

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, April 1, 2010 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House that the following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as they are now outdated: Motion No. 680, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party, and Motion No. 703, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Cancer Awareness Month

Hon. Mr. Hart: I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing April as Cancer Awareness Month. This is the time to pay tribute to men, women and children who demonstrate their dedication to eradicating cancer by volunteering their time and effort.

Monsieur le Président, j'invite aujourd'hui mes collègues à se joindre à moi et à souligner le Mois de la sensibilisation au cancer.

Le moment est bien choisi pour rendre hommage aux hommes, aux femmes et aux enfants qui consacrent bénévolement leur temps et leur énergie pour vaincre le cancer.

Whether they are encouraging their friends, family and co-workers to sponsor them in events, such as the Run for Mom or Relay for Life, selling daffodils at the local store, going door to door, raising funds for the Cancer Society, or even shaving their heads to raise funds, they are all working hard in the fight with cancer.

Cancer has touched each and every one of us. There isn't one person in the House who hasn't been touched by cancer in some way or another, whether it's through a friend, family member or co-worker.

According to the Cancer Society, it is estimated that in 2009, 3,300 Canadians were diagnosed with cancer every week, and 1,450 Canadians died of cancer every week. Three types of cancers account for the majority of new cases: prostate, lung and colorectal in males; breast, lung and colorectal in females. Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer death in both males and females.

I am pleased that my department has taken such a strong stand in the battle against tobacco, from the *Smoke-free Places Act* to protect the public, to the establishment of the Smokers' Helpline and our QuitPack smoking cessation program.

We know our smoking rates are high and we are doing our part to reduce the impact of tobacco on our citizens, which in turn will help reduce the rate of lung cancer in this country.

Healthy living is another way that we can all join the fight against cancer. While healthy living can't prevent all cancers, it is estimated that up to half of all cancers can be prevented through making lifestyle choices such as not smoking, eating well and staying active, among others.

While Cancer Awareness Month is only 30 days long, I ask us to commit to joining the fight against cancer today and every day going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci beaucoup.

Mr. Fairclough: I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to Cancer Awareness Month and notably the Canadian Cancer Society. Canadian Cancer Society is a national community-based organization of volunteers whose mission is the eradication of cancer and the enhancement of the quality of life of people living with cancer.

Funds are raised through the donations by individual Canadians, by door-to-door campaigning and by fundraising events. The purchase of daffodils kicks off the April campaign, which is one of the Cancer Society's single most important drives in the fight against cancer. Bright, cheerful daffodils are the society's symbol of hope. This year the Cancer Society will also introduce a daffodil pin in support of those who are on a cancer journey.

Cancer is the leading cause of death worldwide and the total number of cases globally is increasing. Each year, over 12 million people receive a cancer diagnosis, and 7.6 million die of the disease. The good news is that approximately 40 percent of cancers are potentially preventable and, along with early detection, can improve the survival rates.

Until the day we eradicate cancer, the goal for cancer patients is to become cancer survivors. Throughout the year, the Cancer Society Yukon region has many fundraising events, including the Relay for Life in both Whitehorse and Dawson City, the Battle of the Badges, daffodil flowers and luncheon, and the wheelbarrow races in Carmacks. The annual daffodil luncheon will be held on April 9 at the Westmark Hotel.

I encourage all Yukoners to get involved, become a volunteer, help sponsor their team, make a donation, wear the new daffodil pin in support of those living with cancer or in memory of those who have been lost to this devastating disease.

On behalf of all Yukoners, I would especially like to publicly thank and pay tribute to the tireless efforts of our Yukon volunteers. We truly appreciate your time and commitment to making cancer history. We also thank the many donors for the support they so generously give every year to this very worthwhile cause. We all have a cancer story. We have all been touched by cancer, directly or indirectly, in some profound way. Through your continued support, the fight against cancer will be advanced. We will make cancer history.

Mr. Hardy: Cancer — I shouldn't be here today. I honestly shouldn't. I got cancer over three and a half years ago — a very serious form of cancer. I was probably within days of death — our great medical system kicked in for me, and medevaced me to Vancouver. The treatment that I received down there was phenomenal and has extended my life, but

that's all that it has been able to do — extend my life. Very recently, all the treatments have failed with me, and I have withdrawn from cancer treatment.

I made a decision for quality of life, to take myself off the conventional treatments that are available for people who do have cancer. So basically, I shouldn't be here today, because I should have been dead a couple months ago. Interestingly enough, in taking myself off the conventional treatments, it has given me a reprieve, and I have been in some form of remission or some form of recovery, though the cancer still continues to rage through my body and probably it is growing, but I am not going over to the hospital to find out what is actually happening any more because there is no treatment left for me. So for people who were surprised when I walked into the Legislative Assembly when it opened, that is really what has happened.

I would like to thank everybody who expressed their concerns and kindness toward me and my family, and I would like to thank the departments that we have and the people within those departments for the type of treatment I have received and the care I have received. Home care is one example. They came into my house, and it makes my ability to live there a lot easier and allows me to hopefully die at home and not in the hospital. I think I want to be at home.

It is my belief that if I had lived in any other country I would not have survived — with some possible exceptions. I believe Canada has a phenomenal system in place. Unfortunately, it has been under attack — and that's our health care system. But it has allowed so many cancer patients to get the care they need upon being diagnosed with cancer, without the concerns of financial ability. That is our Canadian system. It has allowed people to get care that's recognized around the world as leading edge in many cases — but definitely first rate — in our hospitals, our specialty clinics within our hospitals, to extend their life, and sometimes actually to eradicate cancer from their bodies — depending on what type of cancer it is, of course. It's all over the map. This is because this was a country where the people have cared deeply for each other, and that's how the health care system came about — and we know the history of it with Tommy Douglas and the Saskatchewan movement and all ministers and people there who made it happen and how it expanded all across Canada.

We also recognize the fundraisers, the groups out there — that has already been mentioned, so I won't go over it again — that continue to work and support the research and assistance for people with cancer.

Just to give you an example of how important this system that we have in Canada is — I went into the day clinic after I had my transplant. I had to go back every day for treatment and, in the old hospital before they'd moved it, we used to sit in rooms with groups of people, and of course we'd engage in discussions about cancer and the treatment we were having and where we stood with it in our life. Many of us had caregivers with us, and they would engage in the impact on their lives and how it's affecting them as well, but I met quite a few people who had come up from the United States. They were Canadians, but they had been working in the United States for many, many years. One example I'll give — and this was right across

the board with everybody I'd talk to about this — is one man said: "My wife got cancer 10 years ago. I lost my home; I lost my savings; I lost everything I had. She died. I was living in the States. I moved back to Canada two years ago. I got cancer. I have a home; I have savings. I have a health care system that is not costing me everything in my life that's left. I am not putting my family in debt — my children in debt. I am being cared for. I am so, so glad to be Canadian and I'm so glad to be back in Canada because this is a society that cares for every single person."

I heard that from doctors who had moved back to Canada, who had been treating people in the United States, saying the exact same thing — saying they had the means to address their cancer in the United States, but it nearly broke them. They were so glad to be back in Canada because people care here. It's not about what you make; it's not about who you are; it's not about what culture you're from; it's about what you need to survive, to live, to be healthy.

The health care system in Canada is worth fighting for. Never mind what people say — how bad it is or the Americans' viewpoint that we've heard so much about with the debate in their attempt to bring some form of health care into their country. We know — especially the people who have experienced the care that is offered at our hospitals at local levels. If we have to go see specialists or specialists are brought up, we know that we have a better system and it is one to preserve.

It is what identifies us in the world as a caring society. I am only standing here because of that. If I had been born in the United States I could have never afforded the treatment. I know that for a fact. I know the costs it has been to the system because of me. If I had been born in a Third World country, I would have been long dead. I was fortunate to be born in a caring society, our Canada.

There are many challenges with our system. There are many areas that we need to improve on. There are financial challenges and there are care challenges. But we can overcome those without gutting our system, without changing it. We can make it even better but we need to work together and we need to do it in a wise way and one that involves the people and what they really want.

The truth is cancer continues to grow in our society and it gets closer and closer to each and every one of us. It could be a friend, then it could be a sister or brother or cousin, then it could be us, so we need to look after each other.

We're not winning the war on cancer; honestly, we're not. I've seen the stats. In the Yukon, we need to take a serious look at the levels of cancer and which cancers are most predominant. When I went Outside, the doctors asked me why so many Yukon people are coming down with leukemia. Why are they getting treated in Vancouver, where I went? They can also go to Calgary or Edmonton for the same kind of treatment. The numbers must be staggering. But leukemia lymphoma is very high in the north. Maybe we need to sit down and take a look at that and all the other cancers — breast cancer, lung cancer — all of those.

And you're right — what was said earlier by the minister — that the *Smoke-free Places Act* is a good step forward and

the other programs the government has brought in. They are very good steps forward to address lung cancer. That is a lifestyle — a health choice. But I say this very clearly: most of the cancers we're dealing with, we don't know where they originate, where they come from. We are still in the dark in trying to deal with this, and the treatments that people go through are unbelievably invasive and hard, and people will make decisions, like me, at some point, where the treatment is not worth it. The quality of life is not worth it. You cannot continue, and you take yourself off the treatment. And you say, "It's time I move on in my journey." We need to support those people as well and give them as much care and love as we possibly can. And there are many of them out there in the Yukon. Many of us know many people like that. Reach out. Offer them support.

My thanks are on behalf of the NDP to everybody who cares, all the groups out there — the governments that continue to invest and believe in a health care system and what we truly need to be a caring society, and from my perspective, what each and every one of us truly believes in, that we're here for the good of the people.

In recognition of National Oral Health Month

Hon. Mr. Hart: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for that also.

I rise today on behalf of the House to acknowledge April as National Oral Health Month. When we talk about taking care of ourselves, or staying healthy, we often neglect to think about our mouths and our oral health as part of that care. Yet our oral health can greatly influence our overall wellness.

Monsieur le Président, je voudrais rappeler à mes collègues qu'Avril est le Mois national de la santé buccodentaire. Quand il est question de prendre soin de soi et de rester en santé, on oublie souvent qu'il est important de prendre soin de ses dents et de ses gencives. Pourtant une bonne santé buccale peut avoir une grande influence sur notre bien-être général.

For instance, the Canadian Dental Association states that the research has shown there is a relationship between oral disease and oral health problems, such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke, as well as pre-term and low birth-weight in babies.

Eating, speaking and socializing can be impacted by oral pain, missing teeth or oral infections. Not being able to eat or speak well can greatly impact the individual's quality of life by affecting their physical, mental and social well-being. The Yukon's children dental program, as part of the Department of Health and Social Services, provides diagnostic, preventive and restorative dental services to Yukon children. These services help identify any dental problems early, before they've seriously impacted the health of the children.

In addition, children in the program learn proper oral hygiene at a young age to help them develop healthy habits that can last a lifetime. We strongly believe that, starting young, we can help create good dental habits that will keep children healthy and well throughout their lives. We have made considerable efforts these past years to work with new mothers and infants to teach them about the importance of dental health, even for those little ones without teeth, and with toddlers, pre-schoolers and school-age kids.

During April and throughout the year, Yukoners are encouraged to think of their oral health as an important component of their overall health. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and merci beaucoup.

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

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling a report from the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly on the absence of members from sittings of the Legislative Assembly and its committees.

Are there any other returns or documents for tabling?
Any reports of committees?
Any petitions?
Any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

Hon. Ms. Horne: I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to reinstate its funding for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation to ensure that the Kwanlin Dun First Nation, the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, the Northern Tutchone Tribal Council, and the Committee on Abuse in Residential Schools Society, or CAIRS, who provided services to residential school survivors can continue their programs.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a wellness strategy to promote healthy living habits for all Yukoners.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT the terms of reference of the Select Committee on the *Landlord and Tenant Act*, as established by Motion No. 850 of the First Session of the 32nd Legislative Assembly, be amended by changing the date of its reporting to the House from the 2010 spring sitting of the Legislative Assembly to the 2010 fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly; and

THAT the Government of Yukon introduce in the House legislation no later than the 2010 fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. McRobb: I give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the shareholder letter of expectations for 2010-11 from the minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to appoint former United States vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin as a special advisor to the Yukon Health Care Review Oversight

Committee given her unique and personal perspectives on this issue and her first-hand experience of the Canadian public health care system.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?
Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Aboriginal language protection

Mr. McRobb: Yesterday, the government members had a great deal to say about aboriginal languages, but had managed to avoid voting on the one thing that would matter — establishing a commission on Yukon aboriginal language protection. Clearly, the government doesn't feel that Yukon's aboriginal languages deserve to be saved from extinction. Furthermore, this government lacks the courage to stand up and put that on the record.

Last fall, the Yukon Party talked out the clock on this motion. Yesterday, it did the same thing to prevent the motion from coming to a vote and skating away without justifying its reasons. We could have taken an important step yesterday toward protecting aboriginal languages. It's a shame it was wasted. Why is this government so reluctant to vote on this motion and put its position on the record?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: This government certainly takes pride in the position we put on the record yesterday with the programming in place throughout Yukon that we and our partners are working on.

The member opposite has commented that we should invest in what matters, and yesterday we provided information about teacher training programs, language programs, programs in the classrooms and programs across the north. We discussed programs at Yukon College with the Yukon Native Language Centre. We also discussed programs under the northern strategy and the programs where Yukon First Nations have drawn down jurisdiction to provide aboriginal language services in their own communities.

Mr. Speaker, this government fully endorses and supports aboriginal languages in Yukon, and that was clearly demonstrated yesterday. It is clearly demonstrated in our budget which makes a significant investment into Yukon's future and Yukon's aboriginal languages.

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, then why did the Yukon Party government again talk out the clock and fail to state its reasons for not supporting the motion? Now the government side did put a lot of words on the transcripts yesterday, and I will quote part of it. "I believe that all MLAs in this Assembly would be unanimous in their belief that aboriginal languages and, more specifically, Yukon aboriginal languages, are valuable and worth protecting. That is a responsibility that we as legislators, as members of the government, as representatives of our constituents and as citizens of the territory, all hold."

Well, the member was partly right. The opposition MLAs believe in the importance of aboriginal languages and the opposition MLAs are trying to act on that responsibility even if the government members won't. If the government members

feel so strongly about aboriginal languages, why wouldn't they vote on this motion yesterday?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I think what the member opposite missed there was that that quote was attributed to me, and that was the comment that I put on the record. That is certainly a strong belief that I hold. That is why the investments are being made in programming, in teacher education, in teacher training and accreditation of programming, and diversity of different programs being put into the community — programs like the Haines Junction bicultural program or the numerous other programs that are put out there.

One only has to take a look at the budget, the investments made in the Yukon — investments, which I must say, the opposition has characterized as being reckless, to look and see that the proof is in the pudding. The proof is in the programs in place.

I appreciate the members opposite have a different approach in addressing this issue, but what they certainly realize is that there are certain significant investments into putting the practices in place and continuing to prepare people, train people and encourage people to use Yukon's aboriginal languages.

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, the motion put forward yesterday by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin would have produced concrete, positive steps toward preventing the extinction of our aboriginal languages, yet the Yukon Party wouldn't bring it to a vote. They again talked out the clock. That's what happened.

This government is hoping to coast into the next election without taking positions on any of the hard issues. It refuses to take a position on the Peel. In fact, the Environment minister isn't even allowed to talk about the Peel. Yesterday, it turned down an opportunity to take real action to protect aboriginal languages and it wouldn't put its position on the record. Instead, it just talked out the clock. It's time this government starting going on record so Yukoners know exactly what it stands for.

If government had no intention of supporting this commission, why did it stall the vote?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, there certainly is a difference in philosophies here. The Liberal Party believes that real action is establishing a commission. That's the Liberal position.

The Yukon Party position is that we will invest in teachers; we'll invest in language programs; we'll invest in bicultural programs; we'll put money from the northern strategy into a diverse range of programs. We'll look at using technology; we'll look at accrediting programs. We'll look at partnering with other universities to provide a bachelor's degree and language proficiency certification programs.

The Liberal Party wants to create a commission to study it and we want to put money into action on the ground, in the classroom, with the students where it makes a difference. There's a clear distinction in the philosophies here and Yukoners need to hear about that.

We'll continue to work very closely also with those Yukon First Nations who have drawn down this jurisdiction — who, as part of their self-government agreement, have identified that

this is one of the issues that they want to be responsible for, that they want to work with and that they now receive the funds coming from the federal government.

We're making a difference; they want to make a commission.

Question re: McIntyre Creek protection

Mr. Inverarity: We know that the Minister of Environment supported the concept of protecting McIntyre Creek when he was a member of the opposition.

I would like to quote from a motion that he tabled in this House just last year: "This House urges the Yukon government to work in collaboration with the City of Whitehorse, First Nation governments, and the Friends of McIntyre Creek to establish a park for all land along McIntyre Creek and its wetlands."

Mr. Speaker, the City of Whitehorse has an official community plan that will impact the future of McIntyre Creek. The window to make submissions for the city's planning session closes today. Did the Minister of Environment make a submission to the city planning committee, and if so, what did he say?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No.

Mr. Inverarity: Mr. Speaker, this sounds like another missed opportunity for the Minister of Environment as an advocate for the environment. We know that the minister is aware of the inherent values of the urban wilderness.

In the motion tabled last October, he listed 10 reasons why he wanted to preserve it. Let me restate some of the values that he used last year to advocate for the protection of McIntyre Creek: nesting areas for birds, cross-country skiing and hiking, educational experiences and environmental science, salmon spawning and ecotourism.

Mr. Speaker, now that the Member for McIntyre-Takhini has crossed the floor again, things are different. When will the Minister of Environment keep his word and advocate for the protection of McIntyre Creek?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Once again, Mr. Speaker, I have to state for the record what I have stated before — that I was a lone voice and one voice does not budge three governments.

