

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, April 15, 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.

Introduction of visitors.

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling the report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Yukon on political contributions 2008.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to ensure that the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board follows the *Workers' Compensation Act* and publicly announces any changes in investment policy through an order-in-council.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?

Hearing none, is there a statement by a minister?

Hearing none, that brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Dawson City hospital

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, we would like some answers from the Health and Social Services minister about the recent announcement to build a hospital in Dawson City.

In response to my questions yesterday, the minister said, and I quote: "The process to build a hospital or something similar to that in Dawson will include...a functional assessment of the community needs." Yukoners want good health care, and there are lots of good things about Yukon's health care system. But there is a problem and we want to see it fixed.

This government can't finish what it starts. The Watson Lake hospital project has a 5-and-0 record — five years, \$5 million and zero benefit to Yukon's health care system. And here we go again — same story, different community. Why did this government decide to build a hospital in Dawson without having a plan in place?

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to the hospital situation in Dawson City, it is the Yukon Hospital Corporation's responsibility and mandate to deal with acute care throughout the Yukon. They have indicated a willingness to look into the situation in Dawson City and do an assessment of what's going to be required and what types of facilities are going to be required and, as I also stated yesterday, what kind of footprint is going to be needed to deliver those services within the community of Dawson City.

Mr. Mitchell: That's passing the buck. Until such time as the Yukon Hospital Corporation has a hospital that it is operating in Dawson City, it is this minister's responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, we want good health care for Yukoners. This government may be "...working to provide health care in our communities," but they haven't delivered yet, at least not in Watson Lake. The Auditor General of Canada reviewed 10 projects this government had undertaken. None of them — none of them had, and I quote: "documented project plans that clearly set out a strategy and course of action for completing a project."

Here we go again. Has this government learned nothing in all this time? Dawson may very well need a hospital. We have no problem with that. But this government needs to finish taking the pulse of Yukoners before it makes a diagnosis.

When is this government going to put into practice what it should have learned from the Auditor General's recommendations?

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite, this government's responsibility is to ensure that we provide excellent health care to all Yukoners, and that's throughout the Yukon. Part of our process is to ensure that service is available. We are letting the experts in that field take that procedure on, thus the Yukon Hospital Corporation is doing the assessment for the City of Dawson. They're looking into what's going to be required to assist and provide the hospital-type facility in Dawson. They're the experts in the field and we're going to allow them to do that. Once they have that information available, they can come back to us and make the assessment and we can go from there with regard to providing health care for the citizens of Dawson.

With regard to Watson Lake, I will advise the member opposite that we've come a substantial way with regard to the Watson Lake hospital since December. We've had active involvement from not only the staff, we've had active involvement from the union and the citizens of Watson Lake themselves. I must say, in the three or four meetings that we've had with the public, it has been very well received, and they've indicated wholeheartedly that they're looking to have a full-fledged hospital in Watson Lake.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, just last Thursday, late in the afternoon, the minister was announcing a hospital for Dawson. Yesterday, it was a hospital or something similar; today, it's a hospital or something like it.

We need to fix an existing weakness in Yukon's health care system, and the minister's answers show us what that is. We're talking about a demonstrated weakness of this Yukon Party government. It's called successful project management.

Now, this government may be working with the people in Watson Lake on the hospital project, but it certainly hasn't been succeeding to date, and we're going down the same road again. This government announced a plan to consult with Yukoners about health care needs. The consultation process had barely begun, and here we are with the government announcing the outcome for Dawson.

Why is the government making major decisions before concluding the public consultations?

Hon. Mr. Hart: The consultations on the health care program are on all the aspects of health care throughout the Yukon. With regard to Dawson City, this is an area in which we've had consultation with Yukon Hospital Corporation, who have indicated that they will look at the assessment for providing acute care in Dawson City, and we will await their review. They are having a professional firm come up and do the assessment and help them out with how the design will take place, with regard to the hospital in Dawson City, and we look forward to those end designs.

Question re: Dawson City hospital

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, same minister, same topic. On the Thursday afternoon before the long weekend, the Minister of Health and Social Services virtually slipped the news release under everyone's door, announcing another change of plans for health care in Dawson City. After promising and not delivering a new health care centre, the government is now promising a new hospital. Residents are quite leery of whether or not the hospital will ever be built. Who can blame them? They are tired of the broken promises of this government. When this project was last discussed in 2008, there was a commitment to replace the seniors facility, McDonald Lodge. Is that part of the new plan or has that now been dropped?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I thank the member opposite for the question. I wish to advise him that, with regard to the Dawson City hospital, we're looking at having a meeting this Friday that will involve all the stakeholders with regard to what should take place there. That meeting has been scheduled and set and will involve all the stakeholders in Dawson City.

Mr. Mitchell: We support improvements to health care. There should be a plan in place before announcements are made. The announcement was last week; now the minister says the meeting will be this Friday.

The former minister was very good at making announcements, but he was not very good at actually doing the work. I guess that's why he's now the former minister. Since this project was first announced in 2004, there have been many setbacks. A \$14-million facility was designed and then scrapped. There have been endless rounds of consultation and no actual improvements to health care. Residents have little faith the government will actually keep these commitments. Based on the number of broken promises, how could they think otherwise?

A great deal of money has been spent already on this project and there are millions more to come. In Watson Lake, we are looking at \$25 million to \$30 million for a similar project.

Will the Health and Social Services minister tell us how much has been spent to date on Dawson and what will the total costs be?

Hon. Mr. Hart: The member opposite makes a lot of statements with regard to health care. We have to provide health care. Health care has to be improved on a continuous ongoing basis, not only in our jurisdiction but in all jurisdictions. Are we going to wait for a review to be done to make changes and improvements? I think not, Mr. Speaker. We have to ensure that the needs of the community are met and we are going to go toward that process to ensure that the concerns of the citizens of Dawson are heard and that we can meet the issues that they bring forth.

Mr. Mitchell: For the minister opposite, yes, we agree that he needs to provide health care. We support the idea of that project. We simply want the government to get on with it and to plan it properly. We want to know what it will cost. We want to know what has been spent to date. We want to know why the announcement was made before any discussions were actually held with residents. We want to know if the plans include the replacement of McDonald Lodge or not. We want to know if the changes will include an upgrade or the replacement of the current Dawson nursing station. All these questions remain unanswered. The reason the minister can't answer them is because the minister is proceeding without a plan in place.

Let me ask another question. Does the minister even know where this new facility will be located?

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite, with regard to the placement of the Dawson City hospital, that is what the Yukon Hospital Corporation is going up to visit — the City of Dawson. They are taking along their professionals who can assist them in identifying the footprint that is going to be needed, where it can be placed, what the options are and how it is going to take place.

I would like to also state at this time that they will be working closely with the Health and Social Services department to ensure that we can maximize and utilize the space for the services that we provide with regard to community nursing.

Question re: Dawson City hospital

Mr. Cardiff: Last week, the Minister of Health and Social Services reversed a decision made by his government that was backed by budget commitments in previous years to build a multi-level health care facility in Dawson City. He announced that Dawson will get a hospital with an acute care mandate instead. It was *déjà vu* — Watson Lake all over again. Will the minister confirm that the decision to build another hospital in Yukon has pre-empted consultations with Dawsonites on what they say their needs are?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As the member indicated with regard to Dawson City, they have indicated to us during our numerous visits to Dawson during the fall tour that this sort of facility is required in Dawson City.

As such, as I mentioned earlier, the community has indicated a need, and we are addressing that need and moving forward on that process.

Mr. Cardiff: They are closing hospitals in southern Canada while we're building them. It's not just building hospi-

tals that costs taxpayers money; it's operating hospitals that makes them expensive. To be accredited, acute care facilities require costly, 24-hour medical staff — doctors, nurses, lab technicians — at a time when recruitment and retention is one of the biggest problems in health care. Even the chair of the Hospital Corporation admitted that.

Dawson would need four doctors and 10 nurses to meet the requirement of a hospital. Hospitals need complex and very expensive diagnostic equipment, and the capital costs of that — the current Yukon Hospital Corporation relies on fundraising by volunteers to pay for it. How was the minister planning to fund the building and operations of two new hospitals in the Yukon? Is it by borrowing money and paying interest to banks, or is it by opening up —

Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to the Watson Lake hospital, we haven't entered into an agreement with the Yukon Hospital Corporation. They are doing their assessment of the Watson Lake hospital, and they are determining what's going to be required to operate the facility. At the end of that term, they'll be bringing forth a recommendation on taking over and managing that facility as a hospital, and dealing with it.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, Mr. Speaker, we fear that this could be the thin edge of the wedge here when it comes to P3s. Privatization of the health care system in America hasn't worked, and we don't believe that it'll work here.

Now, the Romanow report on the future of health care, seven years ago, recommended some practical ways to keep our health care viable. Romanow recommended establishing systems of primary care delivery in collaborative clinics that are team-based, multi-disciplinary models, and they're working well in other parts of Canada, providing a continuum of outpatient care such as home care for seniors, public education, pre- and postnatal care, and rehabilitation therapies for chronic problems. That doesn't happen in an acute care facility.

This government claims that the provision of mental and addictions treatment is a priority, in response to demands from Yukoners. These services don't come with an acute care hospital either. Will the minister assure Yukoners that preventive programs, addictions treatment, home care —

Speaker: Thank you. You're done. Thank you, sir.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: There is a problem here, and the problem exists across the floor. Both benches of the opposition are conveniently ignoring that, since 1978, there has been that exact same facility, that exact same service delivery in the community of Watson Lake. The building that provided those services is no longer structurally functional. That's why the government's making the decision, because the corresponding impact is transferring all that cost and service to Whitehorse, which also incurs added travel costs. Why would we take doctors out of our communities, take these types of levels of care out of our communities and transfer it all to Whitehorse? The members opposite may want to do that — if they ever get to government; that's not what this government is going to do. It's going to take care of its citizens to the highest standard and level we possibly can in their home communities.

Question re: McIntyre Creek wetlands

Mr. Edzerza: To protect our pristine natural environment is a Yukon government responsibility. First Nations have a very high regard for the land and all living species that depend on a healthy Mother Earth. Kwanlin Dun First Nation has done their share by having a provision in their final land claim agreement to help the Yukon government when they are pressured by citizens at large to protect natural habitat regardless of where it is situated.

Chapter 10 regarding special management areas provides this. Will the Premier do his duty and notify Kwanlin Dun of an interest to implement chapter 10 with regard to McIntyre Creek?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I think the member opposite and his understanding of the obligations housed or invested in the agreements of public government — and indeed First Nation governments — is probably at a very high level, so I'll accept his point of view. However, if Kwanlin Dun as a government wants to contact this government and discuss possible special management areas within their land claim, the government is open and obligated to enter into those discussions. There is a very defined process for that.

In the matter of McIntyre Creek, the member is very confused. The work has been done. This Assembly, the government, the public, the First Nations and all those who want to participate have gone through a very extensive and lengthy process. All that work has been turned over to the city. The next step in this process is concluding the official city plan. All matters after that will be addressed accordingly. So I would suggest again, as I did yesterday, and probably on numerous occasions recently, that all those individuals who have an interest in this particular area within the municipal boundaries of the City of Whitehorse should involve themselves in the official city planning process.

Mr. Edzerza: The work is not done. Mr. Speaker, it appears the Premier does not want to demonstrate any opposition to the local municipal government. Don't rock the boat. He should demonstrate the same courtesy to all First Nation governments in the Yukon.

A good leader makes tough decisions. I might remind the Premier that most, if not all, of the eight MLAs on this side of the House support having the McIntyre Creek corridor protected. I bet even some of his own MLAs who reside in Whitehorse support this request. Will the Premier notify the local municipal government that his government supports having the McIntyre Creek corridor protected?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, Mr. Speaker, all that work has been provided to the city itself. For the Member for McIntyre-Takhini to suggest that we take different approaches to orders of government in this territory is entirely incorrect. Our obligations to First Nation governments are clearly defined in the agreements — both land claim and self-government. Our obligations to municipal governments are clearly defined within the *Municipal Act*. It's quite a simple process if the member wishes to actually analyze those processes so he can get an understanding of them. It's not something as a matter of the member's opinion that we would do. We are obligated, as defined in the

mechanisms of the *Municipal Act* and the treaties themselves, and that's how this government conducts its business.

Mr. Edzerza: First Nation governments go to court. Municipal governments have protocol agreements with this government. The Premier is responsible for representing all citizens of the Yukon. The Kwanlin Dun First Nation is only responsible to its own citizens; therefore, the Premier should take the lead on implementing chapter 10 because he can. Political will would help him.

Kwanlin Dun First Nation is not opposed to development, and they should not be used as a scapegoat on this issue. Will the Premier not attempt to shuffle his responsibilities on to Kwanlin Dun and take the lead on a request to negotiate a special management area for McIntyre Creek on behalf of the citizens of this city and of the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I'm not even sure if the Member for McIntyre-Takhini really knows what he's talking about or understands what he's putting on the public record. Every statement he just made is simply not factual. That's not what is happening here, not what is happening at all. In fact, I don't know of any development or any other matter that may be housed in the municipal city plan, the official city plan. That's up to the City of Whitehorse. Yes, we have a protocol with the City of Whitehorse; it's not anywhere near the standard of obligation we must meet when it comes to the self-government agreements in the final agreements.

If the member wants to do something constructive here, go to the next city council meeting, put in his input to the official city plan, do something that he should be doing — representing his constituents in that process, instead of dealing with it in the way he is here on the floor of the House, because it's not going to produce one single constructive initiative.

Question re: Workers' Compensation Health and Safety investment fund

Mr. Fairclough: Mr. Speaker, two years ago, the Minister of Environment failed to produce a state of the environment report. It is required by law under the *Environment Act*. The Premier said it was "a benign legality". The Minister of Finance made \$36 million of investments that were not allowed under the *Financial Administration Act* according to the Auditor General. The Premier said it was "just her opinion". Under the *Workers' Compensation Act*, when the minister changes the investment policy, he is required by law to make those changes public. The policy was changed in 2007 and 2009.

Can the minister table the order-in-councils to prove to the public that in fact they were notified?

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite, with regard to the changes made in 2007 and 2009, both of these change dates were provided and they were posted on the Web site and made public for everyone to look at, as well as being in our annual report.

Mr. Fairclough: Why can't the minister table that? Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board lost \$20 million last year on its investments. One of the reasons for these major losses is a new investment policy. It was approved by Cabinet in June of 2007. That new policy allowed the board to

make more risky investments and, by law, any amendments to the compensation fund investment policy should be made public within 10 days of approval. The minister said the changes were made by order-in-council.

The order-in-council does not appear on the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board Web site. It does not appear in the *Yukon Gazette* — the official record of government. Will the minister table the OIC to prove to the public that they were notified?

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite, with regard to the investments, the member knows well just what was on record with regard to the investment. I will remind the member opposite that the investment revenues were \$5.3 million. The unrealized loss was \$19.7 million, with a net investment loss of approximately \$14.8 million, whereas the AGO indicated approximately \$15 million.

With regard to that, Mr. Speaker, 105 percent of our fund is guaranteed and therefore fully funded. Therefore, no worker is going to be without their funding regardless of how long they live in that process. I would say that this is based on the market value as of December 31, 2008.

Mr. Fairclough: I asked this question twice — whether or not the minister would table the OIC and he was unable to do it again. According to the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board Web site, the last time any changes were made to the investment policy was in 2000. Yet we know the policy was changed in 2007 and 2009 by this Yukon Party government.

The government is required by law to make this kind of information public. Injured workers and employees should know how their money is being invested. In 2007 the rules were changed and yet no one except Cabinet was ever notified. The government has signed off on substantial changes to how funds are to be invested on behalf of workers. Those changes allowed more risky investments and the results have not been good. As was stated, \$20 million is gone. The *Workers' Compensation Act* requires the minister to make those changes public within 10 days of being signed off. It is the law, Mr. Speaker. Why weren't people told about these changes as required by law?

Hon. Mr. Hart: The member opposite keeps referring to risky investments. There were no risky investments made by the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board investment fund at all. In fact, Mr. Speaker, changes were made in 2007. They have been posted on the Web site — what those changes are and how they were segregated. They included investment in trust, clarification of investment in pooled funds, returns on investments from 3 percent to 3.5 percent, increase fixed rates from 2005 to 2010 — also allowing to hold triple-B bonds, to a maximum of 15 percent. Mr. Speaker, in the recent audit by the Auditor General, the funds indicated actual revenue from the triple-B bonds with regard to the investment, and we actually made money on those investments.

