

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, October 4, 2010 – 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the Sisters in Spirit campaign

Hon. Ms. Horne: As minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, I would like to tribute the Sisters in Spirit campaign for standing up to violence against aboriginal women and girls. Violence against any woman is unacceptable and yet it remains one of the most serious social issues in Canada.

I would like to thank those individuals and organizations that speak out against violence against women. I would like to acknowledge the vigil being held in Dawson City and hosted by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in today, which is simultaneous with ours in Whitehorse. I would like to acknowledge that vigil and thank them for coming out. I would like to see this vigil held in every community in Yukon in future.

Today's march in support of the Sisters in Spirit campaign here in Whitehorse is supported by the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council and the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Council. The Sisters in Spirit campaign is a national research, education and policy initiative driven and led by aboriginal women whose primary goal is to conduct research and raise awareness of the alarmingly high rates of violence against aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

We know that in the north this is an especially troubling situation. In the Yukon, women experience sexual violence at a rate of two to three times higher than other Canadian women. Yukon government remains committed to addressing violence against women, especially aboriginal women who are the most at-risk group. Our efforts include boosting to \$300,000 the women's equality fund and the doubling of our prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund to \$200,000 so that community partners have the resources they need to do their good work.

But we cannot do this alone. For the violence to stop, we need all Yukoners to stand up against violence. We need women to stand with their sisters in the face of violence. We need more men to model appropriate and respectful behaviour. I do appreciate the many, many Yukon men who do treat women with respect and dignity.

As a government we will continue to work with you, focusing our efforts on the root causes of violence. Thank you. Günilshish.

Mr. Elias: I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Sisters in Spirit campaign. I want to begin by saying it was an honour to walk side by side my shi-juu khut this afternoon in the march. That means "my sisters" in the Gwitchin language.

This year marks the fifth annual Yukon Sisters in Spirit vigil. October 4 has been designated a day when we honour the lives of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls across Canada.

Research done by the Native Women's Association of Canada proves that more than 582 women and girls have gone missing or been murdered to date in this country. Yukon aboriginal women experience higher rates of violence than non-aboriginal women, and northern women are more at risk of experiencing violence than their southern counterparts.

Today's vigil is the bringing together of people from each and every community to honour the lives of Yukon women who have gone missing or have been murdered.

Today's walk was about being one voice, united in one cause: to stop violence against women and girls. It is a day of remembrance for those who can no longer speak for themselves. They were somebody's mother, daughter, sister, child, or grandchild to the families they have left behind. This is a day for celebrating their lives. We thank the Aboriginal Women's Council, and the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, for hosting this silent vigil every year, in remembrance of the aboriginal women and girls who have gone missing, or have been murdered. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of World Habitat Day

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: The United Nations has designated the first Monday of October every year as World Habitat Day. In their own words, the idea is to reflect on the state of our towns and cities and the basic right of all to adequate shelter. It is also intended to remind the world of its collective responsibility for the future of the human habitat.

I would like to take this opportunity to bring attention to the tremendous work that has been done, and continues to be done, specifically by the Yukon chapter of Habitat for Humanity. This organization is making an incredible contribution to our community, whether one is the recipient of the housing provided by this organization, or the volunteers and businesses who give so selflessly to their projects, or as a general member of the community who is inspired by the work of this organization.

This weekend I was fortunate to be involved with the official opening of the new duplex housing in Whitehorse, and I was struck by the variety and the number of people involved to make this project a reality.

The expression on the faces of the two families who were the beneficiaries of these houses was absolutely priceless. As I witnessed all those individuals, businesses and the governments that helped make this housing happen, I was moved to realize the community spirit and the collective responsibility of the people of the Yukon is alive and well.

The Government of Yukon is proud to be a partner with Habitat for Humanity in this project and also with the Phoenix Rising project triplex at 810 Wheeler.

I do not think we can talk about Habitat for Humanity and their contributions to our community without acknowledging the tremendous role played by Todd Hardy, of course. I've spoken of how the members of Habitat for Humanity have inspired our community, but it's important to acknowledge where the members of Habitat got their inspiration.

Economic stimulus funding from Canada has enabled Yukon to construct significant housing projects in the territory and make important retrofits to existing affordable housing. This new housing will provide seniors and elders in Yukon with affordable homes designed to help them remain in their communities. Stimulus funding from both levels of government has contributed to the construction and retrofit of 323 units in the Yukon — a total joint investment of almost \$24 million provided for the work. New construction projects will meet Yukon's superior green home energy efficiency standards and accommodating home standards for a barrier-free living environment for residents with disabilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Mitchell: I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to pay tribute to World Habitat day.

The UN's World Habitat Day was first celebrated in 1986 with the theme "Shelter is My Right". The UN has designated the first Monday of October each year as World Habitat Day. This is a day to call attention to the current state of human habitat and strive toward the basic right of all — adequate shelter and housing.

Le jour d'habitat du monde De l'ONU a été célébré la première fois en 1986 avec le thème « abri est mon juste ». L'ONU a indiqué tous les ans le premier lundi d'octobre en tant que jour d'habitat du monde. C'est un jour pour attirer l'attention sur l'état actuel de l'habitat humain et à tâcher vers le droit fondamental de tous, à abri et à logement proportionnés.

This is a day to reflect on the living conditions of human beings and for actions to be taken to address the shortcomings of these conditions. It is also intended to remind the world of its collective responsibility for the future of human habitat.

The 2010 theme "Better City, Better Life" was chosen to highlight the collective vision of a sustainable urban world that harnesses the potential and possibilities, mitigates inequalities and disparities, and provides a home for people of all cultures and ages, both rich and poor. This is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity.

World Habitat Day is a day for grassroots action and a day for people to be united in their efforts to eradicate poverty housing.