I did take the issue forward to one government that I thought was very, very upfront and one of great importance, which I'm beginning to believe that the members opposite really didn't give much weight to — the Kwanlin Dun First Nation. That's unfortunate because they're the ones that probably could be of assistance. However, other stakeholders, the Official Opposition and even members of the Third Party never went to consult with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation. I rest my case.

Mr. Inverarity: This minister has a stronger voice now that he's the Minister of Environment and he should use it. McIntyre Creek has inherent value as urban wilderness. It is a wildlife corridor and home to a variety of animals and fish. McIntyre Creek is also a sanctuary for many different species of birds, three of which are on the endangered species list. Tourists fly to Whitehorse to spend their vacation time in McIntyre Creek. Can you imagine that?

The minister had the opportunity to make his views known, too, as part of the official community planning process — which I have done — but chose not to. Yukoners are con-

fused by this minister's unpredictability, and rightfully so. Perhaps the Premier made another irate phone call to the department. When will the Minister of Environment find his voice?

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: It has been confirmed and reported here on several occasions that the official city plan is the primary government that goes forward with this land use development planning. I know there are a lot of different stakeholders with different interests and, at the end of the day, yes, it is going to probably be a plan that is not going to please everyone. I know that there are approximately 3,800 hectares of land protected within the city's draft plan.

So, again, because of the diversity of stakeholders, not everyone is going to be pleased at the end of the day.

Question re: Health care user fees

Mr. Hardy: Now, in *Yukon Health Care Review "Taking the Pulse"* document, most Yukoners surveyed said they are opposed to user fees and the reintroduction of health care premiums. In the Premier's budget speech, though, he said Yukoners want to see carefully planned, private, user-fee health care services. This is not supported by the survey conducted among Yukon people. Nine hundred people responded to that. That's a very high number, yet the Premier states he is acting on the health care review. There's a contradiction here, Mr. Speaker.

So where is the Finance minister getting his information that Yukoners want to see user fees?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Actually, Mr. Speaker, it's about the report and the overall process that the government had conducted in the matter of presenting to Yukoners a clear picture of the health care system, and of course we applied a 10-year window to do so. These are items of discussion that came forward during that time and are represented in the report and in documents. The budget speech merely repeats those types of discussions that have been ongoing.

But I have to, once again, reiterate the government's position. We have stated all along, categorically, that we will not be seeking to raise fees — user fees or other matters. There is one thing we have done, however, and that is impose a dramatic increase in tobacco taxation. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that we are now experiencing a drop in tobacco tax revenue. Obviously, that has been a step in the right direction.

Mr. Hardy: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear what it says — what the Premier's words are in his budget speech. It says "...some carefully planned private user-fee health care services."

When I read the *What We Heard* document, I understand most Yukoners do not want to see user fees or privatization when it comes to their health care services. Yukoners stated all along, categorically, that this is the case. Now the Premier obviously has a different view in reading the study.

The New Democratic Party has a very long and proud record of opposing the national trends toward user fees and privatization creeping into health care; that is our history, Mr. Speaker. The Premier, in his budget speech, also indicated his government has taken action on this. Immediately following that sentence is "taking action". So my question really is sim-

ple: what action is he taking regarding user fees and privatization? He says it in his budget speech. Do we believe it or not?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, I can't answer that question, whether the members opposite believe one or the other or whatever they may deem to be their view or opinion. We can't answer that on this side of the House. The member knows what the government's position is and has known all along. There is no process to increase fees, apply user fees. There was, in the past, a fee that Yukoner paid toward health care but that is not what the government is doing today. Are we taking action? Yes, we're taking a lot of action in dealing with health care. All one has to do is look into the budget, and the steps toward ensuring the Hospital Corporation can deliver, to the full extent of its mandate, health care and acute care services for Yukoners. But let me remind the member that Tommy Douglas himself — the founder of universal health care — clearly articulated years ago in the 1960s that his belief is that all individuals should make a contribution to it. That's not to say that, in today's Yukon, the government is proceeding with taxation, fees, or other courses of action that will charge Yukoners for the services. In fact, we are investing in increasing services for Yukoners.

Mr. Hardy: Well, the simple question is, why is it in the budget speech? Why is it in there? If you're not doing it, why do you put it in the budget speech? The budget speech is telling the people of the territory what you're planning to do. You even say you're taking action on this. Now, you're saying you're not. Will the Premier please get his stories right. At least explain why it's in the budget speech. You know, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition made it very clear in its submission to the health care review. It did not want to see user fees or means testing. That has been noted. It states in that document, and I'm quoting, "before any decisions are made regarding the *Yukon Health Care Review* recommendations, the Yukon Legislature would like to know what you think."

Well, when are we going to get a chance to have this debate regarding this document? Are we going to take some time aside to do this and not cut into departmental debate?

So, Mr. Speaker, why hasn't this happened? Why hasn't it been brought forward to the Yukon Legislative Assembly so we can have this discussion?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, once again I would point out to the member opposite — the member of the Third Party — that these are reflections of what Yukoners said — nothing more. Again, the government's position is very clear. In fact, if the member was to look at the budget, there are no increases in taxes or the application of user fees for health care. What there is is dramatic investment in the health care system. Mr. Speaker, that's our focus.

Now, I question why members opposite would choose to try to present an interpretation of something instead of actually going to the facts of the budget and the position of the government that has been stated on the floor of this Legislature. One can only wonder what motivates that, Mr. Speaker. We hear quite often — especially from the Official Opposition — some very strange interpretations of the written word, and it is get-

ting quite questionable, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the credibility of the opposition.

Question re: Health care costs

Mr. Hardy: Wow, that is interesting, questioning your own words. Now the Yukon Hospital Corporation is building a nurse and doctor residence with borrowed money that will need to be paid back with interest by Yukon taxpayers. We know this. The Yukon Hospital Corporation is building hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City with borrowed money that will need to be paid back with interest by Yukon taxpayers. The purpose behind the government's health care review is to examine the sustainability and affordability of Yukon's health care system over the next decade. What I read previously about this being brought before the Yukon Legislature to be debated has not happened, but decisions are being made. My concern here, though, is the capital and O&M costs of these projects alone will drive up health care costs dramatically. How does the Premier plan to cover these costs? A very simple question.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, this is very troubling. Does the member not realize that the beds that will be provided in these investments are needed? How does the member expect to meet the health care needs of Yukoners? By setting up a MASH unit tent?

Facilities are a requirement in our health care system, and that will contribute to sustainability and clearly, Mr. Speaker, we have to look at it on the basis of why the taxpayer today should pay the full cost of building facilities that will be used by Yukoners long into the future. This is a balanced approach to take and that allows the government — the governments — to retain fiscal capacity to actually deliver the health care within those facilities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the NDP has got a very rich history when it comes to debt and investment of said debt. We are investing in hospitals; the NDP invested in failed enterprises like sawmills.

Mr. Hardy: Oh, like the bridge in Dawson and the \$3 million there, or the study there that went nowhere with the P3 project, or like the railroad study that was about \$4 million that never went anywhere — that is \$7 million wasted — or like the hospital supposedly sitting in Watson Lake that hasn't even been opened yet, and it's probably up to \$10 million. You can't stand on this floor and talk about debt. You've created it. You've created waste.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Please address your comments through the Speaker.

Mr. Hardy: Yes, sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Okay, so the Yukon people are very aware of the dangerous financial waters this Premier has taken us into. When he talks about the future generations paying for what we do now, that's creating a financial disability for those not even born yet. Do we have that right? No, we don't have that right.

Now, I would like to know if the Premier has determined which public assets — because I believe this is what's going to happen and this is the direction we're going in — he's planning

to sell off to the private sector when the unsustainable financial plan he's manufactured catches up with reality? Because I believe that's going to happen.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, you know, at the risk of being deemed callous, let me point out to the member opposite that the member just articulated to this House what a great system Yukon has when it comes to the delivery of health care. The investments we're making are complementing that great system the member spoke about. As far as the member's assumption that somehow we're going to start selling off assets, maybe the member should recognize that the assets are actually the Hospital Corporation's assets. That's an important factor in this matter. They are the corporation's assets.

So the member does not agree with the approach. That's fine, but the member should explain to Yukoners, then, how the NDP would meet the health care needs of Yukoners. We need beds and we need improved and enhanced acute care. Mr. Speaker, there is a gamut of needs in the Yukon Territory when it comes to health care, and even though today, as the member said, our health care system is very, very good, there's much more to be done. That's what the report points to — the fact that we're growing contributes to that, the fact that our population is aging contributes to that — that's why the investments are being made today. It is for tomorrow.

Mr. Hardy: I'd like to remind the Premier, because he seems to have forgotten, the Yukon Hospital Corporation is not an entity unto itself. It's not a private business, as he seems to want to indicate it is. It is owned by the people of this territory. It is accountable to this territory now and in the future — and the Premier should remember that. Some accountability has to come back.

Now, Yukon Energy ought to be worth a pretty penny. We all know what happened earlier last year. What happened there? The Premier was trying to sell it off. The Premier was trying to privatize it. That's where my questions come from. I am very suspicious now of what direction this government's going in. They weren't able to do that, because the public responded and said, "You're not selling our assets." But, historically throughout Canada, governments have run up massive debts — usually Conservative or Liberal governments — and then started selling assets.

That's what this question comes from. Will he tell us his privatization plans now since they failed a year ago, or will he wait until next spring when he surprises the public around the next election?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, it would be impossible to explain to anyone here in the House, in the Yukon, in Canada at large what privatization plans the Yukon has, because we don't have any.

Now I agree with the member on one point: the assets of the Hospital Corporation are Yukoners'. Yes, exactly that. That's why we're making the investment. That's why the Hospital Corporation is going to work within the full extent of its mandate. Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt in anyone's mind there's a need in this territory. Furthermore, that need doesn't just exist in the City of Whitehorse. What about communities like Dawson City? What about communities like Watson Lake?

What about those surrounding regions? Should they be forced to travel far from their homes to receive the health care that this member so eloquently articulated exists in this territory?

Not this government's view, Mr. Speaker. We believe Yukoners should receive to the extent possible health care services where they live. We made that case with Canada, Mr. Speaker. This isn't even an item of discussion, if we had not made the business case with Canada on the delivery of comparable services for Yukoners.

Question re: Porter Creek land development

Mr. Inverarity: Porter Creek residents are concerned that blasting on infill lots will damage their homes and nearby buildings. Site 4 in Porter Creek is deeply embedded with rock and would require extensive blasting to develop the property. The Yukon government currently owns this site and the residents worry that it will be transferred to the city without provisions for ensuring their safety. They have written to the minister asking that he take steps to ensure that their homes, as well as the nearby Porter Creek high school, will be protected from flying debris.

What steps will the minister take before this land is transferred to the city for development and ensure that these residents are protected from flying rock?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Certainly, we are aware of the situation that happened on the Hamilton Boulevard and there are concerns. Occupational Health and Safety will be part of any process that happens in any part of our community, so hopefully we as citizens and as a contracting world have learned a few lessons from what happened on Hamilton Boulevard and we certainly hope that this kind of work would proceed under the safety net that we have in place here in the territory.

Mr. Inverarity: I have with me the letters from the residents who wrote the minister asking for his help and I will file them now. There are 24 signatures on this. It was the city officials who told the residents in the area that the extensive bedrock would need significant blasting to develop new residential lots. It may be that the new lots and construction could endanger many of the existing homes and are not the best use of the land. Perhaps it should be withdrawn from consideration. Will the minister commit to consulting with the residents before the land is transferred and about other possible uses for this land?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I remind the member opposite that we do work with the municipality of Whitehorse on issues like this. As far as the safety concern, we as the territorial government, or we as Yukoners, try to manage this situation so it doesn't endanger any individual or private property in any way. But we do let the municipality of Whitehorse manage inside the city and we work where we can with them.

Question re: Dawson City sewage treatment

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back to yesterday's debate regarding the cost overruns on the new Dawson sewage treatment plant. It was projected to cost \$24.8 million only eight months ago. The price tag is now \$34.3 million, according to the government's recently released budget.

The MLA for Klondike who was recently promoted to the position of Cabinet commissioner has responsibility for this project. His title also allows him to answer questions in this House. Yesterday he was asked about this project, but he refused to respond. We know anyone on that side of the House can answer for the government's side and I'm sure the residents of Dawson City would like to hear from their MLA. So he'll have another opportunity to respond today.

Why has this project already gone overbudget by \$5 million?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The waste-water treatment plan we're investing in in Dawson City is on time, construction-wise, and it's on budget at the moment. We have a program ahead of us that will involve expanding that unit so that we can put a heating component to it. Of course, that was a \$4.5-million improvement to the existing infrastructure. But at the moment, Mr. Speaker, the project itself is on time and at the last briefing I had, it is on budget.

Mr. McRobb: Well, Mr. Speaker, yes, part of the increase in the price tag of the project is due to the addition of that district heating system estimated at \$4.5 million, but after doing the math, there is an unaccounted-for increase of \$5 million. That's what we need to have explained. That's what this government is ignoring when it responds to these questions.

Now the long-term capital plan tabled by the government last week shows that the budget for this project has ballooned to \$34.3 million. Even accounting for the district heating system being added into the mix, the price of this project has gone up 20 percent in just eight months, yet the minister says the project is on budget at the moment.

Both of those statements are on a collision course. Is it any wonder why this government is broke? Can the new Cabinet commissioner, who is responsible for this project, explain to us why it is so far overbudget?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Again, the project is on time and on budget. We all understand that some of the figures put on the floor by the opposition have very little background to them. Certainly this improvement in Dawson is driven, by the way, by a court order and we are working in partnership with the City of Dawson to address the court order. Certainly, the Liberal Party would understand that because they were part and parcel of that when they were in government eight years ago.

This investment on the ground is a large investment for us as a territorial government. For the City of Dawson, it will address the waste-water issue they have in the City of Dawson. Of course, the district heating system that they have will add another secondary value to the City of Dawson that will enhance the heating for the domestic hot water. It will utilize a local individual for supply of the pellets, the chips that will be used to heat the system. There will be an opportunity for the City of Dawson to heat the water in the swimming pool. There's an opportunity to sell heat to the new hospital as well as the Korbo Apartments. So there is added value to that in respect to ongoing returns from this investment. But as far as the project itself —

Speaker: Thank you. You're done. Thanks.

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, let's examine what is happening here in this discussion. I am asking the government side, in particular the Cabinet commissioner responsible for this project, to explain the unaccounted for \$5 million, yet the Cabinet commissioner is muzzled. We get a response — not an answer — from the minister that completely avoids answering the question. He talks about part of the project we've included in the math.

We don't need more about that. We need to hear about the missing \$5 million. We're using this government's own figures. A contract was awarded last July. We are using the government's own figures, so with the Cabinet commissioner responsible for this project, why is it so far overbudget?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I remind the House today that this is probably — like the opposition — this is part of the reckless spending of the government of the day in investments of the ground in the territory. This, by the way, is a court-driven decision. We worked in partnership with the City of Dawson. The project, as I said to the member opposite, is on time, and, at this point, is on budget. As the member opposite said, a contract has been let. That contract is going ahead. We're working with the contractor to get updates on how the project is going.

For the member opposite, the project in Dawson — the waste-water treatment plant is on time and on budget.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Government House Leader's report on length of sitting

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I rise pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 75(4) to inform the House that the House leaders have met for the purpose of achieving agreement on the maximum number of sitting days for the current sitting. The House leaders have agreed that the current sitting should be a maximum of 32 sitting days, with the 32nd sitting day being Thursday, May 20, 2010.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare the current sitting shall be a maximum of 32 sitting days, with the 32nd sitting day being Thursday, May 20, 2010.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 20 — *First Appropriation Act, 2010-11:* Second Reading — *continued*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 20, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie; adjourned debate, the Hon. Mr. Lang.

Hon. Mr. Lang: In addressing the budget that we're about to debate here in the House — the ongoing discussions that we've had over the last four or five days — I would like to, of course, talk about the budget. First of all, I would like to address some of the comments that the opposition has made about reckless spending. One of the interesting parts about the ongoing discussion with the opposition is that one minute it's

reckless spending, and the next minute it's for requests for increases on issues that they have in their specific ridings, or wish lists.

As government, we have to have a balance, Mr. Speaker, because we of course as government have a responsibility throughout the territory to invest on the ground.

So I'd like to go over a few things that we're doing through joint investments here in the territory, whether it's municipal governments, unincorporated communities or First Nations.

In infrastructure investments, Mr. Speaker, we can start as far north as Beaver Creek. Again, would the Member for Kluane consider the road and drainage upgrades we're spending resources on there as reckless spending? I think if he went to talk to his constituents in Beaver Creek, like we did on our community tours, he would find that the streets and the drainage systems are a priority to that community. So this government has invested resources in that investment for the community of Beaver Creek.

Now Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay — we all understand the necessity of potable water and the issues we have in our communities, upgrading our facilities to bring our potable water up to an acceptable standard, Canada-wide. Again, we have another investment. Is that a reckless spending investment, Mr. Speaker? I don't think so.

The improvements — we as a government are going to work with Burwash on well-head protections. That in itself, Mr. Speaker, is an investment this government is making at Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay. Now this is only infrastructure investment, Mr. Speaker. I am going to get on later in the day, if we have enough time, and I want to discuss what we're doing in Highways and Public Works and other investments we're making here in the territory under the government.

The opposition and the Leader of the Official Opposition calling this reckless spending, reckless investment and irresponsible investments — okay, let's take a look at the community of Carcross, Mr. Speaker. What infrastructure opportunities are there? What investments is this government going to make on the ground in Carcross? Well, we've made some commitments, Mr. Speaker, and part of that is resurfacing the streets and making highway turning lanes.

We understand that Carcross is getting a lot of tourist pressure now that we, this government, have invested on the ground in Carcross to make it a destination point for the railroad for White Pass. Certainly, the community itself — one of the things they brought up, Mr. Speaker, was a residence for the swimming pool staff. That is another commitment in infrastructure this government has made. I don't really think, Mr. Speaker, the people in Carcross would think that would be reckless or irresponsible spending that we would enhance Carcross to have a residence for their seasonal pool instructor and also maintenance individual.