But I will say, with regard to the risk, Mr. Speaker, less than two percent of our total portfolio is in that area, but we actually made money on that process.

I'd also like to say that the fund experienced an operating deficit of about \$18.3 million in 2008. This is largely as a result

of a net loss in investment of nearly \$15 million in 2008, and largely as a result of the economic downturn compared with an investment loss in 2007. Again, Mr. Speaker, that's a quote directly from the Auditor General.

Question re: Old Crow solid-waste facility

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Environment minister.

The minister recently rejected a recommendation of the YESA Board concerning the solid-waste site in Old Crow. For the minister to reject this 36-page recommendation outright, and to sign the permit giving authority to continue the operation of the solid-waste facility for another three years, in effect allows for the facility to pollute the Porcupine River. The distance between the site and the river is only 50 metres, Mr. Speaker. In the solid-waste regulations it says that a waste-management facility has to be at least 100 metres from a water body. The minister must have some compelling reasons to have permitted this operation. Will the minister explain to Yukoners, and to my constituents, why her department is allowing the Old Crow waste-management facility to continue to operate?

Hon. Mr. Lang: To address the member opposite about the solid-waste situation in Old Crow, yesterday during our debate in Community Services we certainly listed off the many solid-waste facilities we have in the territory. We also committed a half-million dollars to do an overview and to do the work that is needed over the next two months to resolve this issue. We are going forward with that plan, not only in Old Crow but in all the communities in the territory. All of them have archaic solid-waste management tools in place, and this government is committed to improving that in the near future.

Mr. Elias: Let the record show that I once again tried to engage the Environment minister, who actually made the decision for this waste-management facility operation, and she refused to answer the question.

The Community Services minister has budgeted for other waste-management facilities for regulatory compliance, but I guess Old Crow has been left out of that. Mr. Speaker, my constituents have communicated many solutions to address this problem in the short term, like ensuring that the air quality in the community is monitored year-round to evaluate the health risks to my constituents; to hire a facility manager and establish a schedule of operations; put up proper hazardous-waste signage and fencing; divert all surface drainage water away from the Porcupine River and partner with the community on recycling and waste-reduction initiatives. These interim solutions can be accomplished quickly with the proper direction and resources allocated to the site in Old Crow.

Will the minister allocate the proper resources to the Old Crow waste-management facility to implement these short-term solutions?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I recommend that when the review committee goes to Old Crow, that they bring exactly what the member opposite brings forward to the floor today. I'm not looking at short-term fixes; I want a long-term fix for the solid-waste management in the territory. All our communities — I listed off 20 yesterday — have questions about management ability. We've also invested in the municipi-

palities to do an overview there. We're doing the overview on emissions. We're also having these public meetings; everybody in the Yukon is invited, and it is recommended they participate to do exactly what the member opposite is requesting us to do.

Mr. Elias: My constituents in Old Crow do not want the waste-management facility to operate as is for the next three years. They put out solutions to this government and they're not listening. This solid-waste management facility is in direct contravention of the *Environment Act* solid-waste regulations, okay? The final recommendation from the YESA Board stated that the project not be allowed to proceed, because the project will have significant adverse environmental and socio-economic effects that cannot be mitigated. My constituents simply want a commitment from the minister to implement some short-term solutions to address this problem so it doesn't continue for another three years. We expected a commitment to come out of the YESAA process, but the Minister of Environment rejected it outright.

Will the minister please answer the call of my constituents?

Hon. Mr. Lang: We are doing just that. We are looking at all of the waste sites in the territory. We are doing an assessment, and we are going to move forward with long-term fixes, Mr. Speaker. This is a very big issue throughout the territory. It is not a short-term issue. This is a long-term decision and a big investment in waste management in the territory. This government will proceed and do just that.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 729

Clerk: Motion No. 729, standing in the name of Mr. Nordick.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Klondike THAT this House urges all Members of the Legislative Assembly to address the priority issue as recently identified by Yukoners, which is the economy during this period of global economic recession.

Mr. Nordick: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to this motion today — the motion that urges all Members of this Legislative Assembly to address the priority issue as recently identified by Yukoners, which is the economy during this period of global economic recession.

One of the most important issues to the Yukon and this government is the economy. That is why we, the Yukon Party government, listened to Yukoners and came up with a record budget — a \$1.3-billion budget.

To begin this debate this afternoon, I will focus first on my riding. I listened to the people in the Klondike. One of the things I heard was the need to improve Front Street. I commit-

ted to improving and paving Front Street, and there is \$3.5 million for this project in this budget. This project will start in May of this year. Paving will start at Crocus Bluff and extend to the ferry landing, including parking lots and aprons. We are planning on using a clear petroleum product, which will extend the life of paving by mitigating the effects of permafrost. I look forward to the completion of this project.

I also heard and agree with the citizens of my riding that we would like to see an increase of health services in my community, which is the complete opposite of what the Liberals across the way feel should happen in my riding. During Question Period today, they were hoping for a decrease in services in my community.

Mr. Speaker, there is \$1 million allocated in this budget to start the construction of a regional hospital in Dawson City. The construction will start this summer. The Yukon Hospital Corporation will operate this facility.

The Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services will be attending meetings in my community with me, at which time I will introduce the people in my riding to the corporation. The meetings will involve Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the citizens of Dawson, and most importantly, the health care providers in my community.

The second phase, which the members opposite were concerned about earlier today, yes, is going forward. It's the replacement of McDonald Lodge, and it will start on the completion of the hospital. The intent is to use the same mechanical system for both buildings.

I also heard about the need to replace or repair the Margaret Fry arena. Options for the replacement or repair of the current facility were considered. The City of Dawson chose to repair and upgrade the current facility. We listened. Once again, Mr. Speaker, we listened, and there is \$4 million allocated over five years for this project. I look forward to seeing this facility used to its full potential.

Mr. Speaker, I will begin to list what the Yukon Party government has accomplished because we listened to Yukoners. Later today I will speak on current initiatives we are undertaking because we listen to Yukoners.

Because we listen to Yukoners, these are some of the accomplishments we have achieved to date in meeting the commitments we made in our 2006 election platform which is *Building Yukon's Future Together: A Clear Vision for a Bright Future*.

Mr. Speaker, we listened and we established our election platform with four major pillars: achieving a better quality of life for Yukoners; protecting and preserving our environment and wildlife, while studying, mitigating and adapting to climate change; promoting a strong, diverse private sector economy; and practising good governance, cooperative governance, with strong fiscal management.

The territory has advanced on all fronts since our government took office in 2002 and was re-elected in 2006. In 2002, there was no agreement on how to proceed with the development of Yukon's education system involving all stakeholders and especially Yukon First Nations. Our government, in cooperation with Yukon First Nations, undertook a major education

reform process. That process has been completed and our government is now implementing a new education strategy, entitled "New Horizons: Honouring our Commitment to the Future."

It was evident at that time that the territory suffered from a lack of skilled labour. Between 2003 to 2007, our government increased the number of apprentices at Yukon College by 90 percent.

Corrections consultation was another major initiative undertaken by our government. This led to the development of the corrections action plan which, in turn, is leading to the preparation of a new, modernized Yukon *Corrections Act* that we will be looking at in this Assembly. The Community Wellness Court has also been established in keeping with the corrections action plan and our substance abuse action plan to integrate a therapeutic problem-solving court into the Yukon justice system. Drug abuse and other illegal activities are a problem in many Yukon communities and, as a consequence of the unanimous vote of all members of this Assembly, the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* was passed to deal with these problems in addition to the establishment of the RCMP street crime reduction team.

The lack of family physicians and other health care professionals was a major issue in 2006. Once again, our government took action to increase the number of physicians and health care professionals by establishing a comprehensive health human resources strategy and establishing a new nurse mentorship program and a licensed practical nurse program at Yukon College. The health human resource strategy also provides bursaries to Yukoners being educated as health care professionals and implementing a family physician incentive program.

Child care was also another major issue. In 2007, our government provided \$5 million for the next five years for child care, to improve wages for childcare workers and decrease the cost of childcare for low-income families. Our government implemented the most comprehensive review of social assistance since inception of the program by increasing the rates, providing an incentive to encourage recipients to enter the workforce and to provide enhanced services to persons with severe disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, social assistance rates for items of basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, incidentals and utilities were increased by 25 percent in July of 2008 and these items will now be indexed each fall to the Canadian Consumer Price Index. We established a new service to children with the disabilities program and increased home repair funding for disabled homeowners.

We constructed a new seniors residence at Yukon College in Whitehorse, as a legacy of the 2007 Canada Winter Games, as well as new seniors facilities in Haines Junction.

All of the foregoing initiatives have improved Yukoners' quality of life, and represent just a few of the many initiatives we have already implemented.

Our government is also very proud of its many initiatives to protect and preserve the Yukon's environment and wildlife. The development of the climate change strategy and subsequent climate change action plan were major undertakings that

will serve Yukoners well in addressing climate change impacts through mitigation and adaptation, in addition to recognizing new economic opportunities presented by climate change action. Yukon College is currently in the process of establishing a home for the Climate Change Research Centre of Excellence.

Our government is proud of the fact that Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions have been reduced by over 24,000 tonnes per year by the extension of the Whitehorse-Aishihik-Faro electric grid to Pelly Crossing and the Minto mine, taking both off diesel. Our government made major initiatives in inventory surveys, updating information regarding fish, wildlife and habitat areas to address key gaps in our knowledge of the impact climate change may have on biodiversity and species of concern. We are also working with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations to utilize the forest in the Kluane area killed by the spruce bark beetle.

Our government increased financial support for community recycling depots and introduced a new program for recycling action and education in Yukon schools.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon's economy has experienced significant growth since 2002, when our government first took office, due to the growth in our two major strategic industries, mining and tourism, and through our efforts in diversification. We have worked hard to develop and highlight Yukon's mineral potential in Asia and China, in particular, in order to support Yukon companies' efforts to secure investments. Today all that work is paying off. We supported the new placer regime, and amended the Yukon *Quartz Mining Act* to provide a competitive fiscal regime, as well as reforming the *Miners Lien Act* to facilitate access to debt financing for mine development, while providing reasonable protection for suppliers and contractors.

With respect to tourism, we launched a multimillion-dollar national marketing campaign for the three territories, in conjunction with the very successful 2007 Canada Winter Games.

In mentioning the 2007 Canada Winter Games, I must say thank you once again to all those dedicated Yukoners who made the 2007 games such a success. Everyone I talked to said the games were the best ever and literally put Yukon on the map as a place to come and see. Our national exposure was worth millions, which we are still benefiting from today.

Our government has built upon this marketing momentum by establishing the Larger than Life tourism branding initiative to help further position Yukon as a destination of choice.

In addition, we are promoting Yukon's tourism through such initiatives as the Destination: Yukon campaign in Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver and the Greater Toronto and Ottawa areas.

On the energy side, our government has developed a comprehensive energy strategy to meet Yukon's current and future energy needs. Our government has worked hard to ensure the territory is pipeline ready, including support for Yukon First Nations through the Aboriginal Pipeline Coalition, should the Alaska Highway pipeline or the Mackenzie Valley pipeline receive the necessary funding support to proceed.

On the infrastructure side, our government has concluded an agreement with Canada for the Building Canada fund to provide \$182.9 million to Yukon over the next seven years to

help drive economic growth and improve community infrastructure.

In addition to streamlining our land management services in order to improve the disposition of land to Yukoners, our government has worked with the City of Whitehorse to develop the Arkell and Whistle Bend subdivisions to make 532 residential building lots available by 2012. We have also worked with the city of Skagway to ensure the territory has affordable port access to sustain Yukon's economic future. A hallmark of our government's administration has been cooperative governance at all levels — federal, provincial, pan-territorial, First Nation and municipal.

Practising good, cooperative governance with strong fiscal management is a major pillar of our 2006 election platform. We have had many successes in this regard. Our government has worked cooperatively with the Yukon First Nation governments through the Yukon Forum and other partnerships on major federal initiatives such as the \$50-million northern housing trust, the \$40-million northern strategy, the \$27-million strategic infrastructure northern economic development fund, as well as urging Canada to negotiate new self-governing financial transfer agreements to support the implementation of land claim settlements.

Further, our government met its commitment to help reestablish an intergovernmental forum with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the Yukon government and all 14 First Nation governments.

Our government utilized the pan-northern collaborative approach with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut to: one, achieve a new principal-based territorial formula financing agreement with Canada; two, make a success out of the 2007 Canada Winter Games and explore opportunities for cooperation presented by the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver; and three, prepare a broad collaborative vision for the north entitled, *A Northern Vision: A Stronger North and Better Canada*, as well as the *Northern Connections: a Multi-Modal Transportation Blueprint for the North*.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Nordick: I see the Member for Kluane just asked for this subject to be cleared but the member opposite should know that I've got lots of good things that this government is doing in listening to the Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, at the legislative level, our government met its commitment to establish an all-party committee to oversee Yukon government's appointments to major government boards and committees. We also worked cooperatively in establishing an all-party committee of the Legislature to conduct public consultation on anti-smoking legislation and human rights.

As we are about to begin the second quarter of 2009, the Yukon economy remains robust and our population continues to grow despite the global economic downturn. We believe we can meet these new challenges by continuing to work collaboratively with the governments at all levels by utilizing our 2009-10 budget initiatives to provide the necessary economic stimulus to keep the Yukon moving forward.

I will now speak on our current initiatives in the 2009-10 budget. I will only touch on the highlights, and I am sure that the ministers will go into detail in each of their departments later on today.

The Yukon Party government's 2009-10 budget is an investment in Yukon's future. It is being constructed with the major input from Yukoners as it is designed to provide economic stimulus to the private sector economy, improve the quality of life for Yukoners and balance economic development with the protection and preservation of our natural environment.

It is the largest budget in the Yukon's history and totals \$1.3 billion while forecasting our seventh consecutive year-end surplus. Through this budget we are investing in green energy, highways, bridges, airports, communications, water and sewer systems, First Nation cultural centres, waterfront development, municipal infrastructure and other public facilities.

We are also investing in people and communities through education and training, seniors and social housing, schools, hospitals and health care centres. All these investments will keep the Yukon's economic pump primed for the immediate future while contributing to the long-term economic prosperity of the territory.

Mr. Speaker, I will now go into some highlighted details of our 2009-10 budget. There is an additional \$500,000 for overseas marketing and \$100,000 to attract more meetings and conventions. There will be continued investment in the Old Fire Hall in downtown Whitehorse to support Yukon arts businesses. There is \$550,000 to complete construction of the Tombstone interpretive centre, construction of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations cultural centre in Haines Junction and Kwanlin Dun First Nation centre on the Whitehorse waterfront. There is over \$2.6 million for the Yukon's participation in the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver. There is funding for the implementation of the climate change action plan and \$450,000 to establish a climate change secretariat. There is \$319,000 for an animal health program to ensure a healthy wildlife and domestic animal population. There is \$200,000 to establish a contaminated sites unit to assess and book environmental liabilities. There is \$1.75 million to complete Hamilton Boulevard. There is \$2.5 million for Takhini North infrastructure. There is \$3.4 million for Whitehorse waterfront and \$735,000 for the Carcross waterfront. There is \$5.5 million for Carmacks waste-water treatment. There is \$2.4 million for Marsh Lake intake and commercial fill system. There is \$750,000 for arsenic treatment upgrades. There is \$1.5 million for Carcross water systems and \$250,000 for the Old Crow water well. There is \$10.45 million for land development in rural Yukon and \$18.2 million for Whitehorse. There is \$56.7 million for road construction and bridges upgrading — an increase of 13.8 percent over 2008-09 for work on Yukon highways. There is \$14.9 million for mobile communication systems including cellphone expansion. There is \$15.7 million for the expansion of the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport terminal building.

Mr. Speaker, there is \$3.3 million for the community development fund. Marketing initiatives in China have led to the

purchase of Yukon Zinc's Wolverine project by two Chinese companies who plan to invest \$240 million in the mine for production in the third quarter of 2010.

There is \$4.25 million for the third turbine at Aishihik Dam and \$40 million for the extension of the Whitehorse-Aishihik-Faro electric grid from Pelly Crossing to Stewart Crossing. There is a \$120 million upgrade to the Mayo dam.