Habitat for Humanity organizations around the world join in events focused on education, advocacy and fundraising. Habitat for Humanity Canada first formed in 1985, has grown to 70 affiliates in 10 provinces and two territories, and has been successful in placing more than 1,000 families in new homes.

Habitat for Humanity Yukon Society's founding member and president was the late Todd Hardy, the former MLA for Whitehorse Centre. The Yukon chapter was given official

status in September 2004. It successfully completed the first Habitat for Humanity house in December 2006, and has now completed a duplex in Copper Ridge, which was formally dedicated this past Saturday with a celebration thanking all who participated and donated their time and materials. It was great to see two families so excited to be living in their new homes, thanks to the efforts of so many. Habitat for Humanity Yukon is currently working on its third project, a triplex in downtown Whitehorse.

We would like to thank the many volunteers, groups, businesses and organizations, and the board of directors, who have contributed to the success of Habitat for Humanity Yukon, for it is Yukoners helping Yukoners. We also congratulate the new owners who donated much effort and labour to the construction of their new homes as part of the process.

The Yukon must be able to provide inclusive living conditions for all its citizens, as everyone has the human right to housing, to a decent living environment, to clean water, sanitation, transport, electricity and other services. We must make sure there is affordable and adequate housing for all. Let us all work together to help to provide a better future for all Yukoners.

Le Yukon doit pouvoir fournir des conditions vivantes incluses pour tous ses citoyens, car chacun a le droit de l'homme au logement, à un environnement vivant décent, à l'eau propre, à l'hygiène, au transport, à l'électricité et à d'autres services. Nous devons nous assurer qu'il y a à logement accessible et proportionné pour tous. Tout le travail ensemble aidons à fournir un meilleur futur pour tout le Yukonnais. Merci, M. le Président. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of National Family Week

Hon. Mr. Hart: I rise on behalf of the House to pay tribute to National Family Week. National Family Week is an ideal time for us to acknowledge and celebrate all the qualities that make families special and all the ways families nurture themselves through fun and activities. National Family Week has been celebrated since 1985, when it was proclaimed an official week by the Government of Canada. It is always the week before Thanksgiving, and it is a time when organizations, businesses, governments, schools and communities and families can focus on the importance of families in Canadian life.

This year's events are centred on the joy of reading and storytelling, with the theme "Families Connecting through Stories". With the hectic pace and the obligations of today's families, reconnecting by sharing stories provides the simple pleasure of being in the company of loved ones, talking and listening to one another's experiences.

In the Yukon, National Family Week events are coordinated by Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services, with the support of parents, for children. These free events include everything from story telling in public libraries throughout the week, to public swimming and skating at the Canada Games Centre. This is an ideal time to celebrate the joys of reading and storytelling. Through these everyday activities, family members of all ages can take part in rediscovering the spirit of the family. Thank you.

Speaker: Further tributes?
Introduction of visitors?

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. Horne: I would like the House to acknowledge the former MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin, Lorraine Netro, in the House. She's also a very effective and active advocate against violence against women in Yukon. We have Adeline Webber, Kluane Adamek, Julie Ménard — all these ladies belong to Yukon organizations that are against violence against women in any form. I thank them, and we should thank them for their being so active in this fight.

Applause

Speaker: Further introductions of visitors?
Returns or documents for tabling?
Any reports of committees?
Any petitions?
Any bills to be introduced?
Any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT the membership of the Members' Services Board, as established by Motion No. 7 and Motion No. 887 of the First Session of the 32nd Legislative Assembly, be amended by appointing Steve Cardiff to the board.

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

THAT this House recognizes and supports the important work of projects like the Sisters in Spirit campaign in raising awareness of violence against women and addressing its devastating impact on communities.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to donate residential building lots in all future Yukon government developed subdivisions to Habitat for Humanity to facilitate future building projects by providing the much-needed equity in owning the land.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Yukon's member of Parliament and senator and their federal Conservative colleagues and in consultation with the board of directors and president of Yukon College to seek federal funding for a study on costs, timelines and design for a comprehensive university in Yukon.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to invite the Governor General of Canada, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, a distinguished educator, to view and have input into Yukon being chosen as the location for a comprehensive northern university.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to table statistics for each of the past eight years on the number of overpayment cases involving all Yukon government employees and board members, showing the annual number of cases, the amount of funds involved and the number of cases repaid, in arrears or forgiven.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada's Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada to ensure the new Nutrition North Canada program delivers healthy food to citizens living in Old Crow, Yukon by:

(1) assuring the Nutrition North Canada program includes a personal shipping transportation subsidy from Whitehorse to Old Crow of "nutritious perishable foods", "non-perishable foods", "non-food items" and "essential non-food items" by the residents of Old Crow via Air North and;

(2) maintaining a transportation subsidy that is administered by Air North with the company being accountable directly to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

I also rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to address the unknown health implications of the consumption of energy drinks on youth under the age of 18 by:

(1) immediately prohibiting the consumption, distribution and possession of energy drinks in all Yukon schools and within their jurisdictional boundaries;

(2) developing legislation to ensure only citizens over the age of 18 can purchase energy drinks in the Yukon; and

(3) working with Health Canada to ensure the consumption of energy drinks by adults only is being properly regulated in Canada.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Economic Development to explain his comments from *Hansard* on Thursday, September 30, 2010, where he stated, and I quote: "There's always a flex within that budget ...", and explain whether that flex is also in his department, Yukon Liquor Corporation, Yukon Lottery Commission, and Yukon Housing Corporation for the 2010-11 budget.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to increase funding to the RCMP to aid them in solving all outstanding major crimes cases.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to immediately recognize the vital nurturing role of Yukon grandparents and extended families who are actively parenting children related to them, in their own homes, without compensation, and

who are financially unable to seek custody or access to their kin, by:

(1) developing a policy for realistic financial compensation, similar to rates paid to foster homes for grandparents and extended families parenting their kin; and

(2) introducing into the Legislative Assembly legislation that defines a distinct process for grandparents applying to the court for access or custody of their kin.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: RCMP funding

Mr. Inverarity: Today we mark the fifth annual Sisters in Spirit Vigil that took place today. This honours the missing and murdered aboriginal women in the Yukon. Crimes of this nature threaten the safety of women and the well-being of our community. The fact that crimes like this take place in the Yukon and remain unsolved because of lack of funding is unacceptable.