Of course, this government, through its *Solid Waste Action Plan* has improved the management of the waste facility in Carcross. A solid-waste transfer station has been installed over the last six months. I'm not quite sure that the people in Carcross would call that "reckless spending"— or, by the way,

"irresponsible spending". I think it's an investment that will bear fruit a long way into the future. It's how we as Yukoners are going to move forward in managing our solid waste in the territory.

Water system upgrades in Carcross — again, an issue that we heard when we were in Carcross, and those investments have been made. They're not reckless investments, not irresponsible. They are necessary. We tend to listen to the opposition, especially the Liberal opposition, talking about: "They focus on Whitehorse." It doesn't matter what we talk about, they get back to Whitehorse. I understand they represent ridings in Whitehorse, but we as a government have responsibilities not only to improve situations in the City of Whitehorse — and we don't diminish the need to do that in Whitehorse — but our other responsibilities are outside of Whitehorse.

The opposition is against building a hospital in Dawson City. Why would that be? Why would we not leave the people in Dawson and the health care system in Dawson City, so they could live in their own surroundings? Now it's not a 400-bed hospital, Mr. Speaker, but it's a facility that the individuals in the opposition call "reckless spending".

We have a hospital in Watson Lake, and have had a hospital in Watson Lake for 30 years. Somehow, replacing that facility is "reckless spending". So the people in Watson Lake don't have a facility to go to; they have to come to Whitehorse. Now, Mr. Speaker, on the investment — the "reckless spending" — if in fact we don't do this in places like Dawson City and Watson Lake, we're going to have to expand the beds in the City of Whitehorse to accommodate the individuals who are utilizing the facilities in Dawson City and Watson Lake. So I will leave that alone. But again, "reckless spending".

In the community of Carmacks — in partnership with the municipality and the First Nation — again, there's a wastewater treatment facility. Now, Mr. Speaker, in this conversation we're having this afternoon, I'm not going to bring up figures, because we can go through that during line-by-line discussion of the budget. I'm just bringing up things that this government is proposing to move forward on — the wastewater treatment facility in Carmacks — another investment — not reckless. I don't think if you talk to the people in Carmacks they would find it irresponsible that we would put money into the wastewater treatment facility — nor do I, as the minister. I do travel to these communities and I do talk to the individuals, whether municipal government or First Nations, and prioritize what we can do to make their communities better to live in.

Now, the wastewater collection system improvements — that's being done in the municipality of Carmacks. This government, recklessly, is replacing the Nordenskiöld bridge, according to members opposite. Now, that's a safety issue; that's not irresponsible. That's not reckless. That's a fact. We have to replace the Nordenskiöld bridge. We're enhancing it to put a walkway on it too — because there are people who walk back and forth across the bridge — another safety issue. Not reckless. This government isn't making reckless investments in Carmacks. They're doing exactly what a good government would do — addressing the issues that are brought up in the community.

Now, the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation water-delivery fill station. Another investment in partnership with the First Nation. They need that, Mr. Speaker. I have talked to the First Nation in the past. This is a priority to them. This is needed in the community. They don't think it is reckless to invest the money on that specific issue. They think that it is good governance and certainly we think on the same level as municipal and First Nation governments.

The City of Dawson — again, the member opposite talks about the waste-water treatment and all the issues we do in Dawson City. The Dawson water system study is another investment we have in conjunction with the municipality of Dawson. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation community hall energy efficiency overview is necessary. That was brought forward by the First Nation and also by the municipality of Dawson. And of course, the things we discussed today about the waste-water treatment plant. The district heating system — think about a massive investment like that in the community of Dawson, Mr. Speaker. Dawson City — I am sure everybody in this House understands the location of the City of Dawson — permafrost and all the issues that Dawson City deals with every day. The opposition would not invest, I imagine, in a waste-water treatment plant. We as a government were court ordered to go to work on this issue. Court ordered, Mr. Speaker, and we're doing exactly that in partnership with the City of Dawson.

The district heating system, again, I'll say to the members opposite is a great improvement for the City of Dawson — secondary industry for individuals who work in the City of Dawson. It'll be pellet driven. The waste from the actual sewer treatment plant will be burned in this plant, this district heating system. It will make the swimming pool, the water, in season. It will supply heat to that; it will supply heat to the new Korbo Apartments, which is another 20-unit improvement for the City of Dawson — another investment this government has made.

I guess reckless spending is looking at putting a Yukon College in Dawson. I mean, according to the opposition, why would you need a Yukon College in Dawson City when they could go to Yukon College here? Why do we put these district colleges in communities? Why do we invest in Pelly and these other communities? I mean the argument to them is that Dawson City doesn't need a hospital, because that's reckless spending. Why would Dawson need a Yukon College, an expanded facility for the City of Dawson? Well, this government believes they do.

This government believes that people should be able to live and work and learn and die in their community, Mr. Speaker. With the hospital in Dawson — not only is this government looking at a new hospital, but we're committed, as we move forward, to expand McDonald Lodge so the seniors in Dawson can have a better facility. By the way, Mr. Speaker, that facility is utilized for north Yukon. A lot of individuals — seniors, elders from Old Crow — go to Dawson. They're much more at home in Dawson than they are in the City of Whitehorse. That isn't "reckless spending"; that's investing, Mr. Speaker. That's the difference between us and the opposition. The opposition say that we — this government — are irrespon-

sible for investing in our communities. I don't think the communities think that way, Mr. Speaker. The individuals in Dawson City like Dawson City. Again, I will argue to the point of hospitals. Watson Lake has had a hospital since 1978. Somehow, the opposition thinks we should turn that into a nursing station, and the people in Watson Lake should be some glad to come to Whitehorse, and they'll get mileage. They can travel from Watson Lake to here to get their cancer treatment, and they can drive back. That's what the opposition wants them to do. They don't want Yukoners to invest in a new facility in Watson Lake at all. The opposition says that's reckless spending.

Going back to Dawson City and the investment we're making on the ground in infrastructure, we're investing in upgrades for the Top of the World Highway upgrades. That money is being spent to upgrade the highway between Dawson City and the Top of the World Highway — reckless spending.

Again, we'll go back to the Korbo Apartments. I heard this morning on the radio that that's seniors housing. I would like to correct the radio station, and say that that is Yukon Housing Corporation social housing. It's not seniors housing. Seniors can live in it, but it is open to all Yukoners in Yukon housing. We are investing in 20 units in Dawson City and, by the way, replacing a unit that has been condemned. So that's another commitment by this government to put money on the ground in infrastructure.

Deep Creek — the small community of Deep Creek — again, this government is —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Member for Mayo-Tatchun, please respect the rules of the House and don't comment when another member is speaking. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I will move through the infrastructure plan that this government is putting out and that the Liberal Party feels is reckless investment. Well, another reckless investment is the Deep Creek water treatment plant, so the people in Deep Creek can have potable water and be able to live in their community. I think if you surveyed the people in Deep Creek, they wouldn't consider that reckless or irresponsible for a government to invest in that. I think that they're going to be happy with their facility and everybody in the Yukon should have access to potable water. This government is going to work so that we can make it possible for all Yukoners — not penalize people who don't live in Whitehorse. We're going to work with our municipalities and unincorporated communities.

Now, the Town of Faro — that is another community in the territory. A lovely little community, if somebody wants to travel and look at a beautiful setting and a hard-working group of individuals who live in the Town of Faro. This government has learned in our tours that there is a need for some seniors facilities. Think about that. People in Faro are going to have some seniors facilities — "reckless spending," "irresponsible spending."

But when I talk to the people in Faro about the new six units they're getting, they're pretty happy with that kind of "reckless spending". They're going to enjoy living in their seniors compound in Faro that this government is building for those people.

Certainly we're looking at the recreational facilities in Faro. We have to replace a boiler — another thing brought up by the community. The importance of that is that Faro has a great community recreation facility, and we stepped up and asked, "What are your needs?" That's not "reckless spending." I don't think it's irresponsible to put a new boiler system in the recreation building in Faro. I'll certainly run it by the community of Faro so they can put the question before the recreation association in Faro — I wonder if they think that's "reckless spending".

Certainly as we move forward here, Mr. Speaker, let's look at the needs of other communities and the partnerships we've done. Marsh Lake — finish up the intake water-treatment supply. That has been a very lengthy project that this government took on two or three years ago. It's coming to an end and Marsh Lake is going to have access again to potable water. Talk to the people in Marsh Lake. It's going to shorten the distance they travel to collect their water and, by the way, they can drink the water when they collect it. Potable water — clean, healthy water. Not reckless spending, Mr. Speaker. Not irresponsible spending. We listened to the community of Marsh Lake. The opposition should go out into these communities and talk to these individuals and find out what they think is reckless and irresponsible spending.

The community of Mayo — we've worked with the municipality of Mayo for many years. In fact, we invested in a brand new recreation complex for that community. If you talked to the mayor and council and the First Nation in Mayo, and you looked at the old complex that they had for recreation in that town — I walked through that and I lived in Mayo at one point. I walked through that with Mrs. Hutton and I said to the Premier and my fellow members, if any community needs a new rec-plex it's Mayo, because guess what? They took care of their last rec-plex. It was clean, it was organized.

Mr. Speaker, we put the money on the ground. We built that community in partnership with the municipality in Mayo.

If you talk to the municipality or the First Nation, they don't consider that reckless spending. That investment was put on the ground there for a reason. It is to build a better, healthy community in Mayo. This government made that investment, in partnership, by the way — not driven by the territorial government, recklessly. It was driven by the municipality's needs and the First Nation's, in partnership. We did it, we resourced it.

Today, when you go to Mayo, you can look at the complex there — well-maintained, clean, well-organized, beautiful little swimming pool, all built in conjunction with the community of Mayo.

Now, as we go through it, another investment in Mayo is the recycling centre. We are working with the town there. They feel there is a need to replace the centre itself. I certainly look forward to the opening and the improvements we're making on the ground there.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, another reckless expenditure according to the opposition is the Mayo B transmission line and, of course, Mayo B itself. The community of Mayo — in all of my meetings that I've had with them and the First Nation — is very excited about the opportunities that this investment is going to make for the community — not only the First Nation, but the community of Mayo.

By the way, it's a great investment in Yukon's infrastructure that will improve our lifestyle and access to green energy. Again, it's considered reckless spending by the opposition; this side of the House thinks it's sound investing in the Yukon's future.

Now, a little community like Mendenhall — the members opposite think it's reckless spending. We've got to look at the community water supply. Another issue: potable water. This government, in unincorporated communities, is prioritizing where we're going to invest our money for potable water.

I certainly would like to take a moment here to thank the Department of Community Services for all the hard work they've done with our municipalities, with our First Nations and the unincorporated governments in the territory to prioritize where we could spend money as we move forward on infrastructure over the next seven years.

In the community of Mendenhall it was potable water, the community water supply. But in Mount Lorne — Mount Lorne is going to get a new Zamboni storage area. I guess another wild investment — reckless — Annie Lake Road is going to be upgraded. Is that a good investment for the people of Mount Lorne?

I'm going to go and talk to the people in Mount Lorne and see what they think about the money put in the budget to address the investment in Annie Lake Road — one of the requests I've had over the last three years, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day, we've answered those needs and we are going to invest in that.

Certainly, it will give the opposition as we move forward on the budget ideas on where they would like to slash. You know, this reckless spending — maybe they could give us a list of recommendations of things that we shouldn't do in the budget, okay?

The community of Old Crow — a very important community in the Yukon because it's our only community that doesn't have road access. We're certainly working with the First Nation there — a self-governing First Nation. Of course, their needs in Old Crow have been addressed to us in partnership with our First Nation. The road upgrades in the community — the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has mentioned that many times. I don't think if we talked to him, he would describe the \$1.5 million or the investment we're making on the ground in the road upgrades in Old Crow as irresponsible, as reckless.

The community of Old Crow needs the resources to upgrade the roads. This government, in partnership with the community, is going to do just that.

Another issue we have in the community is solid-waste facilities, which need organization and upgrading. This government has put money in the budget to do just that.

Now, another great improvement for the community of Old Crow I'd like to bring up is the advantage of getting a research station there — another investment this government has made in partnership. We're going to move forward on this and work with the First Nation to have the research centre up and running. I'm looking forward to that.

I don't think that anybody in Old Crow would think that was reckless spending or irresponsible. I think that's an opportunity for the community of Old Crow.

Pelly Crossing — the member from Carmacks, Pelly Crossing — what are we doing in Pelly Crossing in conjunction with the Selkirk First Nation? Well, we're going to paint the bridge. I'm sure the member opposite would consider that reckless spending, but it's maintenance we do on our bridges across the territory. The Pelly bridge needs the resources put in it to bring it up to a standard that's safe for the travelling public. It's not reckless spending. It's not irresponsible.

Selkirk public workshop — another investment this government is making in partnership with the First Nation.

Yukon College — now, why would we want to put a Yukon College campus in Pelly? All those guys could get on the bus and go to Whitehorse.

I mean, that's an option, Mr. Speaker. This government says that we as a government would like to look at an expanded Yukon College in Pelly, and we're going to do just that — and, by the way, in partnership with the Selkirk First Nation. I'm sure that chief and council would tell the member opposite that they're in total agreement with the investment on the piped water system — again, potable water for the community, safe drinking water. They wouldn't consider that at a meeting — wouldn't stand up and say that's reckless spending or irresponsible of the government of the day? No, it's investing in infrastructure in our communities.

The little community of Rock Creek — again, water upgrades. A constant question out in our community is, how we are managing our potable water? Rock Creek, the residents there — we understand the things they went through last year with the flood and all the other issues they had. We certainly are going to address the water supply upgrades there in the community. We don't consider that reckless spending or irresponsible. That's an investment.

Ross River — another partnership. It's another little community that really struggled sometimes but is improving. Every time I have gone there over the last five years — I go to Ross River and it is great. It's great to see the fresh attitude in the community, the opportunities in the community, and the First Nations working with the community. It's a great improvement. I look forward to working with Ross River into the future. They're great to work with. Again, water — so we are again addressing the issue of water, the potable water in the community, including a building for the storage for the water truck. So, that's an upgrade.

Community centre — they've requested some help in the community for the community centre upgrades. Good news — this government is going to invest in that, with partnerships — unincorporated community, First Nation — and improve the

atmosphere in the community — a great investment. Not reckless; not irresponsible — not on this side of the House.

I'm looking forward to the debate when we talk about line items here and get the recommendations from the opposition of what the member opposite would slash from our investment in the community of Pelly. What should we look at in the Village of Mayo — in the municipality? A lot of those things we do in the communities — they could drive to Whitehorse. Yukon College — we have a big Yukon College. But, no, we're going to invest in Pelly Crossing and we're going to put, in partnership — we're going to put a campus there.

Tagish — investment in a solid-waste transfer station.

In Carcross, the Carcross-Tagish First Nation water treatment system — again, another questionable thing was potable water. We're answering their request.

The Village of Teslin — we're building an eight-unit seniors complex there, so people in Teslin can extend the time they spend in the community. Believe it or not, the opposition — the Liberal Party — there are people in the Village of Teslin who want to retire in the Village of Teslin. Isn't that unbelievable? I talked to them — the seniors there. They don't consider the investment in eight units there reckless. Well, now the members opposite — "What's wrong with those people? Why wouldn't they want to move to Whitehorse? I mean, it's driving distance."

What do you think, Minister Horne? But this government has addressed the issue about extending the lives of the people in Teslin so they can live in their community longer.

Again, work on Deadman Creek — a new deck on Deadman Creek. Recreational complex, water closet replacement — those kinds of things. Other investments — working again with the First Nation there on many of their issues.

Opportunity for lots in Teslin, partnership with the First Nation there in expanding our recreational lot facilities — very successful. In Watson Lake, another infrastructure is a 12-unit seniors building. By the way, I did a tour of that the last time I was there, and it certainly is coming along. I look forward to that being in place for the seniors in Watson Lake within the next couple of months.

Now, if we were to go to Whitehorse and look at all the investments this government made in the community of Whitehorse, would you call the new library reckless spending — a brand new facility for the City of Whitehorse? I know how important the City of Whitehorse is to the opposition and we, this government, in partnership with the Kwanlin Dun — their cultural centre, the investment on the ground. It's going to be a massive improvement to the waterfront. We made the move. We're going to have a brand new library for the people of the Yukon. That, according to the staff in the library, was well received — very well received. Not one of them brought up the fact that we should move it to Calgary. They consider it not to be reckless spending; they think it's an investment in the future, and I happen to agree with those individual people who work in our library. One of the best used government facilities in the territory is the Whitehorse Library. They've done a stellar job of — oh, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hardy: I will take you up on your suggestion. Well, it's with great surprise that I'm here to respond to the budget that has been delivered by the Yukon Party government. It's always a joy to listen to the previous minister. His praise of what the government has done in their spending — it's always very interesting to listen to. I know that I would miss it terribly if I were at home and not in the Legislative Assembly. I have really enjoyed representing the people and working with the people in here, and that's all people, whether it's the Liberals or the Yukon Party. I find them all honourable and generally they conduct themselves with a great deal of decorum and grace.

I would also like to recognize the Speaker and Clerk's office as being, I think, a very good example of what can happen, especially in a small jurisdiction, but definitely what can happen in a Legislative Assembly and the work that can be accomplished for the members who rely upon the Legislative Assembly for much of their guidance and funding and explanations — the staff has been outstanding. I know I've had some closer work with them over the last few years, and I've been very appreciative of that. Thank you, too, to the Speaker for setting a good tone here.

I also would like to thank my constituents, the people who have voted for me directly, who have allowed me to continue the work on their behalf, as well as all people of the Yukon over the years. I hope I have done them proud and not let them down. Sometimes you don't know until you go into an election, then you find out what they truly think of you. But it has been an honour to represent Whitehorse Centre. I've always said that Whitehorse Centre is the only true urban riding in the territory. It's the one that most significantly reflects southern urban ridings, especially downtown cores in which there often is high levels of crime and poverty. Many of the businesses occupy that area.