Mr. Speaker, there is also \$3.21 million available through economic development funding programs to support the diversification of Yukon's economy. There is \$21.6 million for construction of a new corrections facility to replace the Whitehorse Correctional Centre to be built in conjunction with a new treatment centre. There is \$719,000 for the women's transition living unit and \$300,000 for a court registry information system to improve treatment and management of offenders. The prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund has been doubled from \$100,000 to \$200,000. There is \$718,000 to improve the functioning of the safer communities and neighbourhoods office to tackle drug abuse and other illegal activities. There is an estimated \$11 million for construction of a 30-unit, family-focused housing complex in Riverdale. There is a \$20-million increase in the Health and Social Services budget from 2008 to 2009. There is \$1.8 million for the construction of a new, super green children's receiving home.

There will be \$3.5 million in capital and \$924,000 O&M over three years for teleradiology and \$50,000 in 2009-10 for upgrading. Mr. Speaker, there is \$450,000 for agricultural land development; \$255,000 for the joint First Nation-Yukon government land management project and \$987,000 for Growing Forward to implement programs and initiatives supporting the development of a profitable and sustainable agricultural industry.

\$400,000 has been made available for the F.H. Collins replacement. There is \$1.5 million for the community training fund; \$200,000 for the youth-at-risk initiative; \$849,000 capital contribution to Yukon College — an increase in base funding of \$360,000 over three years, beginning in 2007-08 and ending in 2009-10. There is \$210,000 to develop a labour market framework strategy from the community development trust; \$1.56 million for apprenticeship training and \$75,000 for new leadership and education initiative fund. There is \$140,000 for assistive technology software and training for special needs students; \$150,000 a year for early years transition to support prekindergarten through grade 3 children along with \$150,000 to implement curriculum and special programs training initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the highlights of this 2009-10 budget. I could continue pretty much all afternoon in discussing issues of what we've heard and how we've reacted to Yukoners to help mitigate this global recession, but I would also like to hear what the members opposite have to say. Before I finish, I just want to touch on a couple other things.

One of the other things that we are establishing is a youth centre in Riverdale, in conjunction with youth groups and interested parties, to examine current youth programs and identify gaps in services. We will also continue to work with all parties to improve conduct and decorum of members in this

Legislature. On that note, I look forward to the support from members of this motion, and I'd like to hear what the members opposite have to say.

Mr. McRobb: Well, it's difficult to take this motion seriously today, considering we've been talking about the economy every day for the past month in this House, in addition to the previous sitting and the sitting before that, and so on.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, we are more than happy to indulge the Member for Klondike and talk about the economy, although one would think he would rather talk about the plans for the new hospital in Dawson City. What have the members of the Yukon Party done to make the economy the priority issue?

Well, the day after the Premier promised to focus on proceeding expeditiously with the government's budget this session, the Minister of Economic Development spent the entire afternoon refusing to answer questions about his departmental budget, questions about the economy. I guess he didn't get the message. Where is the Yukon economic outlook report he was supposed to table this month? One would have thought it reasonable to first table that report to ensure all members of the Assembly had that very important report before bringing forward a motion to discuss the economy. Where is that report? What is the economic outlook for our territory? It's considered a primary document for a discussion on the economy. Why wasn't it made available so members could speak to its findings? Do the members on the government side already have this report and they don't want to share it? Does it contain bad news they don't want us to see?

Mr. Speaker, what is this all about? Bringing forward this particular motion today raises other questions. Is this really the Yukon government's highest priority for using this private members' day? What will be accomplished by this debate? Aren't there other issues of importance that could have been debated today that actually would have led to something constructive, an actual product at the end of the day?

Whatever happened to that CBC motion the government put forward? Why wasn't it called for debate today? You know, Mr. Speaker, we could have sent a united message to the federal government to support the CBC and avoid those budget cuts. Or was that notice of motion just a smokescreen? Friends of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation — a national lobby group to protect the CBC — are currently calling upon its members for support in lobbying the federal government. This is an immediate and urgent matter, but it seems the Yukon Party is satisfied; they've got a news story out of tabling a notice of motion and there's no point in actually doing anything about the matter.

One of the other concerns is that this motion tends to dismiss all of the other priorities as being somewhat less important.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 19(b) says that the members shall be called to order if they speak to matters other than the question for discussion. We've listened

to a very long soliloquy by the Member for Kluane about everything other than the motion under discussion.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Does anybody else want to join in on this, before I say there's no point of order?

It's simply a dispute among members. Member for Kluane, you have the floor, and thank you for your quiet advice in the background.

Mr. McRobb: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, we should all realize that we should avoid dismissing the other priorities as being less important. We should all realize that climate change will remain a top-priority issue worldwide for generations to come.

Would passing this motion absolve government from taking climate change seriously? What about other environmental issues? What about social issues, including health- and justice-related matters? Would passing this motion give the government the green light to treat them with less priority? These are rhetorical questions, Mr. Speaker, but well-deserving of a response from the members across the way.

Before addressing the economy, let's examine a snapshot of the current economic climate. Our country is currently steering through rough economic waters, trying to fend off a recession. National unemployment figures released last week are at eight percent, a five-year high. Since October, the unemployment rate has increased every month, with a total of 357,000 jobs lost — the largest employment decline over a five-month period since the 1982 recession. This is according to Statistics Canada, Mr. Speaker.

What's happening with the unemployment statistics in our territory? Good question, because we know this is one of the main economic indicators, based on what's really happening on the ground. In the Yukon, the unemployment rate has been steadily increasing for the past four months.

Yukon's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate, in March 2009, was 6.7 percent. That is an increase of 2.2 percentage points compared to one year earlier when the March 2008 rate was only 4.5 percent.

On a monthly basis, Yukon's March 2009 unemployment rate of 6.7 percent was the same as February 2009, and this is up from 4.9 percent in November of 2008. Even on a seasonally adjusted basis, Mr. Speaker, it has gone up substantially since the fall.

Now the Yukon seasonally adjusted employment in March 2009 was 16,600 — a decrease of 500 workers compared to March 2008 when it was 17,100 workers. On a monthly basis, employment in Yukon decreased by 100 between February and March of this year. In terms of workers in the territory, this represents a one-month drop from 16,700 to 16,600.

The effects of the recession or near recession are going to be felt here if they haven't been already. How hard we will be hit is still uncertain. We may escape relatively unscathed or we may suffer like other parts of the country. What is known and what cannot be denied is that we are in a period of economic uncertainty in Yukon. That was the overwhelming mood at the recent Partnering for Success economic conference. Yukoners

are holding off on major purchases and trying to put money away for hard times. They just don't have a handle on where we might be six months from now or 18 months from now.

Mr. Speaker, from this situation, you have fewer dollars in the economy, less liquidity in circulation, and that all tends to depress the economy from what it otherwise might have been. In this time of economic uncertainty, we in the Official Opposition are prepared to work with the government of the day to do all we can to ensure that the Yukon survives this economic downturn as best as it can.

We have made several suggestions for how this budget could be improved, but so far we've heard no response back from the government.

Let's go back and review some recent history. It's interesting to see the Yukon Party is really concerned about the economy to day. It certainly wasn't a top priority a few months ago. We spent a good deal of time in the past fall sitting trying to get the Premier to take notice of the economic problems that were sweeping across North America, and indeed, the global economy, but the Premier would have none of it. Here's what he said on December 9, 2008, and I quote: "There is no correlation whatsoever with what the Yukon is experiencing and the situation the United States finds itself in."

Well, let's fast-forward to what the Premier said last month when announcing his new budget. He said it was aimed at bringing stimulus, stimulus, stimulus. Why the need for all of this stimulus if indeed there is no correlation whatsoever with what the Yukon is experiencing and the situation in the United States? Placing such priority on stimulus would indicate there is a problem with the economy, wouldn't it?

Last fall, we asked the Premier to act. He refused and said it wasn't required. The recession isn't coming here, he said. "We have everything under control," he said. Now, spring is arriving and it is stimulus, stimulus, stimulus, because the economy is slipping. His approach on the entire issue was to pretend the bad news wasn't coming, just like his counterpart in Ottawa. He too was in denial. The Prime Minister even recommended last fall that it was a good time to invest in the stock market. Well, members should be aware of the folly of that advice.

The Premier's denial and the Prime Minister's denial caused the federal government and the territory to fail to act quickly and we are now dealing with the consequences across this country. It seems the Prime Minister and the Premier have experienced an awakening, perhaps better termed a "rude awakening".

Speaking of awakenings, Mr. Speaker, let's revisit what the Minister of Economic Development said in this House a few years ago. At the time, the North American economy was moving forward at record speed. The Government of Canada was posting record surpluses. An extended run of high mineral prices was in full bloom and this minister was quick to take all the credit. He talked about the Kotaneelee well in southeast Yukon and how it was being re-drilled. It was because he was the minister in charge. But what is happening with that program today? It's virtually shut down, Mr. Speaker. The same minister also liked to talk about how mineral exploration had

increased, all because of his good work as minister. He didn't mention that, pretty much, all jurisdictions across Canada set records for exploration in recent years because of record-high mineral prices.

What's happening this year? Well, mineral exploration is projected to be about half of what it was last year, perhaps only 25 percent of last year's total. Where is the minister on this matter now, Mr. Speaker? He also talked about the value of real estate transactions and the rising sale prices of Yukon homes — again, all because of his good work.

What is happening now with local housing sale prices? They are down too, and so is the minister — he doesn't mention this any more. He also talked about building permits and how he was solely responsible for an increase in those values. Perhaps he can explain something. On an annual basis, the revised total value of building permits issued in the Yukon last year in 2008 was \$69,975,000 — a 12.1-percent decrease from 2007. How does he explain that, Mr. Speaker? Or do we only hear the good news and nothing about the bad? Is that why he hasn't tabled the economic outlook report that should have already been tabled in this House, and certainly before today's debate?

What about the number of employment insurance recipients. Let's examine these numbers. In December 2008, the preliminary number of EI beneficiaries receiving regular benefits in Yukon increased 15.8 percent from the level in December 2007 — one year before. This was an increase of nearly 16 percent, Mr. Speaker.

In the following month, January 2009, the preliminary number of EI beneficiaries receiving regular benefits in Yukon increased 17.3 percent from the January 2008 level and remained the same as the December 2008 figure on a seasonally adjusted basis. That is not good.

We have already talked about the minister's favourite — the unemployment figures. The Yukon's March 2009, seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 6.7 percent. It too is moving in the wrong direction, and it is everybody else's fault.

As mentioned, it is unfortunate that this government still hasn't tabled this year's economic outlook report. Last month, he did release last year's economic review which provided revised estimates for 2008 gross domestic product, or GDP, and those numbers were to the downside.

It will be interesting to see the current estimates when this government finally does table this year's economic outlook report.

The Minister of Economic Development was very eager a few years ago to take credit for all of the good news. We can barely wait for his speech when he takes responsibility for the new figures. Will he take equal responsibility for the fact all these numbers are now going the other way under his watch?

Let's now turn our focus on some key economic sectors. Let's start with forestry. Forestry is virtually non-existent after six and a half years of Yukon Party promises to energize the industry. Do we all recall what the former Energy, Mines and Resources minister proclaimed shortly after being first elected? Do we recall the headline in the *Whitehorse Star*? It said that

forestry will thrive by 2005. Well, what happened there, Mr. Speaker?

Next, what about tourism? This industry sagged last year. It might be even worse this year. We've heard cutback announcements from major cruise ship companies whose passengers have previously contributed to our tourism revenue. Today we heard about the demise of another travel company, Conquest Vacations.

So how did this government respond? In its budget, it cut North American marketing by half a million dollars, and instead sent that money overseas to Europe. Aside from the economic leakage issue, isn't the government aware that the economy in Europe is no better than in the United States?

Let's look at mining. Exploration spending will plummet, as mentioned, to only half or possibly a quarter of what was spent last year. The meltdown in commodity prices will be felt in other ways too. Just look at the current situation with Adanac Molybdenum Corp. This will dampen the prospects of start-up for many of the companies that have already done exploration work and were looking to develop their properties.

The seize-up of the credit markets has posed another huge obstacle to start-up operations. We're very fortunate to have one operating mine near Minto and another proceeding in that direction — Yukon Zinc, owned by Chinese companies.

Mr. Speaker, remember that proverbial three-legged stool that our economy is often compared to — mining, tourism and government? Well, it seems that two of those legs are shorter than they used to be. Overall, the only sector of the economy predicted to grow this year is the government economy — so much for lessening our dependence on government spending and diversifying our own economy.

And where does the Yukon government get its money from? Well, we all know that about 80 percent comes from the federal government, and that's risky. It's risky because there is no guarantee. The federal government may decide some day to reverse its deficit budget trajectory at the expense of the provinces and territories. Should that happen, the three-legged stool might be more balanced, but it will be a lot shorter.

Let's take a look at the current budget we're dealing with. Before it was released, we identified some requirements, on which we would base whether or not we supported the budget. I'll quote from an interview on CHON Radio, March 2, 2009, and speaking, of course, was the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Copperbelt — beautiful Copperbelt, I may add. He said, "We're going to judge the budget on three basic principles. Number one, is this budget going to create new jobs and keep more Yukoners working as we get into this difficult economy that has spread across North America and the world? Number two, will the infrastructure projects that come forward be worthwhile and meaningful projects with lasting value for the future of the Yukon for the next 10, 20 and 30 years? And finally, will this budget focus on moving us toward the green economy which we ultimately have to do?"

I would add — those are profound words. Some members might snicker at the green economy, but it's what the world is moving to. We see it occurring now. The President of the United States, in all of his popularity, has made the green

economy one of his focus principles, and we see the old black economy essentially going down the drain. Just look at our automotive industry in North America and where it's heading.

It was only a few months ago that the Premier said there was no correlation between what was happening in the United States with the recession and what was happening in the Yukon. We said last fall that he needed to do more in terms of job creation, because leaner times were coming. All the economic stats I've referred to indicate things are slowing down here, from the unemployment numbers to building permits to housing sales. Plenty of people in the territory have felt the pain already, Mr. Speaker. The Premier should repeat his words to those investors who have lost their savings, to workers without a job this summer, to helicopter companies having to survive with the huge drop in mining exploration, to businesses who supply the mining industry, to people in businesses reliant on the oil and gas industry. It, too, is down in terms of spending, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier, fortunately, has seen the light and has changed his tune somewhat by saying his budget would be all about stimulus, stimulus, stimulus. We will be looking for some numbers from the Premier on job creation, and we'll see what those numbers tell us. How many jobs is the budget actually creating?

We think there is a tremendous opportunity with the one-time infrastructure funding to make lasting investments in the territory. I know a lot of Yukoners are quite disappointed that huge sums of money are going to pay for cost overruns on major projects. It's very disappointing to see \$60 million tied up in the new correctional facility. That's \$35 million more than should have been spent. The Premier's political decision to cancel this project six years ago has cost taxpayers \$30 million. That money could have been used elsewhere. It was a very poor decision by this government and very poor planning. This has been pointed out by the Auditor General of Canada. What about the millions of dollars spent on study plans for the Dawson City bridge that hasn't amounted to anything? What about the millions of dollars spent on the Alaska rail study that hasn't amounted to anything either?

You know, it's really not all about how much money the Yukon government spends; moreover, it's about spending it in a way that is fiscally and socially responsible. It's very unfortunate there has been so much money wasted. We had a glorious opportunity to pave the way for the future in the territory, and we've blown part of it.

It reminds me of that bumper sticker from the 1970s that was quite popular in Alberta. It went something to the effect of "Oh, Lord, let there be another oil boom, and this time I won't fritter it away." That's an interpretation that has more parliamentary language, Mr. Speaker. Well, let's hope that the Yukon doesn't see a similar bumper sticker in a few years, looking back at the opportunities lost because of the wasted money.

On day one in this Assembly, we introduced a motion about the Building Canada infrastructure fund. This is a federal program. We urged the government to ensure federal infrastructure funding provides maximum benefit to all Yukoners by

ensuring — there were six sub-points, and they were these: funding is fairly distributed between rural Yukon and Whitehorse; job creation for Yukoners is maximized; money is spent as quickly as possible; funding promotes economic recovery; local economic benefits; and the funding is actually used.

I think many municipalities will be disappointed to learn that the Premier and the Minister of Community Services sat back this winter and decided not to advance these funds as soon as they became available from the Government of Canada.

Canada said, “You can have your \$175 million over seven years, or you can move it up for the next two years.” Instead of reacting quickly, the government responded, “I guess we’ll spend that money next year, when we’re gearing up for the election.”

The Premier says it’s all about stimulus, and then turns around and says no to \$175 million. Not now; we have no plans for investing in the Yukon’s future.