It is the government's duty to help the RCMP gain justice for the victims of these crimes. In a letter I sent to the Minister of Justice on July 26 of this year, I asked the minister to examine the funding allocated for supporting the investigation of major crimes in the Yukon, and I have these for filing.

I would like to ask the minister again: what is the government currently doing to support the RCMP in ensuring that they have resources required to solve major crimes in our community?

Hon. Ms. Horne: Any crime in Yukon is a major concern to this government — especially violence against women remains of grave concern to me personally. I can assure the member opposite that any investigation of unsolved crime in Yukon is funded. We provide our support for supplementary funding at all times. Our officials meet regularly with the RCMP. We will continue to raise issues of relevance to unsolved crimes, and they are funded accordingly.

Mr. Inverarity: It's clear to the people of the Yukon that we need to adequately fund the major crimes unit. I would like to remind the minister that the people trust their government to protect them against all crimes. If they do not receive this protection they will no longer have trust in the government. The minister may argue that funds may not be available to support the major crimes unit in Yukon or that these matters will take time to resolve, but Yukoners are concerned that more women may fall victim to these kinds of crimes if something is not done now. Why is the government unwilling to add additional resources to adequately protect the people whom it serves?

Hon. Ms. Horne: Mr. Speaker, hello? I just said that we provide supplementary funding to the RCMP. We meet with them regularly, and we fund where extra funds are required. Major crime in Yukon — any unsolved crime — is very important to this government. I feel our Yukon citizens do feel safe with this government in control.

Mr. Inverarity: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm disappointed in the minister's response to this. This is a serious issue, and I think that it doesn't deserve levity.

The population of the Yukon is expected to expand in years to come so there will be an increase in law enforcement services. In order to prevent future tragedies like the murder of Angel Carlick, I would again like to ask the Minister of Justice: when will all outstanding major crimes be solved in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Horne: As I just said, and I reiterate, we do provide funding for any investigation over and above the normal budget. Of course we're concerned with the unsolved crimes in the Yukon. We do meet with the RCMP regularly to make sure they're active, to make sure they're still ongoing — I assure the members opposite they are — and the RCMP, for any investigation, is funded appropriately.

Question re: Violence against women

Mr. Elias: I have some questions for the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate. Rates of spousal violence and spousal homicide are higher for aboriginal women than for non-aboriginal women. They experience spousal violence at a rate that is three time higher than for non-aboriginal women. The severity and impacts of spousal violence are also greater for aboriginal women. These are alarming statistics and I'm sure the minister is no doubt aware of them already, but there is always a need to do more.

A recent high-profile case in Ross River has demonstrated that yet again. There are calls for improved services for women in that community. What is the minister doing to answer that call?

Hon. Ms. Horne: I can assure the member opposite that we do have programming in each community in the Yukon; we have counsellors who are available and will go to court with the individual, and victims of crime are fully supported in Yukon.

Mr. Elias: We recognize, and I have recognized the minister on several occasions, for the work she has done on this issue, and we've been generous with our praise. At the same time, we recognize that more needs to be done. The Native Women's Association of Canada produced a report this year, called *What Their Stories Tell Us*, research findings from the Sisters in Spirit initiative. The report details their database that tracks the disappearance or death of more than 580 aboriginal women and girls across our country, as of March 31, 2010.

How does the minister intend to respond to these deplorable statistics?

Hon. Ms. Horne: I'm pleased to advise that I did meet one on one with Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, who is head of the Native Women's Association of Canada, the president, and we've discussed ways that we can address the missing and murdered aboriginal women across Canada. It's not only governments that have to do it. As I have said many times, we all have to be involved. It's the responsibility of each of us to stop the violence against aboriginal women — against any woman — anywhere in Canada.

This government has done many things to prevent violence. We have the construction of the new women's annex at

Whitehorse Correctional Centre and the Help and Hope for Families Society in Watson Lake. We have built second-stage housing. We've released two Yukon-relevant videos. I hope everyone has seen these videos that we produced with Yukon people in them. They are relevant to the Yukon. The Women's Directorate and the Department of Justice co-hosted two train-the-trainers sessions. We've provided funding through the Women's Directorate for a self-advocacy program. \$60,000 was used to create the position of First Nation's liaison worker in the Women's Directorate. I could go on here for some time. This is a concern.

Mr. Elias: During the Sisters in Spirit march today I was very moved by the number of young aboriginal women that took part in that march and, to me, that says that we are making headway, and I thank the minister again. It is my hope that one day that younger generation won't have to deal with violence against women.

The Native Women's Association of Canada report ends with the following statement: "Aboriginal women continue to be the most at-risk group in Canada for issues related to violence..." and continue to experience "...complex issues linked to intergenerational impacts of colonization and residential schools." Ending violence against aboriginal women and girls lies with both men and women, with both aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities, as well as all levels of government. The needs are great, the resources are limited. Is the minister convinced this government is doing enough?

Hon. Ms. Horne: I thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for raising the awareness of this very important issue.

I don't know where to begin or how I can say that we all have to take the responsibility to end the violence against women and I don't think it will cost a lot of money. I think we need to educate each other, to take care of each other.