The challenges facing a downtown urban riding in any community — in any city — are huge, and often quite different from a rural riding or a suburban type of riding. Not only are you representing individuals, but you often are representing a multitude of businesses where the owners don't necessarily live in that area, so their investment in that area, of course, is around their business and how it can be enhanced and improved — whether it's roads, or crime, or cleanliness, sewage. It's quite interesting, because I'm dealing with everybody from all the other ridings who come into the riding I represent. I have to represent them — and willingly so — represent their concerns about their businesses. Mixed with that is, of course, the people who have chosen to live in the downtown core and the challenges that we face down there. I live in my riding. I have lived for, I think, over 25 years in the downtown and have watched its evolution and the challenges that we face — whether they're drug and alcohol related or crime, as I've mentioned.

I've also watched the wonderful growth of Whitehorse Centre and the reestablishment of some families back in there, and it would be my hope that in the future more people, more young families, recognize that this is a good place to make their investment and have their children grow up in. I had my chil-

dren grow up there, and I have a great deal of respect for my children. It was a good experience for them down there, and I would like to see a revival of that. Of course, the downtown infrastructure needs repairing, and we would like to see more of an investment both from the territorial and municipal governments to improve the roads and water and sewer conditions. To stimulate better housing for people, whether it's rehabilitating the houses that exist down there, or replacing them and putting in more energy efficient homes. It's an interesting riding, let's just put it that way. I think we could all say that about all of our ridings, but that one, as I say, is probably the most truly recognized as an urban riding in all of Yukon. It has its special challenges and I can go on for a long time; however, it also is a very unique place to live. With the urban gardens that are happening down there — with the contributions made by the Downtown Residents Association and the people on that board — it is definitely improving from when I first moved into that area over 25 years ago.

Now, the NDP's concern around the budget is of course what we've already talked about. We've already talked about it even in Question Period over the last week, and that is the trajectory of spending and, of course, the direction that this government is going in now, which is quite different from what they did in the past and we're trying to find the answers to why we now are going in this direction. When I talk about "direction" I am referring to debt that's being accumulated — up to \$167 million in debt — if not more — all being decided within one year and being allowed to be absorbed or created under corporations. Well, it doesn't matter if it's under a corporation or not; it still is the taxpayers' debt. It has to be paid by the taxpayers.

There is a deficit and I suspect, very strongly, that it is going to be a bigger deficit at the end of the year than what we have seen previously in front of us. If that is the case, then everything that has been said to date, from the Yukon Party side, the government side, is questionable. But, if it is not, that is good. If it is not, it's good. We don't need a deficit. We shouldn't be running a deficit nor should we be indebting our future generations for our actions today. Just as we should not be passing on our environmental contaminations and problems that we have created to future generations, so we should not also be passing on debt and a deficit budgeting system to future generations or future MLAs to deal with. So our position is that there has got to be more accountability. There has got to be more fiscal responsibility in balancing a budget and our concern, of course, is that this government has gone in a different direction in the last year that really does need scrutiny and questioning and explanation on their part of why we are doing this right at this present time, instead of spreading out much of our activities over a greater period of time — four or five years. Why are we front-loading so much in one or two years, only to create a debt that no government in Yukon has ever had in its past? And it's really questionable whether we can pay for it down the road.

We need to remind ourselves that past governments worked with \$200 million, \$300 million and did a phenomenal amount, whether it was Conservative governments or NDP

governments. They didn't have a budget of \$1 billion to work with, and the times were definitely different then. I just looked at the historical comparisons at the back of the budget speech, and it's only going back 10 years. But basically, in 10 years, we've got double the size of the budget. And with double the size of the budget, of course, we have — I would hope — a greater degree of involvement with our territory and society as a government. Plus, we have to remember that there are other levels of government that are contributing to the economy as well.

This budget is over 70 percent, I think, this time around, financed by the federal government through transfer payments. That is a substantial amount of money to be relying on one source. Diversification has always been a challenge in the territory and to date no government has been able to influence diversification very much.

We all know the boom-and-bust cycle in the territory — how it affects communities, how it affects people's lives and how it affects population growth or shrinkage. We can point the finger very simply, looking at the past and historically looking at it in a very truthful manner that, when non-renewable activities, such as mining, dry up in the territory — which it has many times in the past, and then comes back again — the population levels drop dramatically. As activities start to come back through the mining industry, we often see increases in population. Population is very tied to government spending, of course, but it is also very tied to non-renewable activities. That is why it has always been important for the NDP to invest in that sector in which we have a very good record. Many of the programs that exist today in the mining sector were created by the NDP.

Now, we have seen a good period over the last few years that has been very beneficial for the people of this territory. It has allowed a sense of comfort for people to put down their roots in the territory. However, when we talk about population — because it has been brought up many times that the population is growing again — we have to be concerned that the communities, as well, are looked after. We often talk about Whitehorse and all the lots that are going to be coming out and all that stuff. I don't know where all the people are going to come for all of the lots — 2,000 or 3,000 lots in the next few years — but that might happen.

My concern often is, how are the communities doing? Is the population stable? Is it growing? Is the investment in the communities balanced by the government when they are looking at where they're going to do their capital projects and where they're doing O&M? Are we ensuring that our communities stay healthy and financially healthy as well?

There's a lot of work in that area, I think, that still needs to be done. We have a lot of challenges ahead of us, and this budget — like I say, it's a billion-dollar budget. It's double what it was 10 years ago, yet we still miss the mark in a lot of areas. Truthfully, I'm not that interested in going through the budget and criticizing everything that I think should be done or that the government is falling far short on, but I do want to raise a few areas that I think need to be mentioned in here, and hopefully the government hears my concerns.

Well, I'll give some congratulations in certain areas. I'll start off with the congratulations. Next week, there's the — I always call it the poverty summit, but it's the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Symposium. That's what I think it's being called. I would like to put on record that it's something I'm extremely proud of, more so than a lot of the other things that I've done. When I say that I'm extremely proud, I'm proud of being able to work with the government, to work with the Premier and the members across the way and the minister, to find a mechanism that allows the people of the territory to voice their concerns about the challenges in regard to social inclusion and poverty.

That is an indication of a government that is willing to listen to some of us on the opposition side and we on the opposition side putting forward our ideas with the idea that we might be listened to, and then coming together and working on it. I think that's something we can proudly say we did for the people of this territory. In some ways, we put aside politics to make this happen — our partisan politics, I should say; politics always exists.

I can point to the good work that I've had with the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation with regard to one of my volunteer roles I play in the community — Habitat for Humanity. The minister has been extremely supportive of this project. As well, the other ministers in the government have been very supportive of Habitat for Humanity. I think that is having a very positive impact upon housing and it has continued to grow from its very small beginnings. A meeting in a library room was how it started.

With the support of the government and the ministers, and particularly the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation, Habitat for Humanity is building a triplex downtown that is probably leading edge for energy efficiency. It is also an extremely nice environment for families who would never own a home because of their income levels. We are building it for half the cost, if not even less, than what is normally out there. Therefore, with the government's involvement, we are delivering houses at a lot cheaper rate than anybody in the territory. That comes about because we partnered with different levels of government, with the community — with the business community that contributes substantially to the projects — with the volunteers who come out weekly and do the work on the projects. We are able to build community at much less a cost.

I hope the future is going to be very bright in that area because what is happening in that kind of partnership and involvement by the communities shows that there are different ways to deliver housing than just dollars and cents — and recognizing that we are trying to contribute to reducing the amount of energy that's used to operate a house. I think this triplex is going to be an example that can be held up for many, many years. Hopefully, more people will use that model that we're using with the support of Yukon Housing Corporation, FSC Architects and Engineers, the City of Whitehorse, and all the businesses and many other groups and individuals that I'm probably forgetting, to bring that about. That's happening in my riding and is something I'm very proud of. Those are just two examples of working together, and there are many more.

The NDP's motions of *Landlord and Tenant Act*, legislative renewal, *Smoke-free Places Act*, SCAN legislation, and the moratorium in the Peel watershed are requests that we've made many, many times. They are all being acted on by this government, and for that I thank them.

I want it on record that when we work together, there are a lot great ideas out there and we can accomplish a lot for a lot of people. I do have concerns. I am not going to spend a long time talking here; I've probably already spent too much time. I'm just going to go through a few departments and suggest some ideas.

Yukon Housing Corporation — I will start with them. I think there should be a more cohesive strategy about what they are doing, what they are capable of doing, and what direction they want to go in, and a greater degree of involvement with the local people to identify the needs in the communities — not just in Whitehorse, but an overall Yukon strategy that is developed by the people, in conjunction with Yukon Housing Corporation and with the good people within that department, and the minister leading it. I think that could happen. And I think that would be something that we, down the road, should coordinate and move forward with. There are challenges with the federal government. They have definitely supplied a substantial amount of money in the territory in this area. But there is no question about it — there are going to be changes and cuts, and our housing needs up here should be coordinated in a manner that delivers the best type of housing for the most amount of people, at the least amount of cost.

There are a lot of creative thinkers up here, and I think we need to engage those people to move forward. Of course, working with other First Nations or working with other governments — this is First Nations and municipalities — will help that as well, because there's a lot of money out there that may not be being used wisely.

Of course, Yukon Development Corporation — I am very concerned about the debt that's being accumulated in that corporation in a very short period of time. I do put it on record — I do support the line, the connection to tie the grid together. It's something that — when I was on the board of the Yukon Development Corporation, I supported way, way back. Probably, if we had done it then, it would have been a lot cheaper. But, of course, that's only in relation to having a lot smaller budget as well. So, maybe it all works out in the end. But the Mayo B is very, very expensive, and my concern is that there's not enough new investment and research being done by the Energy Corporation, under the Yukon Development Corporation, that would point to a future that's broader than just hydro.

I believe, and I've put this on record before, that we should pick a few communities that will never be connected to the grid.

Old Crow — I can't ever see a line being taken up there. If it happens in 30 years, of course, somebody can say I was wrong, which is perfect. Ross River — I don't see being connected to the grid, or many of the other smaller communities. We need to look at working with those people to come up with solutions that would lessen the amount of diesel we use in

those communities. I think water, wind, solar and geothermal are all ideas that would work.

I recently read a report from Yukon Energy Corporation that says that the most we can get out of wind would be 30 percent of a reduction — or that would be able to contribute 30 percent to the grid. Well, if we just used that figure of 30 percent, can you imagine the amount of money you would save on fuel transportation to Old Crow, if we can reduce the running of the diesel by 30 percent? That's an investment just on wind that could truly happen and would pay for itself in the long run.

I don't see any of that happening with the Yukon Energy Corporation. I see too much money and too much direction on one or two megaprojects and, though I think they will in the long term be beneficial on some levels, I think it's too narrow-minded and too shortsighted in that area.

Women's Directorate — there are a lot of issues out there in this area and a lot of concerns. There needs to be more attention paid to the culture within our society with regard to the role women play. I believe that, on a positive note, we need to recognize the fact that women's approach to family and politics differ from men. Their contributions, at times, are far greater and are of far more benefit for the society — how they interact with each other and find solutions. We need to praise that and we need to emulate it. From a man's perspective, it needs to be emulated, I think, more. They are definitely less aggressive and more consensus building, and that is what makes a great community. It's not the aggressive or the forceful nature that men often exhibit in their debates or positions.

I think in school, young girls need to be given greater reasons to be proud of who they are, what they stand for and what they believe in, and be encouraged to speak up and be told that they are as equal as anybody else. I think that is still a challenge. We are challenged definitely by the abuse and violence that exists in our communities, which are still at extremely high levels. We need to continue investing in that area to address it as much as possible. So much of it can be addressed through just pure education. That needs to be part of our education package. I will get to education in a minute.

Tourism and Culture — it is an area that we are always trying to grow, and government has done some good work in that area. But like most things, the economy affects tourism quite a bit and we can only try to market the Yukon with its uniqueness that it does have — the wilderness — in a light that attracts more people from around the world. We do have a lot of very good people working in the industry who have a lot of ideas that should be listened to and it can continue to grow.

Culture — of course, we must always recognize all cultures that make up the Yukon and celebrate their cultural celebrations. That would draw people. It's an investment that always pays back.

There have been challenges with the workforce, and truthfully we have apprenticeship programs that pay people for training and we should have a greater degree of apprenticeship programs within Tourism and Culture and continue to highlight that.

Public Service Commission — the biggest complaint I ever get about the Public Service Commission is about Yukon

people trying to get jobs with the government. It's over and over and over, and I can name hundreds of people whom I've talked to over the years, who were born and raised here. They went out and got their schooling, higher education, came back and the government hired somebody from Outside. Same education — but they hire somebody from Outside because they didn't make it past or get through the often very difficult interview process. I've just heard this from so many people in the territory, so many Yukon people. Truthfully, the Public Service Commission may think they're doing a good job and they may be doing a good job on many fronts, but they're falling short in some areas, because there are a lot of young people out there who are just struggling to stay in their home.

This is their home, and we have to be cognizant of that. We want them to stay here. They're the ones who will commit long term — and not just hire somebody from Outside who may commit for three years or five years and then they're gone. We have to look at long-term commitments, and often you can do that by looking at the past.

It's a challenge, though. It's very much a challenge, because you have to be fair, as well, but there are ways to do it. We do it with First Nations. We do definitely try to get as many First Nations employed as possible. That could be improved upon still.

Justice — well, there are so many issues with justice. So many challenges — whether it's policing, the Human Rights Commission — not enough funding for them, changes that are being made, accommodations around that. I'm not going to touch too long on that. My colleague knows the justice area much better, and has probably commented on that already.

Our investment in Highways and Public Works — there are still streets right in downtown Whitehorse with huge potholes and logs sticking out from years ago. You know, right in downtown Whitehorse, we have — I'd say, what they call "old town Whitehorse" — the residential part — unpaved streets. They still put down some kind of oil on the streets. I don't know what it is; it's right in front of my house — and this is right in Whitehorse. The government, I believe, should be working more closely with the City of Whitehorse to upgrade the water and sewer and pave these streets.

But the challenges are also with Dawson City and with all the communities that have many problems. I'm talking more about where people live. The highways, I think, generally are quite well looked after, but in the actual towns, city, hamlets, the streets really suffer. I'm not sure why that is. It could be because there are other levels of government and each government is trying to get the other one to take responsibility for it and there are arguments and debate over that; but frankly, this is where people live, where they drive, where the kids play — a lot of kids still play on the street. We need to take a closer look at what is happening in our rural communities, right in the areas where people live as well as the City of Whitehorse.

Health and Social Services, the biggest budget item — there are huge challenges in this area, and we have talked about some of them already and we'll continue to talk about them. Of course, our debates over the last week have been around the debt that has been allowed to be attached to the Hospital Cor-

poration. I say "attached". We're allowing the Hospital Corporation to go into debt to the tune of something like \$67 million. My question very simply around that is: where does the money come from? They don't generate any money so where does the money come from? Of course, it comes from the government. The government has to collect it from the taxpayers. The argument, of course, is hospitals in Dawson City and Watson Lake. We are not opposed to putting in better buildings, but the NDP's position has been that collaborative care facilities would better serve the communities than general hospitals.

Many of the provinces have cut back on their regional small hospitals and put in different types of facilities, because they were too expensive to run. We seem to be going in a direction that is going to increase the costs. Our question, of course, is the O&M and the staffing. Where does the staffing come from for these hospitals, whenever they get built — because it's still quite far down the road? I was just talking to a person today in regard to the facility for visiting specialists in the health professions that's being built down the road — I think that's about a \$17 million or \$18 million building. How much would it have cost to build four or five houses? Definitely not \$17 million or \$18 million. We're talking about residential facilities for them to stay in. So, what exactly is being built and put in there? My understanding is that the government is going to be renting space out of there. Is that how they're going to pay for the debt? We need more explanations in that area.

On the health care side of it — of course, home care's a big concern for people. There's indication that user fees and privatization, as the Premier's speech has indicated, is something that will be looked at. The review that I read, "*Taking the Pulse*", indicates very clearly that people don't want that, so why is it being done? If it's not being done, why was it said? There are a lot of questions in this area.

Autism — it's such a huge area and I don't have very much time; I think I have about five minutes left, but I've got 12 more departments to even touch on. It is amazing 40 minutes can go by so fast when you are deeply engrossed in something that affects people's lives so much.

Finance, of course — the government is running a deficit and the government is going in debt. That's all I have to say. This is not the direction we should be going in.

Environment — there is definitely not enough investment in the environment, and I'm very worried that this government continues to pay lip service to anything regarding the environment. We have some huge challenges there that are going to be inherited by people who follow us. There are challenges around health in the environment; there's the health of the wildlife; there's health of people whether it's water, sewer, and air quality. It is subsistence living, the quality of life that you've had in the past will be altered because the wildlife has been affected by development.

The Yukon — I wouldn't say it is pristine any more, but it has marketed itself as the great wilderness; and yet, at times I feel we just treat it very poorly, and we may lose that and if we lose that it is definitely going to affect tourism, but it is going to affect the quality of life and the reason people live here.

Education — what we teach in schools, we need to ask ourselves what is important in the full development of a child? It's not just math, not just English, not just French, not just other languages, but what makes up a full child and what is needed. We raise our children and we try to give them skills that allow them to think clearly, to be analytical, to have self-esteem, to be engaged in our society, to be a productive member of our society. We encourage trades and university and college training. But, we don't do enough physical education. There has been a change there. They have found that half-an-hour of physical education a day will often stimulate the child's ability to learn. Why don't we do that? We used to do it. That has changed there.

There are different ways to teach that should be explored. We've got the MAD program, experiential science and a few others that have been very beneficial for a lot of kids. My kids took part in those programs and it was very beneficial for them. We need to expand that. We need to consider it, but we need to have a great open mind in this regard and not get so channelled or so funnelled into the basics and then try to get them into universities. We need to recognize the strengths that each child has and feed on those strengths. Where they're weak, we need to stimulate them and help them.