On the third point, it’s time for the rubber to hit the road in terms of the green economy. We wanted to see major investments in reducing our carbon footprint and real action on climate change. Instead, the budget is as weak as the government’s climate change strategy itself. We need to be moving toward the real use of renewable energy, biomass, geothermal, small-scale hydro, solar and wind. This is a one-trillion dollar part of the U.S. economy now. The Yukon Party government has confirmed it sees this as far away stuff. It’s in the future, it says.

But of course we’ll never get there without investments today. We can’t possibly power all of the future mines with existing hydro, including the small five-megawatt addition that’s possible at Mayo B. Casino alone will require 100 megawatts. Will they want to burn coal and what will that mean for the environment? But even without a huge mine, we will need more renewable energy. Only then can we possibly move to heat with electrical energy and encourage the use of plug-in hybrid cars. These are the kinds of forward-thinking investments we wanted to see in this billion-dollar budget, but they simply are not there.

Look at the issue of net metering, Mr. Speaker. This would provide homeowners, small businesses, farmers, just about anybody the ability to sell power back to the grid. Given the large residential developments on the near-term horizon in the City of Whitehorse, one could expect a lot of housing construction within the next few years.

Had this policy been in place, Mr. Speaker, it would give an opportunity to homeowners to make a long-term investment for their own pocketbooks and the environment.

We in the Official Opposition brought forward a bill a year ago, but it was delayed by this government, and delayed when we returned it in the fall sitting. Instead, the government said it had an energy policy in the works. Well, Mr. Speaker, point one: a bill on the floor is far more advanced than a policy. It could have been a done deal. Instead, the government has done nothing to bring about the opportunity for Yukoners to engage in net metering. That’s another opportunity lost.

On the climate change front, I’m not optimistic at all. The government continues to pay lip service to the environment, but

doesn’t back it up with the dollars to make it actually happen. Both the operations and maintenance and capital budgets for the Department of Environment are cut in this year’s budget.

It is interesting that the motion today is only about the economy. The MLA for Klondike seemed to believe that the only issue government should be concerned about is the economy. The environment and climate change are obviously not high on this government’s priority list and never have been.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Official Opposition talked about the economy only last week, last Wednesday in fact. We talked about the Auditor General’s report on the asset-backed commercial paper, which is also called “the bad investments”, and the \$36 million the Yukon Party has taken out of the economy with these poor investing decisions. We brought in the motion and debated it, but what did the government contribute? Not much, only something about bananas. Check *Hansard*. That was it. For the Premier’s benefit, if he can’t find it, he can Google “bananas”. These are the investments the Deputy Premier told Yukoners were guaranteed by a bank. They were not guaranteed by a bank. The Deputy Premier still has refused to explain why she made those statements in this Legislature that turned out to be so wrong. I think it’s warranted just to put one paragraph on record from the Auditor General’s report. Part 24: “Yukon’s *Financial Administration Act* proscribes the investments that the Government of Yukon can make. We found that the government’s investment in summer of 2007 in two asset-backed commercial paper trusts that were set up by non-banks with a total value of \$36.5 million did not meet the requirements of the act.”

When this report was written, the government had not yet received any payment of principal and interest from these two trusts, and it has not determined the financial impact this may have. We also found that the government has made prior investments in asset-backed commercial paper issued by trusts set up by both banks and non-banks.

Here’s the kicker. These investments also did not meet the conditions as set out in the act. It is important that the Department of Finance manage the investment of public money prudently in accordance with legislation. Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said the buck stops at his desk. He is the one responsible. He sets the direction that is taken by his officials. When we question these bad investments, we are not questioning the officials, we are questioning this government’s policies — let’s be clear about that. That money put into the bad investments could have been put to good use. It could be used to help cover some of the \$30-million cost overrun on the new correctional facility, or it could be used to start building a new F.H. Collins Secondary School this year. But it can’t be used for either of these purposes, because we simply can’t get our hands on it. It is tied up.

Later this year, in October, the government will be forced to admit that we’ve lost even more money. The financial sections of Canada’s newspapers have been full of reports of companies reporting their year-end financial statements. They are writing down their ABCP investments to only about 50 to 60 percent of their value. For us, that would mean a loss of up to

\$15 million to \$18 million, thanks to this government's investment strategy.

The Premier wants to wait until fall to tell Yukoners what he already knows — that we've lost millions of dollars. I guess we'll ask about it then, but Yukoners are very concerned about this issue. The Yukon Party didn't want to talk about that part of our economy. Nobody from the Yukon Party even got up to speak to our motion.

While the Premier seems fixated on how much money is being spent, we are more concerned with how the money is managed. The reality, of course, is that the much ballyhooed \$1-billion budget is only \$25 million larger than last year's budget. That was confirmed in the warrant that was issued recently. Last year's budget may also reach a billion dollars by the time of official year-end reporting.

The government has already demonstrated with the Watson Lake hospital fiasco that it is not accountable or responsible when it comes to spending taxpayers' money. This is the same government that has lost at least \$6 million on bad investments over the last couple of years. With this kind of track record, why should we have any confidence in this government's ability to manage the money wisely?

What about the Dawson City sewage project? There are plenty of questions on that matter, Mr. Speaker. It's a topic for Question Period; I think I'll just leave it there.

What about the medevac contract? The Yukon Party decided to sole source this contract, which is the most expensive way to award a contract. Last September, the Health Care Review Steering Committee recommended that this contract be brought to tender. I'm aware of at least one interested competitive bidder who took the minister's advice and met with officials in Contract Services about getting some information, and he was told the tender would be let early in November; it would conclude later in November, well before the expiry of March 31, 2009. But did that happen? No. We didn't find out until late last week that the contract was merely extended for another year. Why wasn't this information posted? There was no ministerial statement and no government press release. This contract still doesn't appear in the contract registry on the government's Web site. We still don't know the amount. I've asked the minister nine questions on this matter and in his nine responses, he has failed to give the amount of the contract, even once; we still don't know. Of course a bigger question is what happened between October and April to trip up the department's plan to tender the contract? We still don't know. We've asked about it; we don't get an answer.

We get a response and we know that is not an answer.

The Auditor General's report on sole-sourcing office space — this is another example of not getting the best value for the taxpayer's dollar. As mentioned, the delay on constructing the new correctional centre will end up costing our economy some \$30 million to \$35 million. The price of that structure is now estimated at \$67 million. That is amazing, Mr. Speaker — \$67 million and rising.

Those are some things that are in the budget. What about some of the things that are missing from the budget?

There is nothing to help provide free bus service for Yukoners. I hear some of the members opposite laughing at that suggestion. Obviously they don't believe in free bus service. Mr. Speaker, this is good for the green economy and it helps build the attractions that will ultimately bring more people to our territory, which in itself is economic stimulus.

There is nothing to increase the bandwidth of the Internet pipe to the south. You know, historically, we have built roads to riches, and there is a lot of money for that purpose in this budget. Build it and they will come. We should do that for the information highway too, because there are more and more independent contractors and small businesses who depend on it. We need to pursue the knowledge-based economy because it's much more flexible and resilient to economic downturns than is the resource economy. Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, both can happen, side by side.

There is no mention whatsoever of land claims in the budget. We have three unsettled land claims still in our territory. The Premier has tried to shift this responsibility to the feet of the federal government, but the bottom line is that there has been no progress on these claims in six years, since the Yukon Party took office.

Mr. Speaker, I could try to amend this motion. I mentioned some of the other priorities that we as legislators in this Assembly should focus on. I could try to amend it to read "so the Yukon government itself practices what it preaches", because we all know that actions speak louder than words. In both cases, Mr. Speaker, I don't think it would amount to anything. It would be another example of how the Yukon Party uses its majority to get its own way.

We saw it last week when we brought forward a motion — the government simply outnumbered us and brought it to a quit vote and defeated it. I presume today's motion might pass unless enough members stand to speak, simply because the Yukon Party has more members than both opposition parties and the independent and has the numerical advantage.

It doesn't mean things the government does are better than anything suggested by the opposition parties. It merely means they have more votes in this Assembly. That's it.

So there's no use, Mr. Speaker, bringing forward those types of amendments to try to improve the motion and to make it more substantial, leading to something that's more productive than just an open-ended debate on the economy this afternoon, where we're going to hear the government members stand up and say, "The Yukon Party is good; the Liberals and NDP and independent are bad," and vice versa on this side. I think there could have been a lot more productive means to spend our time in this Assembly today. I've already exemplified one possibility that could have easily achieved that.

I want to respond to just two points the previous member made. He said the hallmark of the Yukon Party government is cooperative governance with Yukon First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, that struck me, and I would imagine a few people listening would have felt the same way. Of course, the rhetorical question is, why then is the government involved in so many court cases with Yukon First Nations? Yes, Mr. Speaker, the proof is in the pudding.

In the second matter, the member spoke about the government continuing to improve the conduct and decorum of members in the Assembly. Well, not much has happened in that regard in terms of legislative reform. There's a committee struck for that purpose, yet it has made zilch progress in two and a half years — two and a half years lost and there could have been product already delivered. But instead, this Assembly remains — I won't say "mostly" but I will say "partially" dysfunctional, and we're slipping behind in terms of other assemblies across the Commonwealth.

It is because the government side chairs the committee. Nobody else can call a meeting and that is the way it is. Now I do plan to allow lots of time for other members to speak. I know some government members would like to respond to my invitation for comment.

In closing, I am not sure if this motion today will have led to anything productive by the end of the day. There were other motions that were ignored that could have led to something constructive, but this apparently is the best the Yukon Party could come up with. Everyone should realize that it is the responsibility of the government to take action on priorities. Actions speak louder than words.

What about those economic development plans that were paid for by taxpayers and developed in conjunction with people in Yukon communities? They are only collecting dust on the shelf somewhere.

Those recommendations should be acted on. The government should be moving toward implementing the recommendations in those findings, but that would require the Yukon government's priority at budget time. To the dismay of many Yukoners, those recommendations have been ignored and are continuing to be ignored under the Yukon Party's watch. Why is that? Well, it might be a lack of priority. I don't know the real answer.

But, again, I question the intent of moving this motion today, when it's extremely unlikely that it's going to amount to anything substantial or any change whatsoever. It will just pile up the rhetoric in *Hansard*, what I've said included. Let's be fair. At the end of the day, nothing will have been accomplished. It's sad because it's another lost opportunity. We could have used the time better to accomplish something together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Mr. Speaker, it's always a pleasure to listen to the Member for Kluane and his unique outlook on the world in general. It certainly is always a great pleasure to hear such a "sophistical rhetorician inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity" but we appreciate the effort on that. And again, his —

Speaker: Might that have been out of order? I'm going to have to rely on the honourable member's advice because I don't understand what he said.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: It's not out of order.

Speaker: Okay, you have the floor.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Thank you. I can assure you it's well within order. I was going to start talking about some of the economy things but the Member for Kluane has done such a

marvelous job in being the harbinger of doom and gloom to turn this into, I would submit, a somewhat political debate, but also, has put so much information which is less than factual, and I have some great concerns about that — first of all, when the Member for Kluane starts saying that he was talking about the economy all of this sitting and all last spring.

Well, for the member opposite and anyone listening, the last time that anyone on the opposing benches asked a question in Question Period regarding the economy was on November 8, 2008, and actually I didn't go beyond that but I'm suspicious that probably the next time would be a good year before that. In talking about the economy, I'd like to know where that member is talking about it, because it certainly is not in this House.

He has referred a number of times to the Yukon's economic outlook. Well, actually, he keeps being critical that we have not tabled it. The reality is that it has been on the Web for many, many months, and it is periodically updated — not simply that. I would suggest that the member go on-line and take a look at that. In between his Googling government employees, I think he could learn a lot if he would actually read what has been posted there for months and months and months. You know, I have some concerns about that.

I am glad that he came out with a lot of statistics. He read a lot of statistics into the record, and some were accurate — not a lot, but some. That's always a dangerous thing with looking at statistics in an isolated way. His own party leader, the Liberal leader, has mentioned that many times in this House, and he is, to a large degree, correct.

But also the Member for Kluane questions: Is the economy the highest priority of this government? And the simple answer to that is yes. It has so many different impacts. You can't do anything with the environment unless you have the money in the economy to work with it.

There was a marvelous poll that came out a little while ago — which of course wasn't terribly well reported by the media — that referred to the fact that the economy is by far the number one thing for Yukoners. It has to be healthy, it has to be stable and it's the major issue. It has dropped down — the environment and unemployment, actually — ironically, Mr. Speaker — but the economy is certainly number one.

The member again digs out some old statistics that said it's world mineral prices — they're world prices and they're up. Well, yes, they are, but if you look at the amount of exploration, Yukon was 16 times better than the Canadian national average with the same world prices — 16 times the national average. I wish he would read the rest of the statistics.

Then he questions the Minister of Tourism about what the priority is for tourism and where to place marketing money.

Our Tourism and Culture department does a great deal of polling within the industry to ask what the priorities are and what they want to do. Is the Member for Kluane saying that we shouldn't listen to the industry? Is this what he's saying — that we shouldn't have anything to do with that sort of a consultation?

Now, in so many of these different ways, he brings up again the correctional facility and the treatment facility — Mr. Speaker, yes, we have done a consultation and, yes, it is costing

more money than was originally expected. The Liberal solution to it — the best thing that they had for programming was a basketball court. We would kind of like to do a little bit better and improve the recidivism rate.

He comments that we are doing nothing on bandwidth — completely ignoring press releases, comments in this House, reality, briefings on the budget. We will complete the fibre optics connections to the south over this summer, and we will have 99 percent connectivity in Yukon as opposed to 64 percent. We have some of the best bandwidth and some of the best Internet connectivity in North America and the world.

His best statement, of course, is that he accuses the government of using its majority. In my dictionary, that is the definition of “democracy”. Is he saying that we shouldn’t pay attention to the electorate? That would appear to be one conclusion that could be drawn on that.

And his final comments about the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges looking at procedures in the House — it’s true that that committee hasn’t met in a long time, and the chair is a government-side member, who invited other members to a meeting only a few weeks ago, and the Liberal Party — the Official Opposition — wouldn’t even answer the e-mails to set up that meeting. And then he stands up and accuses us of not having that meeting. The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin is smiling. He knows exactly what I’m talking about. I mean, there is some humour to the whole thing, I’ll give him that.

There are so many things, so you just have to go back and really take a look at what has happened. If you look at this great document that the Member for Kluane refers to on the economic outlook, he’s critical right now. Actually, his leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition, who commented on March 16 on CHON-FM, and said that the unemployment rate was 7.2 — actually, that was the national average, but he was close. He hit the right country, I suppose.

Despite these challenges, the Yukon economy has continued to grow. Yukon’s real GDP grew by 0.7 percent in 2000 and 0.2 percent in 1999 following declines of 3.6 percent in 1998 and 6.2 percent in 1997. We’re looking at between a three-percent and four-percent increase today — 2.7 percent nationally.

It’s estimated that because of these factors, the Yukon’s GDP will increase by two percent after adjusting for inflation. But in 2005, under our leadership — 4.9 and 3.8 percent in 2006 and in 2007, it was 3.3 percent, which was the fourth highest in Canada.

Continuing on with the Yukon economic outlook of 2002, the Yukon experienced a dramatic fall in its monthly unemployment rate from 13.4 percent in January to 9.7 percent in December of last year. This, from the Liberals’ perspective, is to be critical of what is happening today in the middle of what admittedly is a downturn. The average annual unemployment rate of 2001 was 11.7 percent while the average number of people employed dropped by 242 from the previous year. At one point, the unemployment rate was going up while the population dropped by almost 10 percent under the Liberal government.

In those short 22 months, Mr. Speaker, the shortest lived majority government in the history of the Commonwealth of Nations went from double-digit unemployment with a 10-percent drop in population — and they’re critical because we have increased the population — I think it’s around 15 percent now — and dropped it well into the single digits. Net out-migration has completely dropped. With population declines in all of the communities in 2001, for the most part, they’re going up right now, with a little — you know, depending on where the jobs are.

So, Mr. Speaker, for the record, I would like to table the *Yukon Economic Outlook 2002* so that any member can read it and take a look and see what’s actually happening in there. Double-digit, single-digit — I will say one thing about the Official Opposition and the Leader of the Official Opposition. He has finally broken into single digits, and in that same survey that I referred to at the beginning of my talk, the Liberal Party, under his leadership, has dropped to eight percent, which I think is probably an all-time record low.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Mulronee-esque, some might say. It has been just a dramatic, dramatic situation, but the Member for Kluane desperately wants to be critical of what we have done.