I know in our First Nations, the men take care of their women, and we seem to have lost that. The men are the protectors of the women and their children. These are just simple changes that we have to make. It doesn't add up to millions of dollars; it's changing our way of life: to love our women, to love our children, to love each other — for the women to take care of the men. We have to get back to the way we were in the First Nations, respecting each other. Thank you.

Question re: Multiple sclerosis

Mr. Cardiff: Multiple sclerosis is a disease of the central nervous system that in many cases is disabling. It most often strikes young adults between the ages of 15 to 40, the years when we focus on a busy life around families and careers. The symptoms can be vision problems, fatigue, unstable walking, dizziness, muscle weakness or stiffness and speech difficulties. There is no known cause and there is no known cure.

In a recent interview, the Premier stated that multiple sclerosis rates in the Yukon were three times the national average. Will the Minister of Health and Social Services tell the House what this government is doing to support those suffering from multiple sclerosis?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I was recently at a meeting of health ministers in Saint John's, Newfoundland, where this particular subject was discussed in detail. All jurisdictions came out with

a very common theme on this particular subject, and basically we are in support of the Government of Canada following through with the research work that is currently being done both here and in the United States — also being focused in Alberta and British Columbia. We are waiting for the results of that research. Clinical tests will take place based on that research, as the jurisdictions have indicated. We'll look at a pan-Canadian process to ensure that we can participate, which will include the Yukon.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, Canada has one of the highest rates of MS in the world. Recently a controversial procedure, which has been dubbed "liberation treatment for patients with MS", has been made available. It is to treat a condition in multiple sclerosis patients that was discovered by a doctor in Italy and refers to the reduction of the flow of blood from the brain to the heart, due to the narrowing of various veins along the spinal cord. The treatment is similar to that used for heart disease — unblocking veins by expanding them surgically.

Many Canadians and Yukoners are travelling to the United States, Costa Rica, even to India and Bulgaria, among other countries, to have this treatment, which is not available here.

Will the government consider financially supporting Yukon patients who must travel overseas for treatment to relieve their MS symptoms?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I don't think the member opposite was listening to my previous answer. All the jurisdictions in Canada — all the jurisdictions in Canada — with regard to MS and the research that's being undertaken right now have indicated they will support that research, and await the results of that research to identify and ensure that the "liberation treatment" is something that will alleviate the problem the member opposite has indicated.

There have been several incidents where this particular form of therapy has not proven to be what has been indicated to be provided to many patients. For that reason alone, all the jurisdictions have indicated they will await this research, and they will ensure that the "liberation treatment" is something that can be supported by all the jurisdictions, and it will be done on a pan-Canadian process.

Mr. Cardiff: The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada is setting aside \$1 million for an all-Canadian clinical trial of the "liberation procedure". Their partner agency in the United States has committed \$2.4 million to support research projects for this therapy. Pan-Canadian or not, the governments of Newfoundland and Labrador and Saskatchewan announced they will fund in-province studies of MS patients who have already undergone the treatment; however, Health Canada does not feel the therapy trials warrant public money.

What is the position of this government on financially supporting Yukoners who might take part in those trials, which will be taking place in Saskatchewan and in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to the action being taken by the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, that particular program is merely an observation program, whereby the provincial government will do an assessment of those individuals who are going out to get the "liberation treatment" and they

will provide services before they go and after they come back. Those assessments will be done on those who have had the treatment and on those who have not had the treatment, so they can determine whether or not the factor of the “liberation treatment” is ethical.

Now, on that particular one, they are also working with professionals in the field to assess that process. The Government of Saskatchewan has indicated that once their research has provided that clinical trials can take place, based on the research provided, they will proceed with clinical tests in their province, and look at also allowing other provinces to participate. I might add too that the Government of Alberta has indicated they’ll be doing much the same process and have offered their facilities for other jurisdictions to tag on, if necessary.

Question re: Lake Laberge zoning

Mr. Cathers: I’d like to ask the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources about zoning. Does the minister agree that zoning regulations should reflect the interest of area residents? And if government is contemplating a possible change to zoning regulations, and one outcome clearly has the support of a large majority of residents, does the minister believe that government should listen to the citizens?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Of course, Mr. Speaker, this government certainly believes in listening to its constituents — numerous examples of that. Zoning regulations are important in a community. They provide certainty of use. They create expectations of what’s going on in the community and can allow for controlled development or responsible development in areas. It’s an important tool to be used in the planning process.

There are instances of zoning in the member’s riding. There are areas that require additional local area plans. We’ve discussed local area plans in the past and the schedule of the planning process to come forward and we will continue to work with those.

Of course, there are always situations where things come out, outside of normal planning processes, and governments always have a responsibility to take a look at those situations too.

Mr. Cathers: Two years ago, Land Planning branch began public consultations on a request by Takhini Hot Springs Ltd. to make major changes to the zoning for their property. My constituents in the area oppose that request by an overwhelming majority. They are against any change that reduces minimum lot size or allows the corporation to develop condos.

They made that clear at two meetings that had more than 50 people at each, and through a petition signed by over 100 residents, which has been tabled in this House. I wrote a letter and tabled a motion on their behalf and, in April, the minister received another letter from 21 people, re-emphasizing their own objection to that proposal.

Has the minister rejected Takhini Hot Springs Ltd.’s application to amend the zoning regulation and, if not, will he please confirm today that he intends to listen to the overwhelming public opinion and reject the application?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The Government of Yukon certainly recognizes the responsibilities it has to the constituents, not only in the Independent member’s riding, but all throughout

the territory, and also to the constituents who don’t always share the opinion of the member opposite.