The trades need to be promoted more, and maybe we need to allow kids to get into the trades at an earlier age, even while they're in high school. It has been done in other countries around the world and it has been very beneficial. We do have a shortage in the trades. Why don't we recognize that and move education in that area? But there are so many challenges in education and so many expectations by people. These are just some ideas.

It is good to see the child and youth advocate office in the budget. That is something that I think everybody in this Legislative Assembly has supported, and I wish the best for Andy Nieman, who was hired to lead the child and youth advocate office. I wish the best for him and his office in the work that needs to be done in that area.

The Office of the Ombudsman continues to do their work, and that is an important part of our work in here.

There are a few other departments that I haven't been able to touch on, but I am out of time. So, I thank everybody. It is wonderful to see everybody back in here, and I hope the best for the future for everybody.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure, as well, to be able to respond and make some comments. As usual, we prepare comments to make at this time and then, as the debate goes on, information comes up and comments are made and everything sort of changes.

It has been a great pleasure, over the past seven and a half years, to serve Porter Creek North. Porter Creek North is unique, just like every other riding. It has its own challenges and a wide diversity in its population, and a lot of good things that would come out of that.

I certainly appreciate the ability to serve over that amount of time. I do have a number of people who, from time to time, have said, "What do you enjoy about the job? What do you like

about it?" What comes to mind immediately is just when you think that you've seen the most bizarre possible scenario, you go to work the next morning, and something is even wilder and more bizarre. It has been an education. It has been a huge education.

What has also been an education is the amount of mistaken information that comes out. People hear information and often take it as gospel, when the reality isn't even close. An example of that, that just comes to mind — that's crossed my desk — is an article in the *Whitehorse Star* last week that stated: "Capital funding for the Department of Economic Development is down 21.3 percent". And then another article in the same paper said: "Economic Development is slated to receive nearly \$3 million less than what it actually costs to run the department."

Well, reporting on budgets is always very tricky, particularly as you have the budget main estimates at the start of the year, budget forecasts that include all expenditures that the department had completed during the year.

The budget forecast includes revoted dollars and I'll get to that in a minute. All of these things are changing all through the year. When we do comparisons of the department's main estimates of 2010-11 to the 2009-10 end of year, we did change — and I'm sure questions will come up in line-by-line between capital and operation and maintenance. It's quite unnatural really that all these figures will be significantly different to the revotes.

Revotes are when money has been voted on during the year but hasn't been expended. I will give an example of that. We will be meeting in a couple of days to look at tier 3, the most expensive, so to speak, of the community development fund, and we will be awarding some fairly large grants on that, knowing full well that it's in last year's budget. None of the projects will be done. The money will have to be revoted into next year.

We always take criticism from the opposition — why couldn't you spend it? Well, here's a good example where actual decisions will be made into the next year. If all of this is really clear as mud, you have to look at the main-to-main estimates. It's the only fair way to look at the budget, at this time of year anyway. It's the only thing that makes sense.

When you look at that, our main estimates budget for 2010-11 is more than 2009-10 by approximately \$77,000. So in fact, we have not dropped and lost — we have not cut programs — all of the things that the opposition has or I'm sure will claim. The reality is, the budget is up in the Department of Economic Development. I give that as an example of just one of the things that comes up.

There is an article in 2002 — and I can't remember the magazine, Mr. Speaker — it could be *Harper's*, it could be *The Atlantic Monthly* — when we first took government and I had the great pleasure of being appointed to Cabinet and invited to join Cabinet. We were each given a copy of this article. It was written, supposedly, by a member of Privy Council on the federal level — a former minister — to a friend of his who had just been appointed to Cabinet, and it was advice. It was about eight pages long.

It was sort of advice of how your life is going to change, how your decision-making process has to change and everything else. One of the main things that came out of that article was the fact that you are now responsible for your decisions. You can't say whatever you want because you are going to be held responsible for your decisions. What you do can't be speculation. It can't be sort of guesswork; it has to be accurate. The officials in the various departments are just an incredible group of people. We always joke that I couldn't do their job and they claim that they couldn't do mine and that is probably accurate. They do an amazing job of giving an analysis of every possibility, and usually there are five scenarios. What if we do it? What if we do a quarter of it? What if we do half of it? What if we do three-quarters of it? What if we don't do it at all? These are always listed as options with pros and cons.

Well, if we do option 4, here is what is likely going to be a good thing, and conversely, what is likely to be a bad thing. With all of this information, then it becomes Cabinet's decision to say how we're going to handle this and what is the best thing for Yukoners. Where are we going to make these decisions?

Again, the decisions — you will be responsible for them. I will give a few examples of that. A commission, council, group — I forget what the exact term was — to look at health care and look at health care options. One of the options that would be, of course, user fees. That's not something that this government accepted. That is not what we ever looked at, but quite rightly, it was one of the options presented.

The opposition sits there and says the government has made this decision. The government didn't make the decision; it came out of an options paper. The decision clearly was not to do it. It was sort of like a privatization debate and the great politics of that, Mr. Speaker — take an issue or event that did not happen, that would not happen, that will not happen, would never happen under this government. It is easy for the opposition to claim that these are all things that were looked at but the reality is none of it was — amazingly, when in fact at the end of the day, it doesn't happen, they will claim responsibility for preventing it.

As ministers, we don't have that ability. We have to be responsible for our own decisions at the end of the day. Sometimes that gets frustrating. It's easy to sit back and say, "This parcel of land absolutely has to be protected", but when there are 2,700 existing mineral claims in that parcel, who do you want to sue you? It's easy for the opposition of whatever ilk to say, "Well, you know, we should do this at all cost." But they don't have to deal with all of the lawsuits, with expenses of the lawsuits. They want to talk about responsible spending or reckless spending? I would submit that that's an incredibly reckless approach. Be responsible for your own decisions.

There's a saying in my former profession — I'm getting comfortable with that: no money, no medicine. I would submit that's the same, really, in almost any area. No money, no environment. You can't protect the environment unless you've got the money to do it. One of my great theories over the years has been that people consider politics to be a left-to-right spectrum. I would submit that that's not at all accurate.

I would submit that in fact if you go far enough to the left, you're going to come up on the right, because at the end of the day you eventually have to realize that you've got to pay for it. At the same time, if you go far enough to the right, no matter how far you go to the right, eventually you're going to hit the fact that the social safety net is essential. There is a percentage of the population that needs that sort of social safety net, and it has to be there. Again it's easy to throw statements out on one side or the other — but at the end of the day, as ministers of the Crown, we have to be responsible for making a metered, a considered, a responsible decision, and that isn't easy. As I say, you can come up with some pretty bizarre situations at the best of times.

On the radio today I heard someone saying we should be building affordable housing — \$75 a square foot; why aren't we doing this? One of the things that we should be doing on that should be pre-built housing, modular housing, but we did that. We built the modular housing at the athletes village. It came in at about \$225 a square foot. The other territories and CMHC was actually quite shocked that we came in so low. It worked for that. Again, contrary to what the opposition claims, that was on time. The games went on time, without a hitch, and it was on budget. Now, \$2.7 million was budgeted initially for housing the athletes. Well, it was pretty clear very quickly that that wasn't going to work, because according to the terms of reference of the games, all athletes had to be housed in the same place; they had to eat from the same kitchen; they had to deal on a level playing field. You can't do that; you can't do it by scattering them through houses or by borrowing hotels. I mean, even if the hotel thing sort of worked, then where are you going to put anybody who wants to see the games? You've just wiped out all your hotel space.

So it became obvious that this government had to come up with a better plan. They ranged from putting in ATCO trailers or modular trailers. The best estimate on that was \$17 million and the trailers would go down the road as soon as that was over. There was another proposal to put in the trailers and put in all the staff — bring them up by barges. You would have to bring all the staff up, I'm assuming, not by barge, but they would come in — they would feed; they would clean; everything would be done on contract. Then at the end of the day, everything would be shipped back out.

That came in, I believe, at \$24 million. Instead, for \$34 million — on time, on budget — we created 48 apartments, social assistance housing, as well as a complete building that provides for married students. It basically belongs to Yukon College; we turned it over to them. It is their choice how to use it, but allows families to come in from communities, for instance. It was built very, very well. I remember, just before the last election, one of the media claiming it was a collection of trailers. That was actually in this House as well, "It's a collection of trailers. We brought trailers up." I called the reporter, who is no longer here, but I do have a lot of respect for her, and I said, "After the election, I want you to come up with me and point out where these trailers are." I took her out and she did. And she couldn't find any place that she could identify as a trailer in that complex. It was claimed by the media, it was

claimed by the opposition, vehemently all the way through, that the athletes village — the 48 units for social housing for seniors — was in the wrong place. It was terrible. Nobody would want to live there. Mr. Speaker, we didn't even advertise when it was available. We had that fully subscribed, along with a waiting list before we opened the door, and we still have a waiting list of people waiting to get into that facility. Again, that was not a good analysis. I don't mind criticism, but criticism for criticism's sake, without any factual information — or even an attempt to get the factual information, is sad.

I thank the Member for Whitehorse Centre for his comments about the Yukon Housing Corporation, because he has been involved in that — and his colleague from Mount Lorne — I have tried to keep involved in that, and their input actually has been very, very helpful. The comments have come from the Official Opposition — the Liberal Opposition — that we're not building social housing. I took a little bit of a look this morning, and if you go back to 1993, it started out with Whitehorse row housing — 11 units, and then we put a duplex in Carmacks. We put seven duplexes in Whitehorse in 1994, and the so-called gateway housing, which is 39 units. Now, that's a total of 66 units in 1993 and 1994. I won't point out the political party that did that.

From 1994 on until the athletes village: zero. I don't blame the New Democratic Party government; they were busy building a curling rink in Elsa, although I don't think that actually worked out very well for them. The Liberal government — 22 months I think it was — the shortest lived majority government in the history of the Commonwealth of Nations. They didn't really have the time to put anything together, but even there, there was nothing on the books. I think criticizing this government for its development of social housing is a bit — well, it is a bit —

In 2007, 48 units in the athletes village. We did the nine units in the Haines Junction seniors facility and we're looking now at the so-called Whitehorse affordable family housing, 32 units. We have six units being built in Ingram, the Watson Lake seniors 12 units — these are all new units. Teslin, eight and Faro, six. A very large number when you really start looking at 2002, compared to where we are now.

We have 35-percent increase in social housing units and yes, much of this is aimed at the seniors. Well, Mr. Speaker, that was certainly identified as the biggest need that we had. What people forget about is the fact that most of these people were in housing somewhere and as they moved out, other people who were on the waiting list moved in. So they ignore the cascade effect on that, but that is something that you can't. Other projects that we're looking at in this coming year — the Alexander Street Lodge will be replaced. There are 13 apartments in there right now. It will be replaced by 30 units — an increase of 17. The Korbo Apartment replacement. Well, it has 13 in it right now and we're going to replace it with 19 — a net gain of six.

We're going to build in Abbeyfield. I invite anybody listening to do a Google on Abbeyfield housing. It's an incredible pet project of mine, I will admit it, but it will provide another 12 spaces and that is in the process right now. We will be de-

veloping another project that will run in conjunction with the so-called YACA agreement on Alexander Street with another six units, probably three duplexes, and taking the money that is left, which are federal funds that have to be used — there is no choice. At such and such a date, the bank account is closed — not like the Liberal accounting technique which is basically, "There are cheques left in the cheque book, so there's got to be money there."

We have plans and are making arrangements to look at double-wide trailer replacements — up to 15 — in a variety of Yukon communities. We'll fill those in according to what funds are left. Again, there is a lot of information going out there that is simply not accurate.

Within these projects, in simply social housing rehabilitation, there is \$7.4 million — \$3.7 million in the 2009-10 and another \$3.7 million in the 2010-11. We have completed roughly 50 percent of the design — 55 percent is already completed in construction, and that will be done. That involves 74 projects in varying stages from out to tender, to awarded, to work underway, to complete.

In 2010-11, there will be 99 projects looking at renovating some of the social housing stock that is in very bad need. That goes back to the fact that the responsibility for social housing has devolved to the provinces and territories.

Unfortunately, at the same time, the federal government, in its wisdom, has decided to start sunseting the money to pay for it. So, we're not — well, we're bad now, but we're not as bad, because in the next couple years, it will drop exponentially and these are some of the discussions that we're having with the federal government that are critical. I mean, we just have some huge issues with that. So, that's something that this government will be working on.

If I look at the whole thing — and actually, before I get sidetracked and start talking more specifically about some of the budget issues on this — again, I was very, very pleased to hear the Member for Whitehorse Centre talking about the medical care system and the health care system. Yes, there are certainly challenges. The minister responsible for Health and Social Services, I think, gets greyer by the day, but he's doing an incredible job. The one thing I said at the time that I would do, and I want to make good on that, is — I think, as a lot of people know, in the month of January, I had either the misfortune or good fortune — it's hard to tell sometimes — of sampling the air ambulance in the medical service with two rather frantic flights.

I have never in my life worked with really anyone that is so competent and caring as the people within — the pilots, the paramedics. I remember the name Andy out of that but I couldn't pick him out of a crowd right now. Of all of them, it was just incredible — a week or something like that in Whitehorse General. Having in my former life been involved with research and administration of what was at the time, the second largest hospital in the world — because Cedars-Sinai in Los Angeles had us beat. So I certainly have a long, involved background working with hospitals, and nobody — nobody — beats ours.

That being said, during the period of global economic uncertainty, our government took action to meet the economic challenge by making strategic investments that provide economic stimulus both in the short term and the long term. This was something that was done not only by the federal government but by provincial and territorial governments.

We focused our efforts on diversification by promoting natural resource development, information technology, tourism, trade, arts and culture, agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, trapping and small business development. There is economic strength in diversity and we have worked very hard to do that.

It's difficult in a small jurisdiction that's a little off the beaten path. We're not in the middle of nowhere, but you can certainly see it from here. These strategic investments were made with the help of Yukoners through the really good work of two deputy minister committees chaired by the Premier in his capacity as Minister of Finance.

The Deputy Minister Oversight Committee on the Economy was mandated to monitor and assess economic needs and identify and analyze Yukon opportunities to address the impacts and identify the key strategic options. The Deputy Minister Committee on Major Capital Projects provided advice on the implementation of our government's capital investment plan for Yukon with the priority objective of ensuring maximum benefit to Yukon.

These committees sought advice from a broad spectrum of economic stakeholders in the Yukon, and their advice formed a great deal of our 2009-10 budget and our 2010-11 budget that has now been tabled.

One of our key election platform commitments was to continue to utilize government budgets and policies to stimulate the private sector economy and promote the development of balanced budgets for the future. The commitment is being met. The capital spending in the Yukon for 2010-11 is going to be over \$600 million when the capital projects of the private sector and other governments and agencies are included.

A good portion of this unprecedented level of capital investment is flowing from a variety of federal funding initiatives under Canada's economic action plan. I bring to the attention of the Official Opposition, of course, that much of this is federal funding that is time-limited. Yes, there will be an impact on what happens to the budget in future years. But it sort of bothers me, Mr. Speaker, when the Leader of the Liberal Party — the Leader of the Official Opposition — starts commenting on his take on the budget. I would submit that his best understanding of the budget can be found on page S-18 which basically states: "This page left intentionally blank."

It is a case of "use it or lose it" and we plan to use it all to maximize and obtain benefits for Yukoners. We've been the most successful, according to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, of any jurisdiction. As other jurisdictions started coming to conclusions of how they would spend the money — we had buildings up. In fact, I think in one case, we actually had people living in one.

The other major portion of this unprecedented \$600-million investment for 2010-11 is flowing from Yukon's rejuvenated mining sector, with an estimated contribution of

\$229.8 million. Now, the Yukon does have a long history of mining, with the mining industry forming the foundation of the territory's private sector economy for over a century, and history is about to repeat itself.

The Yukon is expected to have three operating hard rock mines by this summer. This is a major achievement for the Yukon with mining now fully back in the territory as one of the prime economic generators. By having multiple mines, we're not putting all of our eggs in one basket, for instance. As much as the opposition would like to say that that's not part of diversity, it certainly is. The three mines are the Minto mine, the Wolverine mine and the Bellekeno. The Wolverine mine is a \$250-million investment, and the Bellekeno is \$50 million, and both anticipate production this year.

It was the year of the Yukon at the 2010 Mineral Exploration Roundup held in Vancouver in January. Yukon also established considerable presence at the 2010 Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada convention in Toronto in March. This convention is the largest mining showcase of its kind in Canada, with some 22,000 delegates. It's still too early to predict the level of exploration in the territory this year. The indications are it's going to be another great year with exploration expected to exceed \$150 million. Now, the Department of Economic Development and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources have done a stellar job, I think, in marketing the Yukon, both nationally and internationally.

Our two departments formed a mining investment promotion team and created a new mining Web portal, www.miningyukon.com, which was launched in January. I don't have location right now, but it certainly links from there. We also have quite a detailed mining portal Web site completely in Mandarin Chinese.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: My apologies for not stepping in sooner. The honourable member made a point earlier with regard to the Leader of the Official Opposition and, from the Chair's perspective, it was a personal statement. I have asked the honourable members in this House not to personalize debate. I apologize for not stepping in sooner, but I just wanted to interrupt the honourable member to tell him to please not do that in the future. The Minister of Economic Development has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Understandable, thank you.

The portal focuses on attracting mining investment to the Yukon and contains a wide range of information from community engagement to geological data to job training. Our government's marketing initiatives in China over the years are now paying off, and we've always said that isn't something that you go into, sign a deal and come out of. It is a long-term investment and it really is starting to pay off with investments, commitments, spinoffs that are starting to approach the \$700,000 mark and more is, I would submit, to be expected this year.