Let’s look back at some of the other things that the Member for Kluane has said over time. I quote these, Mr. Speaker. The same Member for Kluane, in *Hansard* during the 30th Legislature, June 22, page 333: “The Liberals say they will do one thing and end up doing nothing. They broke their promise on legal aid funding; they broke their promise to consult the public. It wasn’t long ago when the Liberals had all the answers. Now they have none.” That’s a direct quote from the Member for Kluane, yet today, he has got the answers. I mean, what a brilliant turnaround. I am just so proud of him for that.

If we look at some of the other things in there — from *Hansard*, again, on October 25, 2000, on page 71: “He is waiting for the day the Liberal government says something intelligent even. He could be waiting a long time.” We are still waiting, Mr. Speaker.

On October 30, 2000: “Delay, review, delay — that’s the Liberal way.” Later that day, during a government motion, and I quote again directly out of *Hansard*: “They do not want to consult.” And yet, they are the first ones to be critical of — well, it depends — it could be too much consultation one day and not enough consultation the next. Maybe we consulted with the wrong place.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, is that someone has to make a decision and that is what has to be done. That’s something that the Member for Kluane just does not understand on so many of these. Now, again, I wanted to talk about more of the economy and some of the programs. I will leave a lot of that to other members on this side to give statistics, because statistics are always a little strange at the best of times. What that really brings to mind, from the Member for Kluane’s speech, is that he would sort of suggest that the Yukon Party is the party of government activism, the party that says that government can make you richer and smarter and take

chickweed out of your lawn. Basically, it's the party that says that the government doesn't work. Then they struggle so desperately to get elected so they can prove that. Let's look at the reality. Let's look at what's really, really happening on these things. You just have to do the analysis, you have to spend the time, not snap off the top of your head on what seems like a good idea. You have to look at all the permutations and everything else that's in there. Again, that's something that certainly the Member for Kluane has not been able to do and certainly the entire Liberal Party in opposition has been unable to do.

With apologies on this one, Mr. Speaker, but this is a direct quote from *Hansard* from the debate on Motion No. 152: "When you vote Liberal, you're prepared to throw your values out the window; you're prepared to forget everything."

Yes, I won't go on with that one, because it gets a little strange, but I think the member opposite has proven that forgetting everything or forgetting a good chunk of it is part of the rhetoric.

We unfortunately have to make decisions. One thing we've been very, very fortunate with in Yukon is that we have not been directly affected. We have had some effects — yes, absolutely, there's no doubt about that, but we do have a degree of insulation from the downward trends of down south and the global problems. We're fortunate that many of the mines are in development and they are well funded; that will continue. I have to challenge comments made by the Leader of the Official Opposition on CHON-FM on March 16. Again, I quote — with one addition of course, Mr. Speaker. "Perhaps the Minister of Economic Development should spend a little more time in the Yukon as Economic Development minister and less time gallivanting around the world, hobnobbing with mining executives and others." Well, interestingly enough, it will be nearly \$400 million by the time they ship their first ores out of Wolverine. That's hobnobbing?

The trips we have made and the investments — 17 or 18 percent of Selwyn Resources has been brought in by what we and the Department of Economic Development and our good officials there have done. Tagish Lake Gold — there are other projects that will be coming that we'll be very pleased to see going.

These are all very, very important things to the economy. What was the Liberal solution? They sent a trade mission over to China, got there during their national holiday, and found all of the offices closed. What a brilliant trip that was. But, you know, I'm sure there were good souvenirs all around, so what can you say about that? Or going to Japan on a trade mission to try to sell Canadian cigarettes in Japan. I'm sure the tobacco industry of Yukon and the cigarette producers of the Yukon are very pleased with that trip. It would have been a little bit better if they were at least a little bit more focused.

In all fairness, I do have to say that the Liberals do offer a mixture of sound and original ideas. Unfortunately, none of the sound ideas are particularly original, and none of the original ideas are even close to being sound. But at some point, you have to do your analysis, you have to see what you're doing, and you have to make decisions. When you look at what's happening in the economy in the Yukon today, I think that we're

doing what we have to do. Our economy here remains strong. We'll continue to practise that responsible and prudent financial management, and the territorial funding agreements continue to provide stability and security to Yukon's financial position now and into the future. Do we have an effect? Yeah, there is an effect. But the reality is that we, so far, have been fairly well isolated from that, and it's our intention to keep it that way.

Some of the comments — again, Mr. Speaker, you just have to scratch your head. I've heard interviews on the radio and articles saying, "Putting money into the Campbell Highway in the Premier's riding that is used by so few vehicles..." Are they forgetting a \$400-million mine that's on that road? Are they forgetting the 60 or 70 people who are up there building a 220-man camp? Are they forgetting the huge impact that that's going to have on Yukon, on Watson Lake, on Ross River?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: And Faro — absolutely — beautiful Faro. And all of the Yukon. But no, it's the road to nowhere. Good luck with that argument. We have the largest budget in the history of the Yukon — \$1.03 billion. Since the members opposite like to forget that you have to compare mains to mains and like to keep looking at the supplementary budget and what comes out of that — yes, it would be closer to \$1.3 billion by the time it settles out. That has been reported in the media erroneously.

We continue to offer programs that foster economic growth and sustainability. I would be happy to get into that right now, but unfortunately my time is limited. I would love to get into it in Question Period, except we haven't had any questions on Economic Development. One in November 2008 and yet the Member for Kluane stands up and says that he discusses this on a daily basis. Well, you know, I understand that, Mr. Speaker; it's not a big problem if you talk to yourself, as long as you realize it's you who is doing the talking, but nobody is bringing the economy to the forefront. That's what this motion does. If the opposition is not going to talk about the economy, then we're going to do it.

Thank you.

Mr. Inverarity: Mr. Speaker, I think I'd like to start by thanking the Member for Klondike for bringing this motion forward today. Again, it's one of those motions that's sort of self-serving. We see them here often. The government brings them forth to pat themselves on the back and to make out like they're doing great things.

I'm happy to discuss the economy today. I think I've been trying to discuss the economy off and on now for two years — despite the Member for Porter Creek North's comments. I'll get to some of those comments a little bit later.

I look as far back as October 2007, when it became evident that the sub-prime housing market was crashing in the United States and, along with it, the asset-backed commercial paper market that we were tied up in. We've been over that fiasco a number of times.

The member from beautiful Klwane here has voiced most of the opinions and comments regarding how the government dealt with that particular fiasco, and I understand we'll be continuing to support that fiasco until 2016 or 2018 — if we ever actually see it.

The reality is that we are heading down a road that has been on a downward slide since 2007 when the economy started to turn around. We tried to bring this point up and discuss it a number of times. The reality is that we haven't actually gotten the economy turned around. It is actually quite disappointing that what we are trying to do right now is spend our way out through infrastructure spending when we've had two or three years that we could have been developing alternative economies within the Yukon. The Minister of Economic Development has said great things about developing alternative economies, but the reality is that he just hasn't done it. He is putting all his hopes on the mining industry, and we know that it is a cyclical industry. In fact, I think I could probably quote from the Premier from March 1999, when he said, "This government knows that, in the future, in the not too distant future, the mining industry will be back. It's cyclical." We can only hope that. "We understand that, and we're very conscious of the fact that, right now, there are properties that are moving through the stages of development." Well, we have heard that again here today. "We have got mines sitting there right now with all the equipment necessary to go into production. Not when there is a regulatory change, not when there is a change in government but when the zinc prices reach a profitable level, those mines will go back into production."

Well, we heard today from the Minister of Economic Development that it is not mineral prices that is the issue — they are up, if I understood him correctly. So obviously it is something else that is causing the economy to slide down and not mineral prices. We do see that mining has been dropping off significantly over the last two and a half years. We know that it is a cyclical business — it has been since the turn of the 19th century. We had our first boom and bust in 1895 to 1900 — in that area — and the economy started to drop off. It has come back and it keeps coming back. Have we learned a lesson from this? Yes, we have lots of resources. We still have lots of resources, and we will continue to have lots of resources, but we need the opportunity to use those resources to develop a long-term, stable economy that is not as cyclical with mining as it has been.

We are dependent on the rest of the world for our resources. It's time we started looking to our own economy, and to our own selves, to develop industry, to develop manufacturing, and to develop knowledge-based industries, and we can do that. All we need to have is a vision.

Over the past two years, as we've seen things steadily drop in the Yukon — we've seen, as I've mentioned, the mining dropping off; we've seen tourism dropping off, and I'll talk a bit about that. Highway lodges have been closing. I understand, talking to the Chamber of Commerce, that some 27 businesses in the past eight months alone, I think, have closed their doors in Whitehorse alone. This is the great job that this government is doing about building the economy? Well, I'm afraid, Mr.

Speaker, that I'm quite disappointed in how things are moving along in that area.

Let's talk a little bit about the forest industry. We've heard great things — that we're going to get forestry coming and going down the road, but we have yet to see it develop. Why? I don't know if it's related to the U.S. markets and the sub-prime housing market crash. Probably.

However, as I recall, the Premier stated in April 1997, we all remember the attempted failure by the Yukon Party government to develop a forest industry. Well, here it is 12 years later; we're no further ahead with a forest industry anywhere in the Yukon. Could it have been a stable force through these tough times when the mining industry is dropping down? It probably could have, but we're not seeing that.

I'd like to throw out this question — where is the vision? Where is the dream? We hear from this government that they want to look forward to the future, as they say, but we don't see that happening. What we see is I'm spending funds that they're getting down east coming in. Is it our right? Is it something that's owed to us by the government, by the Canadian government? I'm not really sure that's all that true, Mr. Speaker.

Again, 1999, the Premier stated: "We have to learn how to spend smarter. We have to ensure that an artificial economy that is not created by government expenditures which does much in the way of contributing to the boom-and-bust economy of past government."

Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what I see continuing to happen here today. The Premier, it sounds like, even agrees with the concept that we need to look to change things, but has anything happened in seven years of this government? I submit, Mr. Speaker, that during the first four years, nothing constructive was done for the economy. It was like living on — and yes, we were in an upswing. Mining was growing, life was going to be good, but did we get there? No, we fell back down through another cyclical cycle that was going on within the government, within the Yukon and within the world. Do we have a lot of control over that? Probably not a great deal, but we do have control over how we are going to live through these downtrends.

I just don't see the Minister of Economic Development doing this. I see him gallivanting off to China and places like this to get mines going. Yes, it's good to keep the mining going, no question about that — but where's the long-term stability that's going on?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit right now about tourism. It's another sector of the economy that has been around for a century or more. In addition to the goldrushers who came up over, we also saw other individuals come up, look around, doing tourism and it has been there. It has been a mainstay within the Yukon economy consistently for over 100 years.

It has been there. It has been a mainstay within the Yukon economy consistently for over 100 years. It has been there in good times and bad. What do we see this government doing with the economy, with the tourism budget? They're cutting it; \$500,000 from domestic marketing is being ripped out of the tourism budget to spend on overseas tourism marketing. But

what do we hear? “Oh, the overseas tourist market is falling off too. The Europeans are fighting in the streets over the economy.” They can’t afford to go anywhere, any more than the North American people can go.

What are we doing here today? We’re cutting the North American market. At least we knew, in past years, that the tourism industry was a mainstay of the Yukon — that it was here through good times and bad. We always knew that they were coming up, so we got it. Well, I think the Tourism minister needs to get with the program and understand that today there are Yukon highway lodges and there are hotels and there are a lot of Yukon RV parks out there that are looking to this government to see what they can do this year, so that they won’t be bankrupted and out of business, like the other 27 businesses within Whitehorse that have gone out of business.

What can we do? Well, I can tell you what we can do. We can start an action plan right now, do some investing in the North American market so that we can get some of these people who may have some income to come up to the Yukon this summer, because there are hotel rooms waiting for people to come. I encourage the Minister of Tourism to do this. I think it’s an important step. I think that, yes, in the long term, let’s look at developing overseas markets.

I think that when the whole world rebounds, we will be able to see some growth in this high-end market, but let’s not give up on our mainstay that we’ve had for decades and decades. Through the cycles of mining that go up and down, we’ve been able to depend on tourism, in good times and in bad. Well, times are bad, and we need to actually start looking at investing in tourism in the short term, and putting money into that, rather than cutting it out of the budget.

I think if we can get through this year — you know, we look at the economy today, Mr. Speaker, and we hear the gurus talking about “down the road, things will hopefully turn.” Well, we know that the minister is going to spend \$2.7 million on the Olympics next year, and hopefully that will be a wise investment to develop some tourism traffic next year, but the need here is today.

It’s like the infrastructure dollars that are not being spent. The government has said — and I think the Member for Klwane said earlier — that there was \$175 million that we could spend over the next two years on infrastructure, but no, we’re not going to spend any of it this year. Those industries and those businesses could use the dollars today to keep staff employed, rather than having them go out. My neighbour next door works in Fort McMurray because he can’t find work here. Where is the vision? I don’t see it, Mr. Speaker, certainly not from the Yukon Party government.

“The Yukon Party mortgaged our future, time and time again.” These are the Premier’s words — March 3, 1999 — and this is where we are, seven years later? We’re still mortgaged; we’re not getting any further along. In fact, we’re actually going backward.

We need an action plan today. We need a plan and a program to address the needs of dealing with the tourism industry this summer; we need to see how we can retain jobs and how we can get people working today.

We need to put butts on planes, we need to put butts on buses and we need to put butts on the road, to be honest.

You know what I suspect, Mr. Speaker? What I’m seeing here is that the Yukon government has abandoned this year, from an economic development point of view and certainly from a tourism point of view. They’ve gone and they’ve said, “This is going to be a bad year. Yes, we acknowledge it, but we’re not moving forward.” Yes, maybe in the years to come the plan will develop and perhaps the \$2.7 million is going to be spent and maybe that will drive some people here. The reality is that I don’t think we’re going to actually get much traffic this year unless we take a proactive plan. I can’t even get last year’s statistics — you know, the total year for how many visitors we had from different areas. I’ve been looking for it for four months. I’ve been waiting. I asked the minister last week or so about it — maybe two weeks ago now — and they aren’t ready yet, which strikes me as odd, because I understand that the federal government — the Parks Canada people have their statistics available and are ready and willing to move forward.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I’ve ranted a little bit here this afternoon. I wanted to talk a little bit about the economy. I have to say that I’m a little bit hot under the collar after the previous speaker’s tirade. I hope that — I mean, I have pages and pages of quotes here from the Premier on comments he has made over his career, and I find that the best one is, “The Yukon Party mortgaged our future.” That has got to be a classic, Mr. Speaker, and I could go on from there.

However, I think that my point has been made. We’re supposed to be in this together. We’ve stood here in this House and we’ve said, “We need to get the economy developed.” We need to get the economy fixed. I think that it’s important that we go down that road and we start putting aside some of this pettiness, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that we seem to digress down to.

I see my time is almost up, Mr. Speaker. I’ve been able to do my little rant here this afternoon, which doesn’t cause me — it causes me much distress, because I think that we should all be above a lot of this.

I suspect that we’re not going to go that way, or I would hope. It is unfortunate. But I do look forward to continued debate this afternoon and thank you very much.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don’t know where to begin. I’m really very disappointed in the conduct of some of the members of the Official Opposition — the Member for Porter Creek South to begin with. I don’t even know where to start or to end there. I only have 20 minutes, so I will touch upon a few points.

First of all, the motion that we are here to discuss on the floor of the Legislature is brought forward by our MLA for Klondike. I would like to thank the MLA for Klondike for bringing forward an opportunity to talk about a topic that is very important, not just to the Yukon but to the entire globe. One only has to take a look around us and see what’s going on.

For some reason, the members opposite don’t feel that the economy is an issue.

You know, it is, and in fact, in the recent poll that was taken here in the Yukon — I won't delve into that poll, because it's rather embarrassing for the members opposite. I will touch upon the topic of the economy and how it was deemed as the number one issue of importance to Yukoners. The poll didn't perhaps poll every single Yukoner in the territory, but it certainly polled a great number. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, it is that reason why we are here in the Legislature to debate issues of importance to Yukoners. I thank the MLA for Klondike, because given the conduct and given the degree of questions coming from the members opposite on everything but the economy, this is why we are here today to discuss this issue. That is why we are here today to talk about what matters the most to Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, one only has to take a look at several years ago when this Yukon Party government was elected to office. We were into double-digit unemployment rates. We saw a population that was heading for the hills — everywhere but Yukon. We saw young families leave because they couldn't find work.