We have a zoning exercise that is underway there. The member opposite is well aware of it. He’s also well aware of the conditions and criteria under which subdividing can occur. There are regulations in place under the current zoning regulations for the area that would allow development to occur, whether it is the establishment of single family homes or to transfer the dwelling occupancy, if you will, from one area to another area. There are many measures that I’m sure the member is well aware of, as he was the minister responsible for this area when the application that he’s referencing sat near his desk.

Mr. Cathers: Actually, the minister is misinformed on that and I can inform the minister, first of all, that no one begrudges this company the ability to operate or to develop their property in accordance with existing zoning.

But this is a proposal that has been made to change the rules and amend the zoning regulations. The minister wrote a letter to the company president on March 22 — I’ll send a copy across to him, in case he has lost it — indicating a decision would be made within several months. It has been over six months since then and residents are worried. The regulations are supposed to provide stability for nearby neighbours, including two businesses and, as the minister himself indicated, to provide certainty.

Over 100 of my constituents are opposed to the rules being changed and their community being negatively impacted by this application from this company. Will the minister be listening to the public and keeping the rules the same, or does he intend to change the zoning regulations?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: This government intends to work with the affected parties, as we have in the past. We recognize the importance of responsible development that follows the rules and expectations of a community. We also recognize that the local area development regulations that the member opposite is referencing do look forward in the future to how some of these areas could be subdivided. We certainly recognize that the citizens who signed the petition recognized that there is a potential for subdivision of that area. Again, we need to ensure that we have orderly, responsible development in our community that benefits not only individuals but also the community at large.

We also recognize that it’s important to see a growth in economic activity, in all the ridings in the territory, and when there are opportunities, we really do need to seize them in a responsible manner. I expect that more work is being done on this file, as I speak now. I, too, look forward to bringing more certainty and more conclusion to this issue.

Question re: Peel watershed land use plan

Mr. Fairclough: I have some questions for the Minister of Tourism about a news release put out last week by one of her partners, the Tourism Industry Association. The release said, and I quote: “TIA Yukon supports the Peel watershed land use plan, as recommended by the Peel Watershed Planning Commission”. Last year the Premier interfered in the Peel land use plan, and the minister did nothing to stop it. With her Tour-

ism hat on, the minister has a second chance to stand up and support the protection of the Peel. What direction has the minister given to ensure the Peel is protected?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Members opposite are well aware of the extensive exercise that this and other governments have taken with regard to the Peel watershed area. Members of this Assembly are well aware of the letter of understanding between the Government of Yukon and the affected First Nations that was tabled in this Assembly and the go-forward plan. Members are well aware of the steps this government has taken with other land use plans and other plans in the territory — for example, the completion of the north Yukon plan, a plan that took nine years to complete.

Mr. Speaker, this government has been serious about addressing not only the economic issues but the environmental issues in the territory. You can see that as evidenced by the strong regulatory regime we have in place, which controls the orderly, responsible development of Yukon's resources. We're working on the plan.

Members opposite know that. We tabled the timelines to do so.

Mr. Fairclough: The Environment minister had nothing to say on the Peel, and the Tourism minister has nothing to say either. Today the Premier directed who was going to answer the question.

Last year the Minister of Tourism said in this House, "First off, I just wanted to remind the member opposite that everything that we do in the Department of Tourism and Culture is in collaboration with industry — the tourism industry." Right now the tourism industry is saying to the minister: protect the Peel, support the plan.

Why isn't the minister collaborating with the tourism industry on the Peel watershed plan?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The Yukon territorial government has a responsibility to work with all Yukoners on this, to work with the affected First Nations, of course, but also to work with those who are concerned about the environmental impacts, the economic impacts — whether those are economic impacts in the areas of forestry, of tourism, of mining — that we have a responsibility to address this issue on a very large and holistic basis.

The Government of Yukon will continue to work through the process, which has been detailed a number of times in this Assembly. We're going to work through addressing and establishing a Peel land use plan — one that will provide for a lot of direction and a lot of certainty for Yukoners now and into the future.

Mr. Fairclough: This issue obviously has a lot of control on that side of the House, but we want to listen to what the Tourism minister has to say. TIA had more to say in its release last week. It said, "Time is running out and TIA Yukon encourages everyone to make their voices heard." And that message applies to the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

It's her voice that needs to be heard. Like the Minister of Environment, she prefers to remain silent or perhaps she has just been told to remain silent and is happy to do so. Yukoners

want to know where the minister stands on the Peel plan. The tourism industry wants her to lead on this issue.

This spring the minister told the House, "We're working more closely than ever before with industry with our associations. The future of the Peel watershed is very much in the minds of TIA."

When is the minister going to break her silence and make a decision, one way or another?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: The Peel watershed plan is in the minds of many Yukoners. It's on the minds of the Yukoners who have sent me e-mails or sent the planning commission e-mails or letters. In fact, I would expect that all members of the Assembly have heard about this. We all have a duty.

The Government of Yukon certainly recognizes that duty. We're working with four affected Yukon First Nations; we're following our obligations under chapter 11 of the self-government agreements; we're continuing to work through the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the responsibilities therein. We have a set of principles that are before us as to how we need to move forward, utilizing and protecting land in the territory.

This is an area that is important to people across the board — indeed to all Yukoners. It's one we take very seriously. The plan is being quarterbacked through Energy, Mines and Resources, as we've discussed before, and we very much look forward to working through this process. It will bring a lot of good things to the territory, now and into the future.

Question re: Peel watershed land use plan

Mr. Elias: Last week, two government ministers finally let Yukoners know what this Yukon Party government thinks about what should happen in the Peel. Those ministers issued dire warnings that curtailing mining in the Peel would cause embarrassing lawsuits and depress mining in the rest of the Yukon — how they came to that conclusion I have no idea — and that there should be new taxes on wilderness users who might choose to use the Peel, to replace lost mining revenues.