The government is committed to encouraging private sector growth and one priority strategy for this is the development of wealth-generating activities in the natural resource sector. I would submit that, again, while we're talking about the mining sector in this particular case, as this develops, that's extra

clerks in every store, that's extra cooks and servers in every restaurant, that's extra taxis on the road — it has a spinoff straight through the community.

Recently Selwyn Resources Ltd. announced its intentions to form a new joint venture company with Yunnan Chihong Zinc & Germanium Co. Ltd. of Yunnan, a province in southwestern China. It's a primary zinc and lead producer to advance Yukon's Selwyn project to bankable feasibility with Yunnan and Selwyn each holding 50 percent of the new company. The transaction is expected to close by May, and the Selwyn project in eastern Yukon is one of the largest undeveloped zinc and lead deposits in the world. Some estimates put that as almost an order of magnitude as larger than its nearest competitor.

Two other deals between Yukon-based companies and Chinese investors have been announced since November 2008: the Yukon Nevada Gold Corporation and China-based Northwest Non-Ferrous International Investment Co. Ltd.

China-based Northwest Non-Ferrous International Investment Co. Ltd. completed an agreement to form the Yukon-Shaanxi Mining Co. Inc. — a new Canadian company that will explore and develop mineral resources in the Yukon.

Yukon Zinc's Wolverine project — the construction expenditures for 2009 alone totalled \$180 million, and an additional \$100 million is expected in 2010. The Wolverine project was purchased by Jinduicheng Molybdenum Group and Northwest Non-Ferrous International Investment Co. Ltd. for approximately \$87 million, and that's before we even start adding up all of the due diligence and time that they spent here investigating that, which I would submit would bring that to somewhere between \$100 million and \$110 million — rather than the \$87 million.

In October, the Yukon government signed a letter of intent to work together — to create a sister-province agreement with the Shaanxi province to the benefit of both jurisdictions. This was followed by a visit to Whitehorse in December by delegates from the Shaanxi People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries to begin discussions with the development of a sister-province relationship with the Yukon. It will be an interesting relationship, Mr. Speaker — the Yukon with a sister province that has a larger population than Canada does.

In October, Economic Development was part of the Yukon contingent attending the NRCan forums and China Mining Congress and Expo in Beijing and Tianjin in China, where a number of forums, information sessions, and networking opportunities took place, profiling Yukon's investment opportunities and strategic advantages.

The Yukon government has sent a contingent to Beijing to attend the annual China Mining Congress and Expo for five years in a row, showcasing Yukon's mineral potential on a competitive global stage. Our meetings and seminars over there have drawn an enormous interest from the Chinese community. And, again, this is starting to pay off with expressions of interest from a number of different companies.

Now, if we look at other different parts of the department — I spent a lot of time on housing, so let's spend a few minutes in Economic Development.

The primary goal of the community development fund, or CDF, is to support projects and events that provide long-term, sustainable economic or social benefits to Yukon communities.

For the 2009-10 fiscal year, the program approved 102 projects, for a total of \$3.2 million. Since reinstatement of the fund in June 2003, after it was cancelled by a previous government, a total of approximately \$20 million has been approved. The CDF has provided significant funding to the Help and Hope women's shelter in Watson Lake to build second-stage housing where women and children can live for up to a year after leaving violent domestic relationships. That project is moving along and construction is either nearing completion or is done. I was in that project a couple of months ago and it was getting pretty close.

The community development fund also funded excellence seminars to develop an integrated approach to linking personal growth and the development of career planning, training and job development for the Teslin Tlingit Council. This year's budget request is \$3.3 million for this fund. I do hope that isn't part of what the Official Opposition considers reckless spending.

The regional economic development fund was established in recognition of the need for effective coordination of planning and economic development efforts by all parties with regional economic interests. Total approved funding for fiscal year 2009-10 to March 10, 2010, is just over \$528,000 distributed among 26 projects. Since its inception, that fund has invested approximately \$2.06 million in 123 Yukon projects.

The Yukon Film and Sound Commission resides in the Department of Economic Development and it continues to administer five film-funding programs and one sound-recording program. Their suite of programs, which includes the film location incentive program, the film training initiative, the film-makers fund, the film development fund, the film production-fund, and the sound-recording programs, were implemented in 2004-05. These programs provide local artists with opportunities to develop their craft and encourage production companies from outside of the Yukon to film in the Yukon. This promotes tourism and creates job opportunities for Yukoners.

When you look at some of the successes, *Anash and the Legacy of the Sun-Rock* — seven episodes of this live action animation television series were filmed in Whitehorse during the fall of 2009 — our government provided \$560,000 in support of the project under the Yukon film production fund. The \$2.8-million project employed approximately 100 Yukoners and the series was written and directed by Yukon First Nations film-maker Carol Geddes.

The other projects that have come out of that — when you start adding them up, we actually took a look at what the benefit was, anticipating that someone would say, "Well, why do you spend this kind of money?" We come up with just slightly short of a \$10 return to the Yukon economy for every dollar spent — 10:1 return. I'll invest in that. I think that's pretty darn good return.

With the support of Yukon government in CanNorth, the development and production of 13 one-minute webisode commercials for filming the Yukon is now underway. The project

will provide training and employment opportunities for members of the Yukon film industry. We're providing Yukon filmmakers and script writers with workshop and mentorship support to develop and pitch film and television concepts under the Film Fantastic program.

We provided \$778,480, to be precise, in funding to 23 film projects to help develop the Yukon film industry and provide opportunities for Yukoners to build film-making careers. There is nothing more satisfying to meet some of the film crews and production crews who come up and say, 'We're here for the Yukon. We here not to look at the place, or see what's there — we're here because of what you've done, a familiarization tour. We're here because we don't have to fly in all of these technical people to support us. You have those people trained here, and they are incredibly capable.' We don't have to look at some of the basic equipment to bring it in; we have it here in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on about the Cold Climate Innovation Centre and strategic industries and on and on and on. I will save that for another day, but this gives you an overview of the budget, about what we're doing with housing, with what we're doing with economic development, and we're looking forward very much to continuing to do that and to continue to develop the economy and the opportunities that are available for Yukoners to take advantage of.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to be very brief in my speech in second reading. I look forward to further debate on the budget and particularly as we get into further briefings upon the budget and more information about what is included in the line items, plus the discussion in Committee of the Whole. My primary questions and interests at this point regard what some of the broader line items and numbers breakdown mean, and what is included within them. As I have indicated earlier and indicated on a number of occasions, my focus as an Independent member will be continuing to represent my constituents and focus on issues that are a priority to them and that includes, of course, projects that are underway or committed to within my riding, projects that have been proposed within my riding and issues of broader importance to Yukon citizens, including my constituents, such as health care, for example, and the funding related to the territorial health access fund renewal and the new territorial health system sustainability initiative. I believe I have already discussed this with the Minister of Health and Social Services.

I look forward to him confirming what that fund would be used for when he is in a position to do so, and hope that — as I indicated earlier in discussion with the minister — those investments will continue to support the valuable programs funded under the THAF funding.

Again, as I said, I've already asked some questions this session. I look forward to asking more, seeking a breakdown of the line items in the budget and more information about whether projects I have requested in the past on behalf of my constituents are funded. And I look forward to engaging in what I hope will be constructive debate in this session. I will note that I was somewhat dismayed that the tone within the

House has already gotten to a level of personalization and unproductiveness that we usually don't see until later in the session.

We had, as you will recall, with a fair bit of fanfare, a discussion in the fall by people on all sides of the House about raising the bar of debate in this Assembly. It would be nice if we could indeed do so. I will do my part in attempting to be constructive and attempting to avoid the temptation to get into those unproductive elements of discussion. So with that being said, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing further comments from the members in this House, particularly further information related to what is in this budget document. I look forward to the debate on other legislation this session and particularly Committee of the Whole debate related to this budget document. Thank you.

Mr. Elias: I'll give it a try, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to address this Legislature and respond to the 2010-11 budget as it outlines a significant direction and agenda for Yukoners to consider. It is a record budget, but firstly, I would like to thank my wife, Tina, and my children for standing by my side during the last four years as the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin. You know, Mr. Speaker, there's been a new addition to the family. I'm proud to say that I'm now a grandpa and little Mary Lily was born last week. She just moved home yesterday and so there's a little bit more responsibility in the household. I'm glad to report that.

I would like to begin with a heartfelt thanks to the people of Old Crow for their incredible support, as always, and to recognize their hard work, because there are many success stories to report and no matter what the issues or concerns are, my constituents are always there participating, solving problems and getting the job done. They have that roll-up-your-sleeves, get-to-work attitude that doesn't seem to diminish. I'm so proud of them with all the hard work they've done and it helps make my job a little bit easier. I'm also honoured to represent and serve such a wonderful, engaged riding.

On behalf of my constituents I want to thank some of my colleagues on the other side of this Legislature for recognizing the importance of the priorities I speak about in this House, because my constituents bear the consequences of our public government action and inaction each and every day.

I say this with respect to my colleagues on the other side of the floor. I appreciate the effort they have afforded me in terms of their time, listening to the priorities of my community and seeking my thoughts on various issues in north Yukon. It is my hope that this dialogue will always be available and will continue.

As I said earlier, there are many success stories to report in north Yukon. We've achieved a *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan* that has been signed-off and completed; it is now being implemented. We've opened the brand new John Tizya Visitor Reception Centre in Old Crow that is just a phenomenal place. It exhibits our Vuntut Gwitchin culture and our land-use history and relationship with our land, water and wildlife. I encourage any visitors who come to Old Crow to go visit the John Tizya Visitor Reception Centre.

You know, we had the opportunity to have the Olympic torch relay come to Old Crow this winter. It was such a phenomenal event from start to finish. I congratulate all the coordinators in relation to that. I did have the opportunity to go down to Yukon Day during the Olympics to celebrate that. My remarks are well-recorded in the media. I am having trouble talking today, obviously, Mr. Speaker; I'm fighting a cold.

You know, too, it was such a proud moment to feel the energy there and the hard work of so many Yukoners at Yukon Day at the Olympics. To put our territory on exhibition for the world to see and to share was quite a memorable experience. There was a moment when the chief executive officer of the Olympics, Mr. John Furlong, actually put on a toque from the Old Crow torch relay and he mentioned some kind words and singled out the community of Old Crow, and that was a special moment.

Our work as a community for the protection of the Porcupine caribou herd's calving grounds in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is an ongoing effort. We continue to send our citizens down to the Lower 48 to educate as many people as we can. We continue to send citizens from our community to Washington, D.C. to speak to the congressmen and women and senators about what a treasure exists in the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd. To this day, big oil does not have a presence there, or industrial development.

The work is ongoing. We're still seeking permanent protection as wilderness in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge on the coastal plain and we will achieve that one day.

More recently as yesterday, as I said in this House, it's encouraging to see that the Porcupine caribou herd harvest management plan has been signed by the Yukon territorial government. Once again, I thank the people who have led this, as well as the Premier and the former Environment minister, all of the parties and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation — especially the technical staff who spent the long hours and nights trying to come to an agreement. They know who they are, and I want to recognize them on the floor of this House.

Just a couple weeks ago — Mr. Speaker, I know you're well aware of the launch of the book from Old Crow called, *People of the Lakes*. It's just a wonderful exhibition of our culture, stories that are thousands of years old that are shared. That book is available within the heritage department of Old Crow and I encourage all to have a read because it is a good read and it's another accomplishment to mention.

A couple of other things — the protection of the Old Crow Flats special management area has been accomplished. Management plans are underway for Vuntut National Park. This is a 4,345-square kilometre tract of land and my community, the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation are co-management partners. This is the second management plan and, once again, congratulations go out to many of my constituents who have participated in guiding the direction and management of Vuntut National Park.

In recognizing my colleagues on the other side of the House — the government members — regarding some of the projects that I've requested on behalf of my constituents, as far back as — I'll call it an election promise the Premier made in

Old Crow to one of my constituent's very specific questions. It has been reflected in this budget, and that's good to see. Whether it's federal money, Building Canada money or territorial government money, it's good to see that the work of my constituents, my own work, and the work of my colleagues in the Liberal caucus and from the government caucuses is bearing fruit in my community.

I would just like to go over some of these that I have found so far in this record budget. There is \$150,000 allocated for the development of sewage treatment option in Old Crow. There is \$100,000 allocated for a land-based education experiential project from kindergarten to grade 9, and I understand that there is more to come for a total of approximately \$300,000. There is \$1.4 million allocated toward roads and drainage in Old Crow, which is very good to see. I understand that there is more to come, for a total of approximately \$4 million.

The Rampart House historic site has once again been allocated \$54,000. I know the men and women who have worked years on that site are very proud of the work that they've done. They have done such a phenomenal job. Again, this historic site has a lot of history to it and it is a wonderful place to travel, downriver from Old Crow.

There is \$46,000 allocated to sports and recreation in Old Crow. I know that those monies allocated to sports and recreation in Old Crow have been maxed out every year, obviously due to our isolation and the efforts put forward by the community.

There is \$67,000 allocated in this budget to the Old Crow youth program and that program has been very successful in not only healthy living, but you know, building good, solid citizens in the community. Again, it's recognized and appreciated. In the budget there is also \$50,000 to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation for intergovernmental relations. There are a couple of line items that have been split up. It's \$4.8 million to be shared among airports in Whitehorse, Dawson, Faro, Burwash and Old Crow. Hopefully, some of that money can be used to further the work on the turnarounds at the end of the airport in Old Crow's aprons. There is \$3.37 million to be allocated among 19 projects in the territory. The Old Crow landfill site is one of those. I've said time and time again that spring is coming and that site really needs to be moved. But hopefully we can work toward that as a community.

These and the many other investments are recognized and appreciated by my constituents and me today.

Just a few minutes ago, the Minister of Community Services was on his feet and he said something to the effect that if any community needs a new recreation complex, it's Mayo, to build a better, healthier community in Mayo, and I agree. I wholeheartedly agree. I'm glad Mayo has been allocated the funds for a brand new recreation complex, and I wish the community well in enjoying that facility. I'd also like to mention that Old Crow has never had the opportunity to enjoy a recreation complex — one that's safe and that will stand the test of time. Our community of Old Crow continues to work toward finding committed partners that will work together with us to achieve and realize a long-awaited and major priority, which is to build a community and recreation complex in Old

Crow someday. Our community recognizes that an investment in a new community and recreation complex in Old Crow will substantially assist in developing successful young citizens, encourage community healthy living and contribute long-term solutions to the needs of the community in social and economic areas. Many volunteers throughout the Yukon have stepped forward and worked with us to accomplish many community initiatives and Vuntut Gwitchin General Assembly resolutions to help make this facility a reality.

To date, we've accomplished schematic designs — several of them actually — numerous feedback and consultation from the community, and the work is ongoing. The goal is still there and the priority is still there. It's a demonstrated need from our community and one day I hope to see our youth skating around on a secure and safe hockey arena, where we have winter nine months of the year, basically.

While I'm on the topic of hockey, it's important to mention that the youth team from the Gwich'in Braves between the ages of 10 and 13 — the boys and girls that participated in the 2010 Yukon Native Hockey Tournament — once again won the gold medal. To watch those kids succeed like that is just unbelievable. Can you imagine what we could do with a full-fledged recreation complex, Mr. Speaker?

It has been proven that having youth, and everyone for that matter, participate in sports and recreation has a positive affect on their individual lives, but it also has a positive effect on their immediate family, especially when youth develop mental, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being by participating in recreational activities because that builds the feeling of accomplishment and success.

Providing these opportunities for youth and all community members to participate creates a springboard effect that leads to a balanced lifestyle, a healthy lifestyle, high achievement in all areas of life and a consistent long-term sports and recreation program. It also decreases the burden on the justice system and social programs, like family violence, for instance. There is also a direct relation to student academic performance and therefore graduation statistics will rise in response.

Mr. Speaker, the nothing-to-do syndrome that the youth in my community have been struggling with for far too long will be virtually eliminated should this sports and recreation complex be built, so they can have another venue and a positive focus for their energies. I ask myself, in this time of plenty here in the Yukon, with a record budget, why is the program and service gap so large between my community of Old Crow and our capital city in terms of employment opportunity, education advancement and youth and recreation?

The Premier today and on numerous occasions mentions, as part of his arguments with Ottawa, that he seeks comparable programs and services. Well, my constituents can't just walk downtown and get their eyes examined or their teeth fixed; they have to wait. They have to plan to get this done and sometimes they have to leave their families to go to Whitehorse to get it done. That's just one example.

My constituents just can't go up to the Canada Games Centre and practice healthy living in a sports facility. Many other rural Yukon communities enjoy the benefits of having

municipality status and therefore have access to certain pots of funding so that they can build municipal recreational facilities. My community of Old Crow does not have access to funds available to municipalities and so the playing field is not level right from the start. However, our community's resolve is strong. Mr. Speaker, millions of dollars have been provided in recent years for recreational facilities in the capital city and other rural Yukon communities. Yet the most rural Yukon community has seen very little investment in this aspect with infrastructure. My constituents have demonstrated a need to help maintain a health community and would like a community recreation facility to become a reality.

Our children are the crux, or reason, why we as parents make the decisions we do. The lack of opportunities for our children is the primary reason why, in one year alone, six families have chosen to relocate from Old Crow to Whitehorse and a couple of families to Dawson. The population migration to the capital city and other rural communities is something my community of Old Crow cannot afford. In the words of an elder in my community: "If we don't do something for these kids, Old Crow will be a ghost town within my time." That was his fear. This is not the future that we want for rural Yukon.

In order to secure our children's future and guard them from the dangers of nothing to do within my riding, we must commit to long-term infrastructure investments that will stand the test of time, with programs and services that are comparable to those provided in our capital city and other rural Yukon communities. A community recreation complex will inevitably support a healthy community and create confident, productive individuals. This is an investment in our most valuable resource — our children in our community.