Mr. Speaker, this government has worked very hard under the leadership of our Premier and the leadership of our ministers and MLAs and certainly the hard work and diligent work of our public servants housed within the Government of Yukon. We have gone to work with our stakeholders, First Nation governments, all of the industry organizations and agencies. We have gone to work with the Government of Canada to address issues of importance and to make those strategic investments in our economy so we could actually turn that pattern around. What do we have today? We have a very good population. Our population has risen. It has risen. We are almost reaching 34,000 — the highest level in many decades. We have a relatively low unemployment rate.

Mr. Speaker, that is not to say that things are going to continue to be that way. For this reason, we are here. We put forward a budget for debate, for discussion, and it happens to be the biggest budget ever. Housed within that budget are strategic investments in strategic industries that have made a difference and continue to make a difference in Yukon.

I'll talk about a number of strategic investments, one of which includes Tourism and Culture. You know, it is really interesting to hear the member opposite talking about the importance that the Liberal government placed upon tourism and culture.

If it was so important, than why did we go through this thing called renewal? You know, we talk about — I think it was the MLA for Kluane who spoke about it — this three-peg stool. Well, you know what? Under that previous government, there was no stool, because mining had tanked and tourism certainly wasn't even on the radar screen. They decimated the Department of Tourism and Culture. And government? Renewal. So, Mr. Speaker, upon taking office, this government re-established the Department of Tourism and Culture. We re-established the Department of Economic Development and yes, we also re-established the Women's Directorate, because women's equality means something on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, we committed to doing just that and we did it and we continue to work with our partners. We continue to work with industry on those many issues of importance to Yukoners. Now, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to tourism, I'll just correct the record. This government has not cut funding to Tourism and Culture.

Again, if one takes a look back in the days when Tourism and Culture wasn't even a stand-alone department — thanks to the previous government, it was Business, Tourism and Culture — and when you look at the last budget that the Liberal government tabled to where we are today, our budget has increased by just shy of \$5 million. Never mind the additional expenditures housed within the Department of Economic Development, which are also integral to the growth and sustainability of the tourism industry — and the cultural industry, which also happens to house sound recording and film.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about cultural industries, we talk about diversifying our economy. Cultural industries are but one example of an industry that has shown so much promise and has employed people and continues to employ people. It continues to make us so proud to call the Yukon our home. It contributes to not only the economic well-being, but also the social well-being of this territory. Not only has this Government of Yukon increased funding wholeheartedly — the Yukon Arts Centre. We have enhanced funding by well over — I believe it's almost \$200,000 on an annual base grant to the Yukon Arts Centre. They do a stellar job.

We are so proud of the work they do. Their mandate is to continue to grow, to promote and to sustain arts programming in the Yukon.

The School of Visual Arts is another example of this government's commitment to diversifying the economy. They've done a great job as well, thanks to the Dawson City Arts Society and the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture. It's diversifying the economy, but it's also growing the economy in a part of the Yukon called the Klondike. I thank the MLA for Klondike for his continued support of this initiative as well.

Our government has introduced new programs for sound and for film as well. We have introduced new programs — a new touring artist fund which has been so well received — \$100,000 in new funding that has taken this industry and those industries that have matured, and who are willing, able and ready to export their wares — this funding has taken them that additional step.

There isn't a day that I don't receive thanks from different artists throughout the Yukon, thanking the Yukon government for the opportunity to go places with the assistance of this funding.

The Artist in the School program — we were again able to increase that to \$100,000 a year. We were able to increase the Yukon arts funding program, providing sustainable, ongoing, stable funding to arts organizations. We were able to again grow the Yukon arts fund. It has been very incredible, the results that we have been able to reap from some of these funding decisions, as a result of providing support to cultural industries.

Supporting cultural venues — I spoke about the School of Visual Arts. The Old Fire Hall is another great example of

bringing business and culture together, and what a remarkable partnership that has been.

Now, I also talk about other expenditures — expenditures on our Whitehorse waterfront or the Carcross waterfront — all told, about \$22 million in expenditures over the last number of years and still continuing. It is helping grow our tourism.

Our expenditures on the Whitehorse International Airport — a well over \$16-million investment, which is going to very much assist with growing the overseas international market for visitors.

I want to touch upon another thing that the member opposite from the Liberal caucus raised and that is: why, in fact, did we actually decide to throw \$500,000 toward the overseas market. Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, we actually sit down with industry on a regular basis and listen to their strategic advice. In this particular case, when our Premier sat down with industry, it was brought forward that the two areas that we needed to focus on were overseas marketing and conventions, meetings and incentive travel. Mr. Speaker, we delivered on both fronts.

Contrary to what the member opposite from the Liberal caucus stated — I again will correct the record — there have been no reductions in our North American marketing. As a matter of fact, I think that the Premier just recently announced \$2.6 million for the Olympic Winter Games coming up next year and how we are going to be supporting what we have coined the largest marketing initiative that the Yukon has ever seen.

We are not stopping there, Mr. Speaker. We are working with Northwest Territories, we are working with Nunavut and we are working with our respective sister territories to further leverage that reach into our markets.

To the contrary, this budget actually — from mains to mains, a year ago to this year — we have increased it by more than \$2.8 million. How the member opposite gets “cut” — it’s kind of like his analogy of cutting the highways budget, when in fact, it has gone up by 13 percent.

There have been all kinds of interesting perspectives put forward by members opposite about this government’s confirmation, or members’ commitment, to the social side of the ledger. You know, I was going through categorically some of the initiatives that we have enhanced. Childcare, for example — a \$5-million commitment from this government to increase childcare. That has gone to increasing childcare subsidies, and not only increasing that subsidy, but also increasing the threshold of parents who actually use that. It’s a great expenditure. It has gone toward enhancing wages for trained childcare workers. It has gone toward capital improvements of childcare facilities. It has gone toward increasing the direct operating grant — a first increase in more than a decade.

Our government has raised social assistance rates the first time in well over a decade. We have also included increased food allotments through the food-basket supplement. We have raised the minimum wage. Contrary to the members opposite, we have actually increased the number of affordable housing units that are made available to Yukoners.

With the addition of 30 new units that will be used for affordable housing for single parents and their families, this gov-

ernment will have raised the number of affordable housing units by more than 100. What did the previous Liberal government provide in terms of affordable housing? Zero. Or the previous New Democratic Party? I don’t think so, Mr. Speaker.

Our government has also gone above-and-beyond as well. We have brought in child tax credits. We’ve increased credits that support families — lower-income families; those who need it the most. We have been able to reinstate the Women’s Directorate.

Not only have we done that, but we have more than doubled the funding allotted so that we can support women’s equality organizations — organizations working to further women’s equality — first time ever. We have been able to support funding for women’s shelters, we’ve increased that funding — three-year, long-term funding agreements with Kaushee’s women’s transition home and the Help and Hope women’s shelter. We’ve been able to increase monies for Many Rivers family counselling services — a three-year agreement, again; long-term funding increased. We’ve been able to work on second-stage housing, which is going up in Watson Lake right now. It’s the first second-stage housing ever in rural Yukon.

We’ve been able to enhance funding — a \$20-million funding increase to health expenditures. This is quite substantive, including enhanced funding for hospitals. We have been able to increase the amount of expenditures for education. In fact, when we first took office, there was a \$1-million increase to the base grant to Yukon College.

We were able to reinstate and enhance beyond that for the community training funds that the Liberal government reduced. We have been able to reinstate a detox centre — something that the previous NDP government took away. We did that. We put back the detox centre and we are planning on a new treatment centre — something Yukoners told us is of the utmost importance.

We have implemented a community wellness court. We have been able to grow our domestic violence treatment option. That has been a very effective mechanism in addressing family violence. We have been able to implement new funding available to address violence against aboriginal women. We are addressing violence against aboriginal women with aboriginal women on a long-term plan. I am so proud of the work of many women leaders throughout the Yukon and in the north, for that matter, for their commitment to addressing this particular issue. Mr. Speaker, we have implemented many more things, but unfortunately I don’t have time to address all of them.

But what I will say is that as long as this government is in office, we will continue to make strategic investments where they have the best return on investment. I just spoke about tourism investments. In addition to increased marketing dollars, we’ve also established a tourism cooperative marketing fund to assist businesses and we have lowered the corporate income tax rate for businesses. We have also brought in a new Yukon tourism brand. We have a new Travel Yukon Web site, new investments in media relations and product development. Those are but a few of the things, never mind all the investments in heritage, investments in our museums and the investments in

First Nation cultural centres. For the first time ever, the Government of Yukon is now providing core support to First Nation cultural centres, and we're very proud of that, to be able to work with First Nations to showcase, protect and preserve what means the most to First Nation governments.

So, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do the good work in all of our respective areas. We will continue to work with stakeholders and industry, and we'll continue to listen to Yukoners about what matters most.

I urge all Members of the Legislative Assembly to support this motion that is before us. I thank the Member for Klondike for his hard work in his respective community and for the betterment of all of our communities, to not only address the economic well-being of the Yukon, but also to address the social well-being of the Yukon. That makes us very proud to call the Yukon our home. Thank you.

Mr. Edzerza: I rise today to speak to Motion No. 729. It's about the economy during this period of global economic recession. The traditional way — I guess one way to deal with this is to seek understanding of what this really means. It means just that: the world is in an economic slump. It has overspent its means. When I hear the Yukon government's approach, it appears that what will save us is to contribute our portion to the national debt.

The problem that I have with the debate today is that it sounds more like an opportunity to stand up and ridicule and insult each other. I might add that it's unprofessional. This kind of unprofessional conduct is what really gives politicians a bad name.

However, we are here today to speak to the economy. It's kind of unfortunate that some of our economy in the Yukon results from trying to clean up abandoned mine sites. When we do have good luck and the mines start up, how much of the profits stay in the Yukon? I think not much. Look at the Anvil mine, for example. Billions of dollars were made and the Yukon has to depend on Ottawa to support it, to support the Yukon Territory. That doesn't make sense to me when we have such a natural resource as huge mines like Anvil. I imagine there are going to be a few more, but the economy in the Yukon doesn't appear to be any better. I know from experience that with mines opening in the territory, we have a large influx of citizens from other parts of Canada who move here to work at the mines.

I don't really know how many traditional Yukoners benefit from the mine. I know that in 1969, when I applied for a job at Faro at the Anvil mine, I had a very difficult time getting work there. When I finally did get a job there, every day — almost every day — someone was coming in from as far away as Newfoundland and Nova Scotia to work in the mine. I don't begrudge anybody the opportunity to come to the Yukon and work. But today we are talking about the Yukon economy, and I just wanted to make that statement because, to me, it is a very real part of reality in the Yukon. I know that we have a beautiful territory and I don't blame people for wanting to come here whenever they can.

But when we move on again, we take a look at Dawson City, for example — billions of dollars' worth of gold taken out of that region. How did it really benefit the Yukon when in fact we can't even put a sewer plant there and we have to use the Yukon River as a means of getting rid of raw sewage? It doesn't make sense to me. Billions of dollars and yet we can't do that.

What is wrong with this picture? Sometimes I think this budget is quite misleading, because Canada does not have the money in the bank to support all the money being spent. But the solution appears to be, "Let's go further in debt and see if we can spend our way out."

In most cases, when someone is having financial difficulties, you tighten up your spending, not go crazy spending. I believe we will all pay some day. We will all pay because that debt is going to have to be paid some day. We can go into a deficit until the cows come home — nationally — but at some point in time all Canadians are going to pay for it.

There is no logic to bringing forth the largest budget in government history when the economy is probably at its lowest in history. It just doesn't make any sense. However, I imagine it's sort of a band-aid solution to the real economic problems. Is it wise to build a hospital in every community? It sounds good politically, and probably is good politically, but I feel the Yukon may not be able to afford this luxury.

How are we going to sustain these facilities with staff and O&M financially? How are we going to do it, when there was a health care review done recently that said we're going to have to start charging every Yukoner in the territory health fees because of the poor state of financial sustainability to the health program? It's kind of like burning the candle at both ends here. In one breath, we're saying we can't afford it, but in the other breath we're saying we're going to build all of these facilities, and yes, we've got lots of money to be able to build hospitals, but, "Listen here, people in the territory — we're going to start charging you \$1,000 a month per head to pay for all this stuff." At the end of the day, I still believe that Yukon citizens will pay dearly for this.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this government should have taken a little more time to prioritize the projects and programs they are supporting financially with this budget. For example, we have no support for those who need help with mental health issues. I know of a case recently where the government's solution was to start sending mental health patients to New Brunswick or some province in eastern Canada. That was their solution. Yet, we are going to build new hospitals in different communities throughout the territory. That doesn't make any sense to me, because we do — and we should — look after people in this territory who have mental health issues. I think, for far too long, this area has really been neglected, not only by this government, but by many, many years of different governments. I also will put on record that I believe First Nation governments have a big responsibility here, but in the same breath I have to say that the big daddy here is the Yukon government. They have a budget of \$1.3 billion for one year. That's about probably 20 times what the Yukon First Nations

people got for their land claims settlement. It's unbelievable. Unbelievable. There is just no logic to that whatsoever.

They're willing to pay only \$200 million for the Yukon, but they can put a budget forward for one year — one year of spending — of \$1.3 billion. So I hope all First Nations right across the territory start to look at this and try to put some sense to what they did get for financial compensation from the Yukon Territory, when a government can put a \$1.3-billion budget forth for one year of spending.

Mr. Speaker, we have a very large number of mental health victims from the mission school days. As much as people would like to sweep it under the carpet, you're not going to do it. You're never going to do it. You're going to have to keep on building bigger institutions, like the new correctional facility that the government is building right now. In my own humble opinion, I believe there is far too much being spent on that correctional facility, because I think it's not very well planned out.

I believe that, at the end of the day, we're going to have some problems there. Number one, if the government is using this correctional facility to take the place of a land-based treatment centre, there is going to be a big problem here, and that's something I can predict right today, and I think I'm not going to be too far off. We cannot take people off the street, looking for help with mental health issues and counselling and put them in with those citizens who are in the correctional facility. It's just not going to work. I believe that the biggest issue that will prevent it from working is going to be a trust issue. And, of course, it gives the opportunity for citizens off the street to be able to assist inmates with getting drugs, for example. How are you going to screen that? If you start mixing the citizens on the street and the inmates, it is going to be very difficult to try to prevent drugs, alcohol and things like that from being taken into the facility or given to the inmates.

In fact, I believe the number one health issue among First Nations is mental health. It's mental health. It's because of all of the historical abuse that our people went through that we are having grave difficulty managing in this world today as we know it — great difficulty.

One of the most obvious things to me is that a lot of our people don't even realize that it's the mental health issue that's keeping them in the state where they can't seem to move beyond a certain point in their life. I think a lot of our people have shut down mentally and spiritually. I don't know if we're going to be able to continue on in the same trend as we are and survive.

I was certainly looking forward to maybe having the government announce that they're going to start a partnership with two or three First Nations that have infrastructure in place and that they would have a partnership where the financial part of the O&M would be taken care of. It would have been a blessing to my ears to hear something of that nature, instead of building new hospitals.

Mind you, hospitals are necessary, but so are facilities to look after mental health patients. I can't understand why, but I'm really getting the impression that this government is blatantly refusing to build, or to become partners with a First Na-

tion, or to deal with the mental health issue and support a land-based treatment centre. There is such a high demand for that kind of structure.

Mr. Speaker, I heard some mention about an options court. Well, I think it was under my watch that the options court came to be; however, it was never the intention just to say that we have an options court. The intention behind the options court was to be able to give those who come into the justice system an option for treatment. I think the minister might stand up and say they're looking after everything quite well. But I can tell you right now — and I don't think I would be wrong if I were to ask that, within the next week, if 30 of the people who have charges in court all chose treatment, where would they go? Where would you put them next week if you had 30 or 40 clients? We wouldn't be able to accommodate those individuals who wanted to go through the option process for treatment. That's where I feel there is sort of a slack area within government right now, but I think they can fix it without too much problem.

Quite frankly, tomorrow if one of the ministers were given the direction to start consulting with different First Nations in the Yukon Territory, to have discussions around partnerships with a land-based treatment centre, I think they would be swamped with First Nations interested in that concept. I believe it would be probably one of the best political moves that the Yukon Party could ever do — to support the First Nations in their healing journey. That is what needs to happen.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would just say that I appreciate monies being spent in Yukon; however, like I said, I question how the government prioritizes their spending. That is all I would say. I'm not going to go in and criticize monies being spent here or there or how much, because it probably in the long run will help people earn a paycheque at the end of the day. We all need to be able to put food on the table. If that is the only way that it can happen at this point in time, then that is the way it will happen. Like I said, prioritizing the spending was the only concern that I had with this whole budget.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Again, I stand today to speak on this motion that government put forward. I would like to thank the Member for Klondike for doing just that.