The Yukon Party conclusion is now clear: be afraid, be very afraid of protecting the Peel. Does the Environment minister really think Yukoners should be scared of protection in the Peel?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Planning in the Peel is an area that this government takes very seriously. We're working on our obligations under the self-government and land claims agreements. We're working with our affected First Nations. We're working with our regulatory processes.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there are significant economic and environmental issues here. Those issues have been identified and addressed in the past and we'll continue to work on examining them as the plan continues through. I've heard a variety of different perspectives from many Yukoners on this issue. They are all important. We'll continue to work through the planning process and bring this to an appropriate conclusion.

Mr. Elias: I'm just trying to provide the opportunity for the Environment minister to fulfill at least one campaign promise, and that's to be the worst enemy of the Yukon Party.

The planning commission recommended 80 percent protection, but it wasn't the Environment minister who was al-

lowed to talk about the Peel; he was muzzled. The Minister of Tourism just had the opportunity and she did absolutely nothing on the matter. The public consultations on the recommended land use plan wrapped up last week. Yukoners have voiced their opinions. There are no more excuses for this government to stay silent.

My question again is for the Environment minister: does the government plan to support the commission's recommended plan for protection, or does it intend to reject it?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: I can't believe the tack the Liberal Party is taking on this one. They'd like us to breach the agreement we established with the four affected First Nations and the plan we have before us.

We agreed to a process with the four affected First Nations on this one; we put forward our timeline; we have a responsibility under the *Umbrella Final Agreement* to do these things. We're going to live up to our responsibilities unlike, it would seem, the Liberal Party — when the tough get going, they toss their previous agreements or commitments out the window.

Mr. Elias: The last thing I need is a lecture from this Yukon Party government on the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, because I was actually at the negotiating table and I didn't see this minister there in the mid-1990s when they were negotiating this agreement. This Yukon Party is beginning to frame their position on the Peel, and it's got rejection all over it. The four affected Yukon First Nations want protection. They are joined by the wilderness tourism and guiding industries; they are joined by national and international conservation groups in the territory; they are joined by many individual Yukoners, hundreds of whom weighed in on the process and the planning commission's work; and they are joined by this Yukon Liberal Party. We believe in significant protection in the Peel.

It's time for the Yukon Party to put what they believe on record, because they're starting to frame it, and I'm starting to understand it now. But we need it clear from some minister over there. Is the government going to accept or reject the commission's recommendation for the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*?

Hon. Mr. Rouble: To make it very clear for the member opposite, the process our government is following is the process laid out in chapter 11 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. Is the Official Opposition suggesting we dispense with the process enshrined in the final agreements — simply throw it out the window because it's become inconvenient to them? First Nations spent years negotiating and then implementing these documents.

It's extremely disturbing to hear members of the Liberal Party say we should ignore these agreements and make up a new process on the fly.

We've worked with the affected First Nations; we've signed a letter of understanding on this issue, which outlines the plan; we've tabled that with the members opposite; we've updated them and we're working through this.

I would ask that the members of this Assembly honour the agreements we've made, allow us to honour the final agreements and work through this process and achieve the appropriate conclusion.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Nordick): Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 21, *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2009-10*.

Do members wish a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 21 — *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2009-10*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 21, *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2009-10*. We will now proceed with general debate.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Fentie: First I would ask the indulgence of the House. I'd like to introduce the gentleman in the gallery, a former deputy minister of the Yukon government, who now serves as the chair for the Yukon Utilities Board. Please make welcome, Mr. Bruce McLennan.

Applause

Chair: We'll now proceed with general debate, Mr. Fentie.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First, some introductory remarks. I am of course very pleased to present the *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, and the accompanying final supplementary estimates for that same fiscal year. I did provide a detailed overview of the supplementary estimates in my second reading speech; therefore in the interests of time, I will limit my comments to a few highlights and some explanations and purpose of this appropriation. As discussed in second reading, while departments try to manage their appropriation by curtailing discretionary expenditures, or by seeking supplementary spending authority so as not to exceed their voted authority at year-end, occasions arise where the year-end expenditure in excess of the voted authority are indeed necessary. Under the provisions of the *Financial Administration Act*, the Legislative Assembly provides the statutory authority for departmental expenditures.

Mr. Chair, in order to fulfill the requirements of the *Financial Administration Act*, the *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, and final supplementary for 2009-10, cover year-end spending requirements for only the Department of Health and Social Services in the amount of \$3.7 million. This additional spending authority is provided to offset unanticipated costs related to physicians and out-of-territory hospital claims.

As noted in second reading, the audit of Government of Yukon accounts for the 2009-10 fiscal year is underway. The figures summarized in the supplementary estimate reflect the financial results of the 2009-10 fiscal year to be detailed in the same year's public accounts. It is noted that these figures are subject to audit. As always, we remain in wait of the Auditor General's final analysis and the presentation the public accounts. We do not jump to the conclusions before the fact, as the Liberals tend to do in this House. Notwithstanding, Mr. Chair, our government remains in a very, very healthy net financial position as we continue to be one of only two jurisdictions to not reflect a net debt position. This government's financial outlook continues to be very positive. We have continued to deliver significant investments in Yukon while maintaining a strong fiscal framework and indeed a savings account, Mr. Chair.

Our strong financial position continues to provide our government flexibility as we continue to be responsive in making strategic investment decisions on behalf of all Yukoners. I believe all Yukoners will appreciate the results achieved by the prudent financial planning and management that has transpired under this government's mandates since 2002.

I am extremely pleased, once again, with the efforts of our government, our department officials and the Department of Finance. They ensure that we deliver effective services and programs, while maintaining this very healthy fiscal position. I certainly look forward to discussing the appropriation more fully in general debate, but let me cover a couple more points. First, I must, once again, encourage the Official Opposition to recognize that accounting procedures and requirements during the course of a fiscal year, after main estimates have been tabled, are not unusual, and it is in keeping with the required responsibilities under public sector accounting guidelines.