It is very important to note that all community members of all ages will benefit from having a community recreation complex. This would be a classic example of a long-term financial investment in our children that would result in a social return on our investment that would know no bounds. My community recognizes the importance of youth and community members being exposed to consistent, long-term sports and recreation, healthy living programs, and having a reliable venue at which to gather as a community. We wish simply to enjoy the benefits that many other jurisdictions enjoy throughout the Yukon. Again, we're not asking for special treatment here, Mr. Speaker. We're asking for investment fairness, and it's time that Old Crow had a recreation complex, because we've never had one.

I'm going to shift focus here and discuss some issues with regard to the Porcupine caribou herd. Again, it's very, very important that we have to understand what we're up against here — what the caribou are up against. For eight years, we have been without a crucial piece of information, and that's a photo census or a count of the Porcupine caribou herd. I encourage the new Environment minister and the Premier to do whatever is necessary to get a census or a count of this herd as quickly as possible. We don't know what the annual grand mortality of the herd is, with regard to predation or wounded loss and accurate harvest numbers in Canada and Alaska.

I know this is being worked on in the harvest management plan. We don't know the effect climate change is having on the herd's population. Again, there have never before been such levels of hunting pressure on the Porcupine caribou on the Dempster Highway. The illegal commercialization and selling of caribou meat for profit still exists. Just recently, there were reports that the Porcupine caribou herd has a poor calf survival rate. All of these combined — all of these cumulative effects on the herd — are enormous pressures on the herd. I hope the dialogue continues and we work toward resolving some of these serious issues with regard to the Porcupine caribou herd.

Mr. Speaker, obviously, we don't always have to agree in here, but like many of the MLAs, I hope that tact and diplomacy prevail in our deliberations to solve the problems in making Yukon a better place to live. Again, my constituents of Old Crow have given me the direction to continue moving forward to improve the relationship between our community and this Yukon government by working toward easy victories in north Yukon, so that we can work together to solve the problems that affect us.

You know, we want partners to make our community stronger and to make our community healthier, with a solid economic base.

Mr. Speaker, thank you. Mahsi' cho for providing me with the opportunity to speak here today about this record 2010-11 budget.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I first want to extend to all members of the House appreciation from the government side for their comments and their input in responding to the budget speech and, indeed, the 2010-11 territorial budget. Once again, it's the largest budget in the history of the Yukon Territory.

Many comments have been made on matters such as "reckless spending" and "going for broke". I am sure that, over the course of debate and in the coming days and weeks, the opposition will continue to struggle with the budget itself, because it is in the numbers, Mr. Speaker — the actual fiscal position of Yukon is in the budget. It's in the numbers.

Let me just quickly go over some important facts that allow us, the Yukon Territory, to table such large budgets. I think it's important that we recognize that this budget of \$1,075,000,000 is a budget that's investing in some 34,000 people. I think if we do comparisons across the country, this is quite a significant accomplishment for such a small jurisdiction. When you do comparisons between Yukon and our sister territories when it comes to infrastructure, health care, our education facilities, our recreational facilities, our hydro infrastructure, and the list goes on and on, the Yukon and Yukoners truly have a lot to be grateful and to be thankful for because our quality of life is really second to none.

What gives us the fiscal capacity that provides the options that we have in today's Yukon to invest in the manner than we're investing? Let us go back in history.

There were past governments in the Yukon that chose to expend the fiscal resources of the territory in a way that resulted in some very problematic outcomes. In the first instance, Mr. Speaker, the fiscal capacity of the day before the Yukon

Party government came into office was totally dependent upon the federal government. At that time, there was virtually no economy in the Yukon Territory. There was an exodus of our population. In fact, I believe, that the population in 2002-03 had dipped to one of the lowest levels in the history of this territory. But most importantly, there was no cash available. The reason there was no cash available is because of the choices that governments were making at the time. That's a very, very precarious and dangerous position to put any government in any jurisdiction in. It dramatically limited the options available for Yukon and it completely reduced the government's ability at times of needs, such as the global cycle we are going through today.

It completely reduces the government's ability at times of need to invest stimulus into the economy, to maintain a level of cash flow that would have at least reduced or possibly stopped the shrinking of our economic well-being and the exodus of our population. The fundamental reason for that is the Yukon of the day was cash poor.

The Yukon Party government came into office with a totally different perspective and approach on fiscal management. The first principle of that was cash management. Fundamentally, that means retention of cash.

Secondly, we recognized that the Yukon was not being treated fairly and we set about going to work on addressing that situation by first creating partnerships with our sister territories, by working very hard with provinces to gain their support and then presented the business to Canada on the merits of changing the fiscal approach between the federal government of Canada and the northern territories. There is good reason for that, Mr. Speaker.

The development of the north, the benefits that accrue from development in the north, the benefits that are created by growth in the north and many other factors result in positive returns to the Government of Canada and to the national wealth and well-being.

In changing that approach for the Yukon, much has transpired to bring us to where we are at today. Let me begin by pointing out that the last actual deficit of the Yukon Territory was indeed in the fiscal year ending 2003, and that was the last budget of those past ill-advised fiscal management practices — in this case, by the former Liberal government. It was the last deficit — real deficit. Since that time, from 2004 to 2009 — I'm not referring to estimates here; I'm not referring to projections. These are factors that come from the public accounts of the Yukon and these elements and these factors are the result of audited public accounts.

Since that last real deficit of the Yukon, from 2004 to the last public accounts as tabled in the Yukon for 2009, the Yukon has been in surplus. In fact, the Yukon Territory has spent some \$155 million less than it has taken in. To complement that surplus position, the Yukon also has well in excess of close to \$200 million cash in the bank. That is why we can table once again the largest budget in the history of the Yukon Territory.

Just to close out what the opposition has been predominantly debating this last year, the members cannot and should not draw any budgetary conclusions from merely using one

estimate of a much larger budget because the actual fiscal position of the Yukon includes a number of calculations and contributing factors that present the real and true fiscal picture.

That said, the year ending 2009-10 has not been audited, and the public accounts have not been completed and presented to this House. I would caution all members that speculation, and the drama, and all that goes with it in the political arena, within which we work, is something that one should proceed with very carefully because the spoken word is the ultimate tool of holding one to account. The reason we can table the biggest — once again — budget in the history of the Yukon is because of the fiscal strength and position the Yukon is in, albeit estimated and not audited and not the public accounts concluded, it allows us to do what we are doing this fiscal year, in the massive amount of investments that are taking place in the territory. That said, we all have to recognize that one year ago, a situation evolved globally and has been defined as one of the worst recessions since the Depression of the 1930s.

That situation resulted in the governments of this country — federal, provincial, territorial — coming together to collaborate on a plan and a way forward to better manage Canada's ability to manage our way through the global cycle. It is a significant downturn. Yukon did its part in that regard. We are a partner with our federal government and with the rest of this country, so that Yukoners and all Canadians experience the least amount of impact from the global cycle. Because of the fiscal strength of the Yukon and what we have built up over these seven years of Yukon Party fiscal management and budgeting, I'm pleased to say that the Yukon has experienced little to no impact because of the global cycle. In fact, the Yukon, unlike the rest of Canada, has experienced growth. Our GDP factor is above the national average. Our growth factor in areas of our economy is much more positive than many other jurisdictions. The Yukon and the mining sector is now not only isolated to our small jurisdiction, but is a jurisdiction that is now being well-received nationally and internationally, when it comes to a place to invest.

There is so much more that goes with it, but fundamentally, the issue is this: Yukon, because of our position fiscally and the other factors that that strong, healthy financial position creates, has been able to manage our way through the global cycle so far and little to no impact — negative impact — has been experienced by Yukoners.

But we've added more to this budget because there is a requirement for governments to look into the future and go beyond the 12-month fiscal cycle that all budgets are comprised of. We have consistently presented a multi-year fiscal framework.

Here, the opposition, especially the Official Opposition — if we take the view that an Official Opposition is to be defined as a reasonable alternative to the government — it's very troubling, that confusion around budgets and the fiscal position of the territory. It's very troubling because that does not demonstrate a reasonable alternative — in fact, quite the opposite. It demonstrates a total lack of understanding of the fiscal position of Yukon — what comprises a budget; what's involved in constructing a budget; a budget's effect in terms of outcome during

the course of the fiscal year; why there are changes; why it's so important for the public accounts to be concluded, so that we can then assess and compare estimates to actual data. There is a massive amount of work that goes with budgeting and the troubling fact for the Official Opposition is that there appears to be a lack of understanding of what it takes.

So, if you look at the multi-year fiscal framework, it is really evidence compiled on paper for the opposition to be better able to hold the government to account, yet they do not do so. Because if they would accept the fact that the budget before them is not a budget created by government forcing numbers upon professionals who are responsible for the finances of the territory, given their credentials and their professional credibility and integrity — it's not by forcing numbers on those officials.

It's by a collective collaboration of departments and the Department of Finance that results in Management Board submissions that come forward for Management Board to make a decision. Only when the Management Board has been presented with the appropriate material that comprises the information for decisions to be made, only then do numbers or values in any budget — only then are they implemented. The fiscal framework clearly shows the members of the Official Opposition and the Third Party and the Independent member that the fiscal health of the Yukon is very positive. It also completely annihilates the argument of going for broke and of reckless spending. It shows that nothing of the sort is taking place. In fact, it shows clearly — and I'll even add more to this in a moment — that the Yukon Territory can pay its way and we can pay our way because of the fiscal management and the cash management practices that we have brought to office since 2002.

It also includes a long-range, multi-year capital plan, which once again is evidence — clear evidence — that we can pay our way. It shows capital projects going forward as far out as 2014. It shows that that money is booked. The fiscal framework shows that our O&M projections go out to the year 2014. It shows our revenues go out to the year 2014. It shows our total capital expenditures extend out to that very same period of time. It shows, and the evidence is clear, that the Yukon can pay its way.

Let me delve briefly on debt. The statements made by opposition members that this is the first time and this is an unprecedented situation of the Yukon Territory having debt is simply irresponsible and is incorrect. The members — if, for example, the Official Opposition is a reasonable alternative — should be clear with the public and explain the fact that the Yukon Territory has had debt for quite some time.

And in fact, debt has been paid for and been paid down and has changed over the years, year by year, on an ongoing basis in the Yukon Territory. Let me give some comparisons. The suggestion today on investments that the Yukon Energy Corporation and the Yukon Hospital Corporation is making, and that this is irresponsible and a debt that is forcing future generations to pay for something that we somehow will absorb and use and that'll be the end of it, is entirely incorrect. In fact, it's the prudent approach and it's the appropriate approach to

invest in the facilities and infrastructure that will be used by Yukoners of today, tomorrow and long into the future. Let's look at how that fiscal comparison actually works out.

There was an NDP government in office and I know the NDP in this House is very clear that we are mortgaging the future. There was an NDP government in office. The total debt of the Yukon Territory under that NDP government was \$88 million.

This was back in 1992. That is a range — that is a debt where interest rates are 9 to 13 percent. Of course, borrowing today is substantially less, but it also represents that the borrowing was 26 percent of the budget. Today's Yukon is nowhere near to such unprecedented positions of debt. Furthermore, if you calculate the same dollars in value, that same \$88 million is actually closer to a range of \$160 million to \$230 million of debt. I think the comparison is becoming more and more clear.

I might break with a normal approach here and refer to the fact that the Member for Kluane thinks the fiscal position of Yukon is funny. The member is expressing by his antics that investment in hydro, averting massive increases in the cost of diesel and the thousands of tonnes of carbon that would be emitted into our atmosphere, is a joke. Meeting the needs of hospitals and beds —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Member for Kluane, on a point of order.

Mr. McRobb: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is making a personal remark and then explaining the source of my amusement is something that it wasn't. I was laughing because he was criticizing a former NDP government's budget, and I was wondering why, then — that was the last NDP budget before he signed up to the party and ran for the NDP.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Obviously, there is no point of order. It is simply a dispute among members.

Hon. Premier, you have the floor.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: These are matters of great concern — great concern for the territory —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order please. I have asked members on the opposition side of the House earlier to respect the rules of the House while members are speaking, so please continue to do that.

You have the floor, Hon. Premier.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: These are matters of great concern, and if we just one more time touch back on history, the position of the day resulted in the creation of the *Taxpayer Protection Act* for the Yukon Territory, and I'm very pleased to say, under the leadership and contribution of this Yukon Party government team, we are nowhere — nowhere close to contravening the

Yukon Taxpayer Protection Act. In fact, I think, each and every year, through our budgeting and investments, we are actually strengthening the Yukon taxpayers' position.

Mr. Speaker, it is now a time to look at the types of investment. The difference between what we are doing as a government and past governments, in all matters fiscally, is where we invest the money. That is one of the main differences. The debt of the past was invested in failed enterprises that returned nothing to the Yukon Territory, absolutely nothing. What it returned to the Yukon Territory was the mortgage that future Yukoners continue to pay.

The investments we are making through the corporations are investments that are providing hospital beds, enhanced acute health care services for Yukoners, providing a fundamental strength in communities like Dawson City and Watson Lake and enhancing the Whitehorse hospital's ability to coordinate and provide health care beyond Whitehorse. We are investing in hydro infrastructure. For a moment, let me express to the opposition that it would be very, very astute of them if they sat down with a pen and paper and start doing arithmetic around the investment in the Mayo B project.

What the members conveniently ignore is that if the Mayo B project was not being built, by the year 2012, because of the success of the Yukon Party government in growing our economy, growing our population and in doing so, increasing the demand for energy — which is a logical outcome of growth — the members, if they did the calculation, would recognize that without the Mayo B project, by the year 2012, there would be at the minimum an increased cost of \$20 million a year in diesel fuel. That is a source of energy to produce electricity that is far more expensive to produce the same kilowatt of energy as hydro — far more expensive.

Now let's do some arithmetic. The members take great problem and issue with Yukon Energy Corporation — a corporation that has the authority, the mandate — in fact, the obligation — to deliver consistent, reliable, and affordable energy to Yukoners. They have this obligation. They take great issue with the \$100 million borrowed by the corporation. If they took the time to take the \$20 million a year increased diesel costs and times it by five years, I think the calculation is pretty clear.

That's \$100 million for what? For thousands of tonnes of CO₂ emitted into the air. Today, the Yukon Energy Corporation is investing \$100 million in infrastructure — infrastructure on the ground, infrastructure that will produce energy for the kilowatt-hour use in a much more affordable manner, and investment in infrastructure on the ground that will reduce our carbon footprint by thousands of tonnes a year. I'll let Yukoners draw their own conclusion.

The government side will let Yukoners draw their own conclusion, but the Yukon Party government will continue its fiscal management practices, its plan, its vision and its investment priorities. We will continue to support our corporations so they meet the obligations they have to Yukoners and we will continue to build a Yukon future. We will continue to invest in improving on the quality of life and we will continue to invest in the growth and the development of the Yukon Territory. Much progress has been made because of the fiscal practices,

the financial management and the prudence that we the Yukon Party government apply in protecting and managing the money of Yukoners.

Carrying on, this budget of \$1,075,000,000 will invest in this type of infrastructure I just spoke of moments ago. It will invest in Yukoners in educating them and training them and preparing them for the opportunities of today, tomorrow and into the future. It will invest in public facilities across this territory when it comes to seniors housing and other affordable housing initiatives. It will invest in our health care system in a way that we continue to meet the needs of Yukoners today while we keep our eye on the requirement of a sustainable health care system of the future.

It will invest in our public service. It will invest in our ability to continue to take our rightful place nationally and internationally. It will continue to invest in our resource development. It will continue the investment in our partnership with First Nation governments. It will continue to invest in our obligations to implement the treaties here in the Yukon.

I'm sure there's going to be criticism from the opposition, but I think the opposition should be cognizant of the fact that their criticism should not be empty. Their criticism should be of substance. Their criticism should present to Yukoners what they would do differently. What would the Official Opposition and the Third Party do in meeting the health care needs and the requirement for more beds and hospitals in this territory? What would the opposition do in meeting that energy demand and supply requirement that Yukon is now facing? What would they do differently? What would the opposition do in investing in our highways, our roads and our bridges? What would they do differently?

What would the opposition do in investing in schools, our education system, our college, in the labor market areas, in training, in apprenticeship programs — and the list goes on and on? What would they do differently? They should tell Yukoners that. More importantly, they should tell this House that. Empty criticism will not demonstrate a credible opposition. Quite the opposite: it will demonstrate why Yukoners vote for the Yukon Party, its plan and its —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order please. Member for Mayo-Tatchun, I would ask you to please respect the rules of this House and remain silent while another member is speaking. Thank you.

You have the floor, Hon. Premier.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are actually what I would call “constructive measures” that we're providing the members opposite because the government side really wants to engage in a debate. We want to engage in the debate that presents to Yukoners what the opposition would do and how it would manage the situation, so that Yukoners can compare that with what the Yukon Party government is doing. We'd like to hear from the opposition on what their vision and plan is. That would be very important. We'd like to hear more from them in areas that are relative to how they would create the scenario that we have created. How would they create on-

going surpluses as we have? How would they create hundreds of millions of dollars of cash available in the bank? What would they do differently? How would they manage that?

Mr. Speaker, there is much more to governing than conversation. It's hard work. It's accepting the fact that criticism will be there each and every day. It's accepting the fact that this is not a job that one individual can do; it's a job that requires many. It requires all the elected people, the caucus, the Cabinet, and Management Board. But, most importantly, it requires the massive numbers of government employees, who come to work each and every day to do exactly what it is we are doing.

So, on that note, I think a great deal of credit goes to departments, their employees, the deputy heads, the directors, the managers — all involved — and especially those in the Department of Finance, because without them, it would be much more difficult to accomplish what we have accomplished in the Yukon over the last seven years. Frankly, we are looking forward to the way ahead because we have the ability and capacity to continue to invest in Yukon and build Yukon's future.

I know the opposition wants to get into a constructive debate, and the government side is very, very ready to do exactly that. Once again, I thank all members of the House for their comments, especially the Yukon Party government team. All ministers are ready and anxious to engage with the members opposite in what their vision and plan for the Yukon would be, as we debate, once again, the biggest, largest investment in the history of the Yukon Territory.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Agree.