As the Minister of Tourism and Culture and Environment commented, Mr. Speaker, we are almost halfway through the sitting and we've done very little conversation on the budget of the day. The opposition has not managed their time well. At the end of the sitting, in the next 16 days, there will be questions about time and the old Official Opposition questions about how there is not enough time to do the job.

Well, let's talk about the economics of the territory, Mr. Speaker. That is what we are doing today on this motion. It is interesting to listen to the debate from the members opposite. Certainly through Community Services, there were the six long days that we used to debate that department. Of course, at this point we've only gone through Economic Development and Community Services and half of our time is done. Mr. Speaker, we have bills to bring forward in the House to debate and yet

we don't talk about the budget. Why would we want to talk about the budget from the Official Opposition point of view? It is a good-news budget. It touches everybody in the territory — investing on the ground, investing in communities, investing in infrastructure and investing in our society as a whole. It has got a social component to it and it has got a tourism component. It has got, certainly, investment in the mining community. There aren't many industries in the territory that haven't been touched by this budget.

This budget came about, Mr. Speaker, not by accident. This budget has moved forward under the watch of the Premier over the last seven years. When the Liberals were in power, chaos that came out of that and, of course, Yukoners spoke. Yukoners spoke in 2002 and voted that government out of office. The government of the day — ourselves — inherited the finances of the territory. The Premier — the Minister of Finance — had to dig us out of the hole that we found ourselves put in by the Liberal government of the day. Of course, the members opposite don't want to talk about the past. Specific things in the past, they don't like to talk about. The Member for Kluane goes on and on and on. Of course, he wasn't a member of the government of the day so he was a bit more critical of the Liberal Party as a whole. So there are a few quotes that, as we discuss this today, I'd like to bring up. It's an interesting argument he puts forward, when you think of the things he said about the Liberals of the day when he was again in opposition. He spent a long time in opposition, by the way.

In the last couple of days, we've been looking at Community Services, and I could go into great length about what a great job the department is doing. I remind members opposite — of course, government — we have it. Again, the Minister of Tourism and Culture and Environment did bring up the hard work and the individuals we have in the bureaucracy that make this a very easy budget to defend. They've done their work in every department. It is the work that the departments have done to get the money, get the resources out and work with us, the elected members, to move us forward to the situation we find ourselves in today — a \$1.3-billion budget.

The Member for Porter Creek South was corrected the other day — and justly so — when he said the Highways and Public Works department was slashed. Then, of course, we had to correct him on the page in the budget that he was reading in the document. In other words, he didn't understand. All the resources we put into briefing and all the work we do — that mains to mains — is how we run our budget as a territorial government.

Now the investment on the ground for the Department of Highways and Public Works, Department of Environment, members opposite, is almost \$200 million in capital O&M — \$194,251,000 — that's in 2009-10. That's a large investment in the communities. Now the investment in 2008-09 was \$170,148,000. The member opposite says that's a decrease. How can you work with the members opposite when that kind of math comes out of the members opposite?

It's interesting when we look at these things. In some of the comments that the Member for Kluane makes as we move forward, it's interesting to see his comments on the Liberals.

It's interesting that he had a few comments to make and how they ring true. I have to agree with him on some of these. Some of these comments are interesting, because they're from a Liberal, and of course, you know, interesting. On June 22, 2000, page 330 in the Blues, Mr. McRobb says, "The Liberals say they will do one thing and end up doing nothing." That's a quote from their member. And if you go through this thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would look at his comments and you'd say, you know, the Member for Kluane's right on the mark. It's an interesting argument he puts forward. He has an interesting argument on his fellow Liberals when he says, "The Liberals say they will do one thing," — and this is out of the Blues, June 22, on the same day, actually, on page 330: "The Liberals say they will do one thing and end up doing nothing." Again, I repeat that. And of course he comments on the Liberals, saying, "The Liberals won't do what they say they will do." That's another comment that's in the Blues. Same day, Mr. Speaker, so he had quite a tirade that day on his fellow Liberals — how the Liberals don't have a plan and all of these conversations.

So, really, when you look at these kinds of comments, the opposition really doesn't know the direction that the Yukon is going in and it seems to be foreign to them. They take a \$194-million budget — an increase from \$170 million — and stand up in the public and say that it has been slashed. The general public realizes what they say, Mr. Speaker, because what we say in the House — people actually watch this and people understand the difference between \$194 million and \$170 million. If they don't understand it, certainly the Yukon does.

Let's move along to the \$122.8 million on the ground — another great investment in the territory. That is all work being done on the ground in the territory. The members opposite went on and one with their comments of all the doom and gloom that is happening in the territory and we are all doomed and the economy is not there. Of course, they haven't explained the population growth, they haven't explained that our unemployment has gone from 13.5 percent to six — actually it went as low as four. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada. Again, why would the members opposite want to talk about a \$1.3-billion budget, Mr. Speaker? It is good news. The opposition is not into good news. We are going to take a few moments this afternoon to talk about what the Department of Community Services and, of course, Highways and Public Works do.

There is a massive amount of investment going out into the communities. The workforce in these departments does an incredible job, Mr. Speaker. You only have to look at our communities to see the return on our investment and also the improvements in our communities. Ross River — the little community of Ross River, Mr. Speaker — we are looking at a capital expenditure from Community Services of \$750,000. Water treatment in Ross River is another priority of this government.

Another thing we've done in Community Services is fund a coordinator training program so that we can go out into our communities and train individuals and municipalities on how to manage the water on a daily basis, because that is going to become part and parcel of the future on potable water.

We are going to have to have trained people on the ground. Municipalities will have to have individuals. We are setting financial reserves today to do just that. Then again, there's the Ross River system — upgrading an arsenic treatment thing, \$400,000 — which is another investment in Ross River.

Again, we don't want to mention — the opposition doesn't want to talk about — Carcross. Why would they talk about Carcross? The opposition had lots of opportunity in their 22 months of government to invest in Carcross. Zero was invested in Carcross under the Liberal government — zero. What are we doing over the last two or three years? Millions of dollars are being invested in Carcross to enhance it and the Whitehorse waterfront. That's what this government is committed to do.

So, if I were to say anything in the comments this afternoon, I'm going to be brief, because I think it's important that we look and critique some more of this budget. We have a very, very tight schedule now. We've only got 16 days to go to work. What I'd like to do is, I will sit down and if anybody else would like to talk about the motion today, I welcome them to the floor.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It's interesting here today looking at the opposition benches. I don't see a lot of interest in debating this motion this afternoon. It's disappointing to see once again very little interest by the opposition, especially the Liberal Party, in actually debating what Yukoners have identified as the priority issue. I would remind members of the poll that was just done by DataPath Systems released March 31 and available on their Web site.

"For Yukoners, the economy..." — I'm quoting from the press release, Mr. Speaker, but it is available on-line and I would encourage members to pull that down. "For Yukoners, the economy is again the number one issue facing the territory. The economy has regained that position with 25 percent of Yukoners polled stating it as their top issue."

Yet in this session — we're nearly halfway through the spring sitting — how many times have we heard the members of the opposition even debating the budget? At this point in the session, with the largest budget in the history of the Yukon presented before this Assembly for consideration in the spring sitting, we have only gone through two departments, with another under debate, on the budget.

If one reads through the pages of *Hansard* to see the debate — comments from members of the opposition — they will not find a very high percentage of the comments mentioning anything related to the budget. There are very few mentions of the budget, very few occasions on which the dollars contained in any department are actually debated. The members, again, are talking about issues. In fact, we see the Official Opposition focusing on issues it brought forward a year and a half ago — old news. We see the members engaging in reflections of events that do not line up with the facts and, unfortunately, persisting in a very negative approach to debate — a very personalized approach to debate, with accusations being levelled at members of the government frequently — in fact, constantly — and we see very little debate of policy, very little debate of

budget, very little debate regarding what is proposed within this record budget.

Now it is, of course, the domain of all members to choose what they wish to talk about in this Assembly. I recognize members of the Official Opposition, members of the third party, and the independent member have the right to not talk about the budget. It is, however, in my view, a disservice to Yukoners at this point in time, with the world economic downturn, with challenges being faced worldwide, with Canadians losing their jobs, with Yukoners concerned about their jobs.

Although we are well-positioned to deal with this world economic downturn, we have seen challenges. There will be more to come. Yukoners, even if they are secure in their jobs, secure in their employment opportunities, have family members from coast to coast in Canada, friends — coast to coast to coast, Mr. Speaker. They have friends and family nationwide who have lost jobs or who are on the verge of losing their jobs — whether it be in the auto sector, whether it be in other areas of manufacturing that depend on the auto sector, whether it be in the financial sector, whether it be in any of innumerable sectors in the Canadian economy that have seen job losses. Canadians from coast to coast are worried about the economy.

Though Canada is recognized internationally by reports, including — the International Monetary Fund and the OECD have recognized that Canada has the strongest banking system in the world, is one of the best positioned nations, in many cases rated number one for being able to withstand the current economic situation, and predicted to lead the world in recovery by a number of those sources during the 2010 year. Despite all of these aspects that are comparatively positive to the rest of the world, Canadians are losing their jobs. Yukoners are concerned about the economy. This government is doing as I believe we should, and further increasing our investment in the Yukon economy, maintaining a positive, healthy cash position at the end of the fiscal year, but in doing so, significantly increasing our financial investment in the Yukon. A record capital budget, a record overall budget of over \$1 billion, and yet the members of the opposition do not seem to want to debate the budget at all.

What little debate there was on the budget focused on things including when ministers informed members that in debate on another department, they would be better able to answer the questions with the information at hand and members fixated on refusing to accept the information presented — refusing to accept the fact and the indication given by the minister of when that question could be best answered. Again, there was much personalization of debate.

I would encourage the members opposite to not only engage in debate on this motion today, not only engage in debate on this motion and actually talk about the motion — as the Member for Klune, in my view, rarely did during his speech — but to get back to debate on the budget when we resume that. The government, of course, only called one motion today in the interest of allowing members, if we are successful in concluding this motion at some point today, to go back into debate on the budget in Committee of the Whole.

In response to that, the Liberal Party, the Member for Kluane, suggested that we should have called another motion, and he had a few choices of motions that we've tabled that he thought were more important to debate than the budget. Mr. Speaker, we believe the budget is the single most important thing for debate before this sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. That is a good part of what this motion is about — trying to focus all members of this Assembly — particularly members of the opposition — in recognizing that Yukoners have identified the economy as being the priority. The budget is very important to how the Yukon government responds to the challenges in the economy and continues investing in Yukon and continues stimulating the Yukon economy.

Mr. Speaker, I will be relatively brief in my comments here today. I do hope other members will engage in debate and I hope that we will have an opportunity to get back into debating the budget today.

I would remind the members opposite that there are a few things brought forward in debate by members of the opposition that I simply cannot leave without challenging and correcting.

I would note that the Member for Kluane, in his rather long speech, talked about practically everything, except the economy and the budget. I would note that he talked about procedural matters and did not accurately reflect the facts in doing so. He mentioned SCREP — the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges — and was talking about the —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Mr. Cardiff: On a point of order, I believe I just heard the Government House Leader suggest that the Member for Kluane did not accurately reflect the facts. I believe that is in contravention of the Standing Orders and it's basically imputing a false or unavowed motive in Standing Order 19(g), by saying that the Member for Kluane was stating the facts falsely.

Speaker: Hon. Member for Lake Laberge, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: On the point of order, first of all, I believe the Member for Mount Lorne meant to cite Standing Order 19(h), which charges another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood. I certainly was not charging the Member for Kluane with uttering a deliberate falsehood. I was pointing out that, in my view, his reflection of the facts did not accurately reflect those facts. I believe there is no point of order.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: It has always been a principle of this Legislature that there can be different opinions of the facts on each side of this House and, in fact, among each of the 18 members in this House. From that perspective, there is no point of order. It is a dispute among members.

Minister, you have about 10 minutes left.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: In resuming my comments, I would briefly point out that the discussion of SCREP — the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges — which the Member for Kluane spent quite a bit of time discussing, in my view has nothing to do with this motion. The only

reason I am mentioning it, in fact, is to point out that these types of discussions do little to further public debate on the budget.

The Member for Kluane again tried to advance the Liberals' idea of a new renewal process, and I would point out that, when in government, their effort at the renewal initiative and the renewal process did not work very well. In fact, I would characterize it as being an abysmal failure, yet they seem to be proposing the same thing on the same concept for the Legislative Assembly. The Member for Kluane has proposed that, in this Assembly, in his view, we would be best served by looking into every government system within the Commonwealth and determining if there might be some new things we could do with our legislative system, and we should be completely reinventing the process.

This government and I have been very clear from the start that we believe tinkering with procedural issues rather than focusing on Yukoners' priorities is not the best use of time for any member of this Assembly, let alone a whole committee of them.

Despite this, we have been open to substantive proposals regarding the Standing Orders of this Assembly, but the last time that the chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges attempted to call a meeting, we saw the very interesting situation where the NDP agreed immediately to the meeting, the Yukon Party members agreed immediately to the meeting, and the Liberal members did not even reply to the e-mail. After waiting for a response for over a week — waiting for information on the verge of the meeting — the chair of the committee was forced to cancel the meeting. So again, I must correct the facts on that. The Liberals talk about SCREP; they have not actually shown any interest in engaging in meaningful debate on it. Again I point out that procedural matters are relevant to this Assembly, of course, but they are not the top priority of Yukoners. They should not be the top priority of this Legislative Assembly.

I would remind members that under the Liberal Party — when the world economy was in a very good situation actually — we saw double-digit unemployment. Today — although we have seen a minor increase in Yukon's unemployment rate — we are still significantly lower than the national average. We have seen some of that unemployment increase due to the Yukon having a record-high workforce last fall — and Yukoners who have returned from other parts of this country that saw an economic downturn earlier than the Yukon has faced it — that has contributed to the unemployment numbers. But again, this government recognizes the challenges that exist through the entire economy, including the Yukon. That is why we have a record budget presented before this Assembly. That is why we are proposing many, many investments in continuing to build this territory and continuing to invest in it, to create economic opportunities for Yukon citizens, while of course maintaining a strong social side of the ledger with regard to things such as health care, education and the protection of the environment.

In this session the Minister of Economic Development noted that he had not received any questions in Question Period

since November 2008. I would remind members of the opposition that to this date in this session, as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, I have not received any questions from them that didn't have the theme, "Mining bad."

In fact, on this side of the Assembly, we believe that responsible resource development is key to the Yukon's economic success. We believe that the strong framework we have in place for managing responsible resource development is very important, that it must, of course, proceed appropriately and effectively and that the officials in the government departments who are involved with the permitting and regulatory process do a very good job of fulfilling the obligations in Yukon's system which is, I would point out again, one of the most modern in the country in terms of its approach to managing resource development. We've taken steps to modernize the *Quartz Mining Act* — amendments to it rather, new regulations under the *Quartz Mining Act*, moving forward with streamlining regulatory regimes, et cetera. This is all very important. This is what we have done and must continue to do. In this budget, again, we have a number of things, including increased investment to the Yukon mining incentive program to encourage continued resource exploration, the members of the opposition, unfortunately, don't want to debate that. This investment, combined with the current geoscience databases and the single assessment process, positions Yukon very well to compete for investment in the mining sector.

There will be challenges. We will see some downturn in exploration, but we are doing what we believe is appropriate to mitigate any reduction in exploration by encouraging that continued work.

I would note that in the media today, one mining company announced exploration programs for this year, specifically citing that the work they doing was, in part, because of the increase to the YMIP and the increased investment that we've placed in that.

Supporting infrastructure and developing infrastructure — whether it be highways such as the Robert Campbell or the \$500,000 per year for the next four years in the resource access road program to upgrade and improve access roads for resource exploration and resource properties. Mr. Speaker, these are important investments.

The cellphone expansion that is occurring in my riding this year — Ibex Valley and Lake Laberge — is part of increasing our infrastructure that is available for Yukon citizens to improve their ability to engage in the modern economy — not to mention improving public safety.

The money that we have through the Growing Forward agreement with Canada — that leverages \$592,000 from Canada for a total of \$987,000 for the Growing Forward initiative. This will enable us to address industry priorities and infrastructure that will improve access to markets for Yukon farmers. We are investing in diversifying the economy. We are investing in increasing the Yukon's ability to meet its own food needs and grow a much higher proportion of our food supply locally.

The energy strategy for the Yukon — another area that, through a number of initiatives provided for within this budget, we will be working on to support the priorities identified in that

work that was done through public consultations, stakeholder consultation, First Nations, municipalities, et cetera, who were involved through the extensive work last year and the ultimate completion of that strategy on January 23 this year.