The Liberals seem to think that the changes, the variances in fiscal framework are due to massive spending. Once again, I would remind the Leader of the Liberal Party that there are a number of factors that create variance, including the aforementioned health care services requirement, which was not anticipated. Of course, you cannot, to any real degree, anticipate what your health care costs will be over the course of any 12-month period. But we will always meet those demands, as required under the *Canada Health Act*, in providing what I would call our obligations to the Yukon public in making sure comparable services are available.

There are some accounting procedures that have created variances in our fiscal framework. One of them is the Auditor General's direction in rebooking the Building Canada fund. This created a variance of millions and millions of dollars in the fiscal framework and is a timing issue, not massive expenditure. Secondly, I would hope the Leader of the Liberal Party

understands the effect of change of tangible capital assets. This is a calculation that is done under the accounting procedures that are required. It's not massive spending; it is an accounting calculation that can create variances.

I would hope that the member understands what revotes are and what the outcomes of revotes can be, once the exercise is concluded and the variances have been established vis-à-vis that exercise.

So the Liberals are incorrect in suggesting here in the House and in the public that the variances in the fiscal framework are the result of massive spending, because they simply are not.

They make much about deficit. Let me reflect on why I mentioned earlier that we, the Yukon Party government, do not jump to conclusions. We table our estimates, we go through the processes, the variances and we provide in total our books to the Auditor General to await her work and from there we then table the public accounts, which, by the way, are the final balance — I will emphasize "final balance". The numbers in the final balance are very important because, unlike the speculative approach by many in this House, unlike estimates and projections, final balance is exactly that: final balance.

Let me reflect now on all final balances since the year 2003, which was the last former Liberal government's public accounts. In that year, the last fiscal year of the former Liberal Party government, the final balance in the Yukon Territory was actually the last time we had a final balance deficit. That was in 2003.

The Yukon Party government's budgets since then — 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 — all final balances, duly audited, present in the public accounts, are all surpluses. I'll repeat for the Liberals and the members opposite — all surpluses — final balance surpluses, duly audited.

The good news on that count is the Yukon Party government, through its prudent fiscal management, through its efforts to create a savings account, through its strategic investments has actually, on a final balance basis, duly audited, present in the public accounts, taken in over \$150 million more than we have expended.

So I challenge the members opposite — especially the Liberals — to somehow change the final balance facts of our fiscal position in the Yukon. It is a good one, we're one of only two jurisdictions that have a net financial resource position, versus a net debt position, and we have a savings account.

We have invested heavily, strategically, across the Yukon, in infrastructure and public facilities, in programs and services for Yukoners, which the Liberal Party in this House voted against. They voted against the prudent fiscal management; they voted against the savings account; they voted against all those successive, surplus final-balance year-ends. We put up our fiscal record to any past government's and stand ready to defend it.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Chair, that was very interesting. First of all, we do have not one, but two deputy ministers of Finance, past and present, in the House. It would only be fair if there were one sitting next to me, but I know we can't do it that way so I'll muddle along on my own. We do welcome back the

previous Deputy Minister of both Finance and Health and Social Services, all in one person.

Mr. Chair, the Premier paints a very interesting picture. He says that occasions arise where departments must exceed their voting authority. Only Health and Social Services had to do this. The only explanation we received was that the \$3.7 million that's being requested in the Health and Social Services vote is to cover unexpected Outside travel for health services, and we have no real argument with that; however, the Premier talked about prudent planning. It's interesting. The Premier talks about prudent planning, and he tries to offer us lectures on accounting procedures. All I want to point out to the Premier is that some 18 months ago in March 2009, for the 2009-10 budget, this Premier stood on his feet in the House and proudly announced that we tabling the seventh consecutive surplus budget.

He did table a budget that forecast a surplus, as the Premier points out. Looking at the mains from 2009-10, there it was, a surplus/deficit for the year, \$19,388,000. The Premier said that proves it was a surplus. He just said it over there to the officials — we did.

All we would point out is, if that's the line he wants to refer to — the line after all the adjustments and after revenues less expenditures less considering the effects of change in tangible capital assets, which the Premier so earnestly wanted to point out to us — now in the budget in front of us, that same line is in brackets. Surplus/deficit for the year is a negative number. It's in brackets. It's now revisited \$25,675,000 deficit.

By the Premier's own logic, if he was forecasting that it was a surplus based on a \$19,388,000 amount, which he said quite often that spring, then I don't know why he has such a hard time accepting the fact that it's now a \$25,675,000 deficit.

It's easy to forecast a rosy future and then say later, as the Premier did here this afternoon, "Not my fault; not my bad; Auditor General changed the rules; dog ate my homework; somebody else's fault."

Well, every year we have to deal with the Auditor General's instructions and decisions. Sometimes we may feel it has been beneficial to the bottom line and sometimes not, but you can't say we don't want to count that part of accounting. That's messy; we can't do that. What the Auditor General actually said was that we couldn't book the revenue until there were the offsetting expenses on some of those projects funded by the Government of Canada. The Premier seems to take issue with the Auditor General's advice, saying the Auditor General forced us to do it. She put this nasty number in brackets in my budget.

You know, Mr. Chair, based on the Premier's logic I'm glad he's not a weatherman because the Premier would stand up in June or July and say, "We forecast it's never going to snow next winter. It's not going to snow. Look, the sun is shining, the days are 21 hours long." Then, come winter, the Premier would say, "It's shocking. It got cold out, the days are shorter and there's messy white stuff on the ground. We didn't know that at the beginning of the year." The Premier would make a very poor weatherman.