Mr. Nordick: Agree.

Mr. McRobb: Disagree.

Mr. Elias: Disagree.

Mr. Fairclough: Disagree.

Mr. Inverarity: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are nine yea, four nay.

Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 20 agreed to

**Bill No. 18 — *Third Appropriation Act, 2009-10:*
Second Reading**

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 18, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I move that Bill No. 18, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 18, entitled *Third Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I am pleased to introduce Bill No. 18, *Third Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, also referred as *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*, to this First Session of the 32nd Legislature.

First, let me give a brief overview. The second supplementary estimates for 2009-10 affords us two opportunities. First, it details the proposed expenditure changes that require legislative appropriation authority, in addition to the spending authorities previously granted by the Legislature.

Second, this supplementary provides the Legislature and the general public with an update on the financial position of the government, thus establishing some context for our future expenditure plans and our long-term forecast tabled with the 2010-11 budget documents.

Before I move on to speak in more detail regarding our government's financial position, I would first like to highlight some of the important expenditure initiatives identified in the second supplementary estimates for 2009-10, for which, Mr. Speaker, we are seeking authority from the Legislative Assembly at this time.

On the operation and maintenance and capital expenditures, members will observe that proposed O&M expenditures are increased by \$12.9 million, the majority of which is related to the Department of Health and Social Services' requirements totalling \$11.5 million.

Now, at this point, Mr. Speaker, I must respond to the comments of reckless spending and challenge the opposition to explain how this significant investment during the course of the fiscal year toward health and social programs for Yukoners is reckless spending.

We on this side of the House are anxious to hear the explanation, as I am sure Yukoners are indeed more than anxious to hear their explanation. While the minister responsible will be pleased to provide detail during general debate, I certainly will take this opportunity to outline areas where this additional recommended funding for Health and Social Services is slated.

The cost to plan and implement our government's response to H1N1 virus totalled approximately \$1.8 million. Mr. Speaker, how can that be reckless spending? How can that be going for broke? This is a \$1.8-million commitment to have Yukoners vaccinated, to be ready for what was, at the time, a great concern around the world of a possible pandemic — \$1.8 million of investment to deal with this virus, and the members opposite call it reckless spending.

\$1.3 million is provided for medical travel, and \$1.1 million for physician claims, ensuring Yukoners continue to have appropriate access to required health care services. These in-

vestments allow Yukoners to access health care that they need, to ensure that we have physicians available to provide further health care to Yukoners that they need. The Official Opposition and the Third Party of this House have called this reckless spending. Approximately \$4 million for territorial health access fund-related initiatives, including work related to development of a social inclusion and anti-poverty strategy, continuing care accreditation, and the children's mental health study. Reckless spending? Continuing care? Anti-poverty and social inclusion? Mental health? Investments in these areas the members opposite claim to be reckless spending.

And there is just over \$2.2 million for social assistance. As I said earlier, I would caution the members opposite on empty criticism. These matters are not of a nature of reckless spending. These are meeting the needs of Yukoners through our fiscal management and investment priorities.

Now, I am sure the members opposite can appreciate the significance of these health-related expenditures that are being delivered on behalf of Yukoners. We on this side are indeed proud of but encouraged by the fact that we can meet these challenges.

Moving on to capital expenditures, the supplementary estimates actually reflect a decrease of approximately \$750,000, Mr. Speaker. While a decrease is reflected overall, there are indeed some expenditure increases for projects that are progressing ahead of schedule.

Now remember, the opposition has berated the government on many occasions for not being able to progress on capital projects. The supplementary is evidence that, once again, we are progressing and, in many cases, as the supplementary estimates require, spending authority is for progress that is ahead of schedule.

Regarding capital expenditure decreases, two significant areas are involved. The land development expenditures have been reduced by \$4.9 million, as some projects have been delayed. These are expenditures picked up in the 2010-11 and future year's budget and are reflected by our \$15-million annual commitment, which is identified in our multi-year capital project listing. Mr. Speaker, an example of paying our way — a very important distinction to be made. The difference between going for broke, reckless spending, and paying our way is quite significant.

Projects under the Canadian strategic infrastructure fund and the municipal rural infrastructure fund have also experienced some delays. Again, Mr. Speaker, these are picked up in the 2010-11 capital estimates.

Whitehorse waterfront project — \$2 million. This is very interesting, and this is to do with First Nations. Kwanlin Dun cultural centre — \$10.3 million, and the Champagne and Aishihik cultural centre — \$6.6 million. Reckless spending? Mr. Speaker, this is a total of \$16 million plus invested in First Nation culture and their facilities here in the Yukon. I'm sure that the governments of Kwanlin Dun and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations are keenly interested in why the Official Opposition, especially the Leader of the Official Opposition, would claim these to be matters of reckless spending.

Lapsing funds would normally be considered for revote purposes later; however, departments have been able to identify unspent funds for 2009-10, allowing us to carry these expenditure initiatives forward, to put required budgets in place at the start of the 2010-11 fiscal year.

Now let me turn our attention to the supplementary estimates that reflect capital expenditure increases. There are three significant projects that are receiving these increases. There is \$2.85 million for corrections infrastructure, \$3.1 million for the air terminal building at the Whitehorse airport, and \$4.2 million for the Dawson City sewage treatment and district heating projects. Well, Mr. Speaker, reckless spending — very interesting — going for broke. I really, really don't understand. I'm sure Yukoners don't understand where it is the opposition is coming from.

Corrections infrastructure, again, is a needed investment for Yukon. Under our approach to correctional reform, we have accomplished something that has never, ever been managed or an accomplishment in the past. We are changing how we deal with those incarcerated. Mr. Speaker, there is a \$3.1-million investment in our air terminal building, maintaining our international status. The City of Whitehorse is on the international map. I would remind the Official Opposition and their leader that Whitehorse is indeed a destination, not from just throughout the Yukon, but as far away as Europe and beyond. China and other countries from around the globe fly to Whitehorse. A \$3.1-million investment in that facility and infrastructure for the purpose of providing the best possible aviation facilities and infrastructure for the City of Whitehorse that we can — reckless spending.

Dawson City sewage treatment and district heating — I don't think I have to expand on what that's all about, including the court-ordered conditions and situation that the City of Dawson is under.

I think that the issue here is not reckless spending at all, but reckless criticism and a lack of thorough analysis of what has been put before the opposition, especially the Official Opposition and their leader.

These projects, Mr. Speaker, have progressed more quickly than anticipated during the fiscal year of 2009-10 and, as a result, funds have been advanced from future years to cover those increases for these same projects. I am pleased to say that these projects are on track, ahead of schedule and on budget. The expenditure increases identified here simply reflect the change in cash flow requirement. Going for broke. When you, Mr. Speaker, experience ever-improving abilities and capacity to build, especially infrastructure, that is hardly going for broke when you are managing the cash flow requirements as the Yukon Party government is.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, these supplementary estimates not only reflect lapses that are included in the 2010-11 capital estimates, but reflect these three significant projects advanced from future years. This is just a matter of timing.

Now let me speak to the financial position, because this has really got the opposition members of the House completely confused. Regarding our government's fiscal position, the supplementary forecasts and annual change of fiscal position for

March 31, 2010 is just over \$23 million. Now our government recognizes — we recognize — that this may cause concern for the members opposite. However, Mr. Speaker, as noted previously, this supplementary reflects a number of positive indicators of how the Yukon Party government's spending initiatives are providing direct benefit to Yukoners.

Before I turn my attention to discuss this in further detail, let me take this opportunity to comment on our government's net financial resource position. This is a very important financial position, because it is what provides our ability on a go-forward basis to pay our way. The net financial resource position is the most important indicator of our government's fiscal health. This indicator speaks to the future. In simple terms, net financial resource position reflects the sum total — I want to emphasize sum total — of the government's financial assets, offset by the sum total of the government's current liabilities.

When it comes to deficit and surplus, this is a very important fact. Let me repeat for the remaining members opposite. The sum total of the government's financial assets — this is on the balance sheet — and the sum total of the government's current liabilities. The estimates show a resource position — a very healthy one — of some \$69 million. Now, what's missing in the opposition's approach to this is their failure to actually do the appropriate budgeting calculations to get to the actual fiscal position of the government. I hope that this helps the members opposite as we go forward with debate, because we would like to see a constructive debate on the realities and the actual picture of the Yukon.

Let me explain it another way in the spirit of being helpful. If our government were to extinguish our current liabilities today, we would retain \$69 million from which we can fund future operations. Now this speaks to the issue of mortgaging the future. Just let me repeat this. If our government — I'll wait until the members are paying attention.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Yes. If our government were to extinguish our current liabilities today, we would retain \$69 million from which to fund future operations. This, Mr. Speaker, in fact, is forward looking and a healthy financial position. That is what Yukoners should be exposed to and presented, which we the government side are doing. That is what is presented in all the budget documents and that is not what is being presented by the opposition of this House. Mr. Speaker, our government has continually maintained a healthy net financial resource position. This is significant, because it allows the government and the territory to be flexible in timing our investment decisions. Our very healthy net financial resource position has provided us the opportunity to make significant capital investment while maintaining and enhancing service levels that Yukoners have come to enjoy and expect, but mostly, need.

Our choice to invest in capital infrastructure at the community level has indeed contributed to the change in the surplus originally forecast for the fiscal year of 2009-10. There are, however, other factors at play — and this again is to help the remaining members of the opposition. As members are aware, our government follows accounting principles. For the members opposite, when reading a budget, we must apply the fact

that there are principles that guide what goes in those documents. To suggest that we would force numbers into the documents just because we want to see something is in contravention of those principles. Surely the members opposite can understand that.

The accounting principles are consistent with recommendations from the Auditor General. I would be very interested to see a government try to force something into a budget and have the Auditor General deal with that. However, those are statements that have been made in this House.

At the time that the 2009-10 main estimates were prepared, our government recorded revenues under the Building Canada fund that were consistent with the cash flow specified in the Building Canada agreement; however, subsequently the Auditor General changed one of those principles and recommended that we treat this in a different manner. The Auditor General suggested that this government follow the matching principle — that is, revenues are booked at the time expenditures are incurred.

Now given that this request by the Auditor General resulted in a major change in accounting for these cash inflows, we are entitled to and receive the cash, but we are not booking the cash as revenues as the original accounting treatment allowed the government to do. I will repeat for the benefit of members opposite — those who are here. We are entitled to and receive the cash but are not booking the cash revenues as the original accounting treatment allowed the government to do. Why? Because, as I stated, there was a change in accounting principle. Now for the members opposite, that is not an expenditure of money.

We did not “go for broke”. We did not apply the principle of “reckless spending”. We applied the principle that the Auditor General suggested of matching revenues with expenditures.

So this timing difference represents a significant change in the 2009-10 fiscal or financial indicators, as tabled in the main estimates. It’s important because the main estimates are still part of the overall budget. That change — because of that accounting principle, not the expenditure of money — not tossing money away — but the accounting principle resulted in reducing — I would emphasize — reducing our estimate or forecast for annual surplus position by over \$11 million. Not by spending — that \$11 million was not spent. It was changed because of an accounting principle change as recommended by the Auditor General.

So, Mr. Speaker, we find another timing difference. When we turn our attention to revotes — as members can appreciate, not all planned expenditures can be made during a fiscal year.

This occurs for a variety of reasons, including inclement weather, consultation processes, regulatory obligations and capacity of the local economy. The revote process addresses these potential delays, providing for unspent funds to be carried over to the following fiscal year. The 2009-10 revised estimates include approximately \$35 million in projects and initiatives that were revoted from 2008-09. While this is normal practice, this represents about \$10 million more than initially estimated for revotes. This represents a timing difference and our commitment to move forward with projects and initiatives that were

not completed in the 2008-09 fiscal year, and has contributed to the change in surplus originally forecasted in 2009-10. That is another \$10 million. I hope the members are starting to understand what the budget is all about.

I would like to mention one other timing difference. Members will note that the supplementary estimates reflect a significant change in the level of anticipated lapses at year-end. On that point, I must say that we have always maintained a prudent, conservative approach to estimates. That’s one of the reasons why we continue to maintain a very healthy financial position — prudence and a conservative approach. Not a Liberal approach and not a socialist approach, but a conservative approach. It’s very important.

This change is a reduction of just over \$17 million and increases the amount of expenditures the government was originally expecting to incur. This is important for the opposition, because it is relative to the true and actual fiscal position of the Yukon. Their statements about wild, reckless spending are indeed incorrect. In most cases, the changes in the estimates for 2009-10 are the result of timing differences and accounting principle changes.

As I mentioned earlier, some of the inherent difficulties departments face in delivering their annual expenditure plans and so on, all contribute to issues such as lapses and estimated lapses, which, as I have said, have been reduced and reflect that departments are — and I think this is important — ever improving their ability to successfully implement their expenditure plans.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, another important point: past practices that created this last true and real deficit, based on public accounts, were made by governments that did not apply cash management principles, implementation phase approvals — a number of processes that have helped and enhanced government’s ability to create budgets based on a more responsible fiscal picture to better make informed decisions on what dollar values we provide each and every department. This is a positive indicator on two fronts. First, departmental expenditure plans and the government’s ability to deliver on our promises are converging, which means we are delivering on our commitments in a manner that is markedly improved over past practices, and that is the result of seven years of Yukon Party government fiscal management.

Its realistic and accurate departmental plans are essential in the ongoing management of our fiscal framework. That’s an important tool for the government to keep the healthy fiscal position going forward so that we can pay our way. Second, our expenditure plans are being delivered in providing direct benefit to Yukoners, as was intended.

So, our fiscal practices over the last seven years have provided us flexibility to step up and provide leadership and stimulus to the Yukon economy. We acted on that opportunity, and indeed Yukoners are feeling the direct benefit of our investments. Further, we have provided these significant investments without sacrificing the future. As I have noted, we are forecasting to the end of the 2009-10 fiscal year the net financial position in excess of \$69 million. While most provincial and territorial governments have net debt — meaning they owe more

than they are currently capable of paying — this is not the case in the Yukon.

It is simply not the case, Mr. Speaker. That is a significant difference between the Yukon and its fiscal management and its government of the last seven years and other jurisdictions. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, we have the cash and the other financial assets to pay off all of our obligations. Now we can take great pride in the fact that we as Yukoners are living within our means — I stress that we are living within our means — and are not mortgaging our future. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the opposite is the case. Yukoners have net financial resources, which is a savings account for the future.

In addition, I point to the long-term plans tabled with the 2010-11 budget, forecasting annual surpluses and a positive net financial resource position. These are strong indicators of our government's plans for continued financial health. As we move forward we, as Yukoners, are well-positioned for the future. In closing, Mr. Speaker, I recall that, in the government's ongoing process of informing its public, we somehow have contempt for this Assembly.

I really, really wonder why the opposition would make such a statement, all things considered, here today. Mr. Speaker, this second reading initiative and process we go through is all about honouring this institution. It's all about us, as elected members, doing our job. I would hope that we see some marked improvement from the members opposite.

In closing, I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Minister of Finance, I am very pleased with this supplementary budget and the very strong fiscal position of the Yukon government and our territory. Ministers who are requesting supplementary budget approval will be pleased to provide members of the Legislature with complete details of their expenditure requirements in the department-by-department, line-by-line review in debate — if we have one, because we need people to debate with. Of course, I will be more than pleased to discuss the supplementary estimates in further detail when we reconvene to discuss it in general debate.

Once again, not only is the closing of our previous fiscal year a healthy one and a significant one for Yukon, it is allowing us to create — once again, going forward in the year 2010-11 — the largest, most massive investment in the Yukon Territory's history. Thank you.

Mr. Fairclough: I'd like to respond to the Premier and the supplementary budget. He's painted a picture for Yukoners. What we'd like to do is ask questions about his own information that he has tabled in this House — the *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*. We have asked questions of the Premier in regard to whether or not this budget that he presented to the House — the supplementary budget — was a deficit budget or not. The Premier skated around that question, said it was not, when clearly, in brackets, it says \$23.318 million in deficit. Everybody in this House can read and we all know — it's in black and white in the information that is presented to this House.

I have to say that's the correct information. We asked the Finance officials about these numbers and they reaffirmed to us

that, yes, it is a deficit budget. Yes, it is. So who is the Premier listening to or what information is he getting that is different from what we have before the House today? This is what we want to work with, Mr. Speaker. Is this budget — this supplementary budget — a deficit budget or not? Is it a deficit budget or not? The Premier says, "No." But the information that he gives to the House says, yes, it is \$23.318 million. We can't let that go. Members opposite know that in fact this is a deficit budget. When you spend beyond your means and don't sharpen your pencil, this is what happens. When we're voting for a budget, the Finance minister and the government side are asking us to approve a supplementary budget that pushes us over into a deficit position. That's what happens and we're going into another one this year. And he wants us to wait for the public accounts. This supplementary budget takes into account the 2008-09 public accounts presented in this House.

It does, and it's \$23 million-plus in deficit. Everybody on that side of the House understands it. The only one, I think, that doesn't get it is the Premier — the Finance minister — the one that we have to ask questions of in the Legislature, day after day. If we take this information out, Mr. Speaker — it is presented to this House. This is what we are supposed to be dealing with. We take it to the general public. They read it and that is what they will see, clear as day, in brackets — \$23.31 million, which is a deficit budget, contrary to what the Premier and Finance minister has said.

Speaker: Order please.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. Tuesday, April 6, 2010.

Debate on second reading of Bill No. 18 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following Sessional Paper was tabled April 1, 2010:

10-1-151

Absence of Members from Sittings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees: Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly (dated April 1, 2010) (Speaker Staffen)

The following document was filed April 1, 2010:

10-1-140

Porter Creek, Site 4, neighbourhood concerns re potential development: letter (dated April 1, 2010) to Hon. Archie Lang, MLA for Porter Creek Centre and Minister of Community Services from "The Concerned Neighbourhood Taxpayers of Porter Creek" (Inverarity)