Mr. Speaker, I can only emphasize this budget is full of many areas of investment to stimulate the economy, to build our infrastructure to make it easier for Yukoners to work within the economy and to build their businesses and to build their opportunities. We have taken a number of steps that we have proposed here, but to date, in this session, the debate from the opposition — the focus — has been personal attacks and negativity.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker — as I see that my time is running out — I look forward to continued debate on this motion, and I can only, again, emphasize to all members of this Assembly the importance of debating the budget, debating the investments in Yukoners' lives and debating the investments in the Yukon's infrastructure. We look forward to constructive debate from the opposition. We look forward to constructive debate from all members of this Assembly, and I believe that that is what Yukoners are very clearly expressing as their top priority — that this Legislative Assembly focus on dealing with the economy, focus on investing in the Yukon and building our future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, I've been listening with interest today to debate on this motion, which is to address the priority issue as recently identified by Yukoners in the DataPath poll, which is the economy. It has been interesting to listen to the debate and the conversation that has been going on here in the Legislature. A previous speaker talked about personalizing debate, and it's interesting, because I've heard a lot of that today.

I've heard a lot of people talking about personalizing the debate, and I've heard a lot of personalized debate and finger-pointing. It's interesting that members opposite want to think it's important to talk about the economy, yet that isn't what I heard a lot of talk about.

It's interesting to note that the motion talks about talking about the economy during this period of global economic recession. I'm glad to see that members on that side have come to the realization that this is something that is affecting us here in the Yukon and that Yukoners are concerned. People were getting laid off earlier last fall. People are concerned about their investments and the future of their pension plans. It is a big concern to people.

As recently as last fall, the Premier described this crisis as a cyclical problem. There were a lot of questions that the Minister of Economic Development talked about.

The most recent question about the economy was — well, there were a lot of questions raised from this side of the House about the economy and what was happening — what the government's plan was to address the crisis in the economy, and the fact that people were concerned about their investments and people were concerned about losing their jobs.

The government's response to that was a little slow off the mark last fall, I suppose. One of their responses was to hold round-table discussions with key stakeholders. This is the way that the Premier put it. The purpose of those round-table discussions was to collect advice and input to aid and inform the decisions. We feel that some of those round-table discussions were too limited. There were a lot of groups that weren't at the table. The government to this day hasn't totally identified who all of those groups were. We would hope that it represented a broad cross-section of Yukoners and not just a few influential persons from the business community — that it would be a broad cross-section.

We would be talking to educators and we would be talking to working people who are actually on the floors of the retail outlets who are right on the front lines, building and working in manufacturing facilities, and listening to what they have to say, and what they see as some of the solutions, as opposed to some — I don't know whether I like to use the word "elite" — from the business community.

What about the non-profit sector? There are a lot of NGOs out there and it's a very large sector. They provide good services to Yukoners, and for the most part, usually at a very economical cost to Yukoners, as well. They rely on doing a lot of fundraising and stable government funding. When we see a downturn in the economy in a lot of those areas, there's even more need to bolster their funding, so that they can deal with some of the problems that they deal with. They deal with issues around mental health and stress. They deal with problems around alcohol and addictions, and other health and social needs that we have here in the territory. In times of economic downturn, that's when we see a greater need. So we would like to have seen more emphasis and more discussions with non-government organizations through this government's consultation process when it's seeking that advice, so that it can inform its decisions on all fronts.

Now, if we look at other jurisdictions around the country, we'll see that some of them are using this global economic crisis — or national economic crisis — to restructure their economies, to do new and innovative things, and to look toward more green-collar jobs.

We don't see the government investing heavily in this area — in green infrastructure.

It's interesting to note — the other day, I was looking, by the elevator, at the display that monitors and tells us how much the solar panels on the roof of this building are producing. It displays how much greenhouse gas emissions we've saved or replaced by not burning diesel fuel to generate that amount of power that we're generating on the roof of this building.

That's one project this government is doing as a — I don't know if it's a goodwill thing or whether it's a research and development program, but it's a good idea. I think it would be one area where the government, through its energy strategy, could put more emphasis on renewable energy, like wind, solar and geothermal.

Interestingly enough, it came up recently at one of the infrastructure meetings, and it also came up at the Partnering for Success conference at the Chamber of Commerce. That was the

desire of both individuals and businesses, to be able to get into that green-energy business, so to speak, by producing green energy for their own needs and being able to sell it back into the grid so that other Yukoners could benefit from green energy as well. They would receive not just the benefits of the electricity, but also be comforted by the fact that it wasn't generating greenhouse gas emissions. We'd like to talk about the economy. I think that one aspect of the economy is the green economy. This government is moving forward on a lot of fronts infrastructure-wise, with highway jobs and bricks and mortar, but we feel that it would be good to invest in some of the human infrastructure, the health and social aspects of our economy. Some of that as I mentioned would be through non-government organizations.

This is a time, when there is an economic downturn, to reposition ourselves a little bit in the economy, to educate our workforce and to diversify the workforce, so that they're ready to meet the challenges of a new economy. I don't believe that the economy is going to necessarily stay the same. I don't know what it's going to look like five years or 10 years from now. Will there be resource development? I hope there will be resource development in the economy of the future, and I hope that it will be done responsibly — not just more responsibly than what is happening now, but more responsibly, taking into consideration all factors of the economy and of society.

We need to be concerned about the future for our children. We need to be concerned about the environment. Through new technologies and education, I believe that resource development can be done more responsibly than it is being done, than it has been done in the past, and probably more responsibly than it is being done currently.

Those are the types of investments that I think we should be going out and attracting to this territory — the companies that want to come here and work responsibly, that care about the future, the land, the water, the air and the people who live here. I think that that's important for a long-term, sustainable economy.

It's interesting — and I don't want to dwell on this too long; I think that the economy is important, and I agree that it would be good to get back to debating the budget. I'm surprised that the government had so much to say today, when they actually thought that getting back to debating the budget would be a good thing. I think that what we need to do is look at diversifying the economy more than it is now. We need to take advantage of the situation that we're in. We need to look at what the priorities are for our people, ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to receive an education. Our young people are concerned, just as we are; they're probably more concerned about their economic future, and what the economy holds for them in the future, and what economic future they have. That's a part of what we need to focus on: education, reinvestment in education and ensuring that they have opportunities to participate in a new economy.

What's that economy going to look like? Well, at a recent event that I attended, a number of priorities were identified by people in business and people who are on the front lines of business. Education was one of them. Venture capital was an-

other, and broadband infrastructure. Broadband infrastructure, interestingly enough, is a relatively green technology.

While there are impacts out there from installing the infrastructure, a lot of the work that goes on over the Internet requires a lot less travel and a lot less use of energy because people are able to work from their homes or work in far off distant locations without having to fly great distances to attend meetings. It allows for greater participation of people in the economy and in business through increased investment in broadband infrastructure.

One of the other things that came up was the need for affordable housing, especially for our youth. For young people especially, the housing that is being built is truly unaffordable, both in terms of rent and in terms of the cost of buying in to that market because of the types of homes that are being built.

So the government needs to think about that and about how it can encourage the building of affordable homes for young folks who want to get into home ownership.

We need to keep more of our economic resources here in the territory. I heard the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources talking about agricultural. That's one good way of doing it, but there are lots of other value-added opportunities out there, forestry being one of them. The government did a lot of work around the forestry act, and I believe it's doing work on forestry regulations. But, again, that's just another potential opportunity.

Wilderness tourism — it would be nice to see the government put incentives in place for the tourism industry and wilderness tourism operators as it does for mining and exploration. I know the government will want to come back and say that members on this side of the House —

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said that all the questions were "Mining bad". Well, those are the questions that are being asked out there by the public. All mining isn't bad. We know that. What we want to see is responsible resource development — both in mining and forestry and in other sectors of resource development. We need to ensure that it is sustainable in to the future.

I was mentioning wilderness tourism. There are 89 licensed wilderness tourism companies in the territory, and they could also use a little help. It is about looking at all aspects of the economy. Manufacturing is another one. We have a lot of skilled workers here. There was some concern — I think the Minister of Economic Development said that if they can't work in exploration, we'll just put them to work building houses or building the new airport. Well, in order to do that those employees need training, so we are back to education. It is a long-term vision and a long-term strategic plan. It needs to be sustainable. It needs to be inclusive of a lot of different sectors of society, and it needs to be a mixed economy. We just can't focus on one aspect.

The time is short for this debate as always and there is always a lot to contribute. I wish there was more time so that I could contribute more to the discussion, but I think it's important that we move on and debate the budget as well. So thank you for the opportunity.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Mr. Speaker, let me tell you, in preparing for this debate today, I reviewed the many, many initiatives that our government has undertaken to improve our economy. Long before the global economy experienced turmoil, Yukon's economy was in difficulty. Under the Liberals, the only exports from Yukon were Yukon families and their U-Haul's carrying their worldly possessions.

I remember vividly those vehicles travelling through Teslin, heading for points beyond our borders. Those tear-stained faces pressed against the rear window have left an indelible memory.

Mr. Speaker, in 2002, Yukoners voted for change, for a new vision. They wanted us to work together to do better. We committed to Yukoners to rebuild and restore the Yukon economy, and that is exactly what we are doing.

We put into a place a plan and a philosophy that would restore Yukon's economy and confidence. In 2006, again, Yukoners spoke and reaffirmed that our clear vision for a bright future was the direction in which they wanted to move. I have articulated previously about the things that we need to build a better economy. Let me again share with you the things we need for that 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.

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

Mr. Speaker, things like roads, bridges, and other transportation routes are critical to developing 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.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke about the need for a communications network to improve our ability to share information. Under this government's watch, we have begun replacing the old radio 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. It amazes me how much technology has changed our world.

Clearly, this government is doing well for the economy. Yukon will be growing. We recognize that Yukoners have been deeply concerned about our economy and we are going to do something to ease their concern. This is why we were elected and re-elected. I am proud of our track record and what we are doing for the economy.

Thank you.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: The ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 729 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Nordick): Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 15, *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Department of Environment.

Do members wish a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 15 — *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10* — continued

Department of Environment — *continued*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 15, *First Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, Department of Environment. Mr. Fairclough, you have about 14 minutes left.

Mr. Fairclough: When we left off the debate yesterday, I asked the Minister of Environment questions with regard to the elk and also with regard to the office that is going to be created for this new position that the minister identified.

I had some interesting comments from the minister on this. I would like to continue to ask questions with regard to the elk. In the *Wildlife Act*, it is an offence to harvest elk. Is that still the case?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I just wanted to make reference to a few of the issues that the member opposite put forward in de-

bate yesterday. The member opposite made reference to a number of different matters, including the introduction of elk, who introduced it, how did it happen, to office space and so forth.

Just to confirm for the member opposite, in the late 1940s, the Fish and Game Association of Yukon actually successfully were able to — through the Commissioner of Yukon at the time — introduce free-ranging elk in southern Yukon. The intent was to provide elk for new hunting opportunities which was deemed as important at that time. That's just a confirmation of where we're at.

With respect to the member opposite's subsequent questions, the member opposite did refer to office space — of course, as I think I referenced yesterday, I don't believe office space is being sought at this time, although perhaps the department may be looking into that. It's more of an administrative matter, but I would concur with the member opposite that certainly, whatever office is chosen, obviously it would be accessible to the public at large. We certainly look forward to getting the office up and running. We were able to dedicate \$320,000 in new funding that will build on existing funding for an existing position there, bringing up the office to well over \$400,000.

Of course, first is first, and that means that we've got a high degree of work to do on that front, in terms of coming up with a job description, coming up with classifications through the Public Service Commission and so forth, and that all takes time.

We will certainly be collaborating with our respective counterparts in other jurisdictions to look at similar traits that other jurisdictions may — in fact, they have that expertise, whereas we haven't had this office up and running before. What we have committed is over \$320,000 for the establishment of an animal health program, including a chief veterinary officer and technical staff to provide a degree of oversight, advice, veterinary services and so forth.

Certainly, we look forward to establishing the office space like we have in other departments. One office does come to mind, and that was the Women's Directorate. The Women's Directorate was reinstated after the previous government dismantled the Women's Directorate. We did reinstate that and we were able to actually find very good office space for the Women's Directorate — high profile — and now they've been able to have great success in attracting women from all over the territory to come in through the doors; it is very accessible.

Of course, we've been able to enhance funding by well over 100 percent since we have taken office, which has enhanced the degree of women's equality work that takes place here, thanks to the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate.

In terms of the animal health officer, that is part of the responsibility associated with getting a new office up and running.

Mr. Speaker, there were a number of other issues that the member opposite articulated yesterday in terms of whether or not the winter tick control on the elk was successful. Contrary to what may be coming from the opposite side, we deem this to

be quite a success. The Department of Environment officials recently held a gathering of individuals to explain the very importance of the program and how it has worked very well in being able to successfully eliminate many of the ticks that were found last winter.

So, again, that's just one part of the parcel that comprises what we adopted last summer — an elk management plan in June 2008 that identifies how, in fact, the plan came into being. It also talks about the importance of elk and how Yukoners deem elk to be an important species, but that they wanted them healthy. So we have taken steps to ensure that elk remain healthy and, in turn, other key valued species remain healthy as well.

So we are undertaking a number of key steps to implement the elk management plan, including a limited harvest. We are working with respective stakeholders at this time to see that that comes to fruition, as well.

Mr. Fairclough: Okay, let's try again. I'll ask the question again. The *Wildlife Act* states that it is an offence to harvest elk. Is that still the case?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: With respect to the member opposite's question, this was a proposal that was brought forward during the recent regulatory round as part of our annual wildlife regulations, which is being considered as we speak. But in the meantime, we are proceeding with discussions on a proposed limited harvest.

Mr. Fairclough: That's a regulation, but it states clearly in the act that it is an offence to harvest elk. Are we expecting amendments to come forward that clearly change that section of the act? How is the regulation going to do that when it still states in the act that it's an offence to harvest elk?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Well, we're actually in the midst of working on those proposed changes that will enable Yukon to conduct a harvest of elk. Those steps are underway right now. It's part of the regulatory process. We're going through that right now with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the department, in our shop, is taking the steps necessary to enable that to happen.

Mr. Fairclough: Can the minister clearly outline exactly how that's to take place? The act still remains. It says it is an offence to harvest elk. The minister talks about regulations, but the act itself — as she says, there are two things happening right now. We've got regulations out there in the public, being consulted on, and also changes to the *Wildlife Act*. Is that what's coming down in the fall?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As I made reference earlier, we are taking the steps that will enable the harvest to take place. It is before the board as we speak. We are going through that annual regulatory process that occurs each and every year. We are in the midst of that, and we look forward to receiving the final recommendations and implementing as such.

Mr. Fairclough: I am not clear on this. I would like to ask the minister, are we expecting to see changes to or amendments to the *Wildlife Act* to reflect the ability to harvest elk?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment and the Government of Yukon will do what it takes to implement those provisions.

Mr. Fairclough: Mr. Chair, that is interesting. First of all, I believe that the department should know the numbers that are out there right now in order to give permits to harvest elk. When are we going to get a fairly accurate number? I know you can't get 100 percent of the count, but when are we going to get that, because right now the department's number simply doesn't compare closely with the numbers that are being produced by the Fish and Game Association?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Right now our complete focus is on addressing the winter tick issue. That was one of many components identified in the elk management plan that was adopted last summer in collaboration with many respective stakeholders: First Nations and renewable resource councils — there was the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and many, many others involved in the development and creation of the actual management plan. That articulates a proposed harvest, and of course, as part of reducing the core range of the elk — and we're dealing with two respective ranges, one being the Takhini herd and one being the Braeburn herd, one of which was very successful.

We held an elk recovery plan last winter, which involved the majority of the Takhini herd. We had penned well over 100 elk, of which we were able to alleviate 100 percent of them, as I understand, which comprised approximately 80 percent of those elk that were captured.

This year, we're doing the same with that herd, just to ensure that that does remain the same; that the elk continue to range tick free. As well, we are also involved in a capture of the Braeburn herd, so those measures are underway as we speak.

So far, the Takhini herd — those efforts that have been completed by the Department of Environment have been very successful to date.

Seeing the time, I move that we report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Taylor that Committee of the Whole report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Mr. Nordick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 15, *First Appropriation Act 2009-10*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report of the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following Sessional Paper was tabled April 15, 2009:

09-1-111

Political Contributions 2008: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Yukon (Speaker Staffen)