My question for the Premier is —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Mr. Fentie, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I'm not a weatherman. I haven't ever been a weatherman and don't intend to be one.

Chair's ruling

Chair: There is no point of order.

Mr. Mitchell: I appreciate the Premier's literal view of the analogy.

I guess my question for the Premier is this: if, in the main estimates, it reflected a surplus for the year of \$19,388,000, does not the fourth budget of the year, *Supplementary Estimates No. 3*, now reveal it to be a deficit for the current year — meaning the year 2009-10, the previous year to now, but the year that's under discussion — as it says on page S-1, of \$25,675,000? If the Premier will just admit to that, as everyone else in Yukon recognizes, I think we can move on.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I really am befuddled at where the member opposite is coming from sometimes — how the member tends to conveniently reference the Auditor General when it serves a purpose, and how the member has a different view when it comes to the Auditor General when it doesn't serve the purpose.

The fact of the matter is that, after two years of booking the Building Canada fund in a certain manner — in the past, all types of funds structured similarly to what Building Canada was, were all booked up front.

The fact of the matter is, that's a \$21-million variance. It's not spending, as the members opposite continue to articulate. It is an accounting variance because of a timing issue. So that's what that portion of any fiscal framework is showing and demonstrating. There's a variance. I was reflecting on final balances after all matters have been addressed, duly accounted for, and our books have been turned over to the Auditor General to be audited.

Final balances are very important. In this case, the speculation coming from across the floor are attempts — at least appear to be attempts — to manipulate the figures that are —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: On a point of order, Mr. Mitchell.

Mr. Mitchell: On a point of order, the Hon. Premier is now imputing a false and unavowed motive to another member — namely, myself — that we are trying to misrepresent figures. That's clearly out of order.

Chair's ruling

Chair: On the point of order, the Chair also believes that it is definitely very close to imputing false motives, whether it is or not. I assume most members believe that each member is honourable. So I would encourage members to respect each other in this Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: As I was saying, we can't, just on a matter of convenience change the way things are. That's why

final balances are so important to any good fiscal manager. We understand there will be variances in the course of a fiscal year, but it also demonstrates in the fiscal framework that even after those variances the Yukon government actually has a savings account. It has a net financial resource position. The last final balance deficit was the last budget by the former Liberal government in this territory. That's a fact of life, Mr. Chair. I can't change that. The member might want to call the Auditor General on that one because it is public accounts final balance figures.

If we had followed the member's logic, that means the indicators — that independent agency's review — to determine the fiscal position of governments would have to be changed. You can't manipulate those indicators, Mr. Chair. If we on the government side were to manipulate those indicators or try to use the indicators and other variances through the course of the fiscal year in dealing with the fiscal framework, we would be hauled out of here in shackles. Now I heard the Member for Porter Creek South mumbling something off-microphone. It probably has to do with shackles, and I would remind the Member for Porter Creek South that they fit all sizes.

Having said that, let me point out what the member, the Leader of the Liberal Party, is actually suggesting. The Liberal leader says that the government has spent its way broke and that's the fiscal position of the Yukon. That's not the case. That means the member would have to change those indicators and changes those facts and figures that are duly audited.

Let me repeat the fiscal position of the Yukon: we are one of only two jurisdictions in the country with a savings account — one of only two jurisdictions in the whole of Canada.

That's what I would call a very significant financial position to be in. That includes, by the way, a billion-dollar budget. This Yukon Party government has doubled the fiscal capacity of the Yukon. In doing so, we have created a savings account that has allowed us to be one of only two jurisdictions in the country that is in a net financial resource position. At the same time, we have provided Yukoners some \$5 million plus of tax relief in the course of our prudent fiscal management. We've been able to deal with variances through the course of a fiscal year because we have a savings account, and we have the options available to meet the needs of Yukoners. Is the member suggesting that a variance during the course of a fiscal year that includes a \$3.7-million cost requirement for the Department of Health and Social Services to meet health care needs of Yukoners is a bad thing? Is the Liberal leader suggesting that meeting our collective bargaining agreement obligations to the employees is a bad thing? Now we know how the formal Liberal government used to meet those obligations. They were servicing debt to meet those obligations. Not the Yukon Party government. We have a savings account. We, Mr. Chair, have a savings account to meet those variances and obligations.

At the end of the day, the facts are very clear — very, very clear — and for the Liberals to suggest that the Yukon Party government has spent the territory broke is incorrect. It is flying in the face of the evidence, as this government has expended some \$150 million less than it has taken in. It is building highways, bridges and roads. It is building cultural centres

and new multi-purpose facilities in Corrections. It's building hospitals. It's creating jobs for Yukoners. It has stimulated the Yukon economy, along with the private sector's stimulation, that has resulted in the Yukon being one of the only bright spots in North America during a major global recession.

Mr. Chair, we have a future. We have a future because we have fiscal strength in this territory. And, you know, the private sector looks to that; they look to a jurisdiction like the Yukon and the fiscal position it's in, and that's something they will consider in making their decisions of investment.

I guess we're going to be here a long time, because there is a huge departure from what we as a government are required to do when it comes to managing the books and doing all the accounting, to the views and approach the Liberals would take when it comes to managing the books and doing the accounting.

We're very pleased with the record; we're very pleased with the outcomes; we're very pleased with the final balance; and we're very pleased with our multi-year projects going forward. It shows that the Yukon will continue to have a savings account.

Mr. Mitchell: We're not asking the Premier to answer questions about a final balance figure; we actually asked him a straightforward question about the surplus/deficit position for the 2009-10 year. He just can't seem to accept it or, even worse, he doesn't actually recognize that it's a deficit. That would be very frightening to Yukoners, if the Premier doesn't even recognize what it says on the page. We'll have to hope it's just that he finds it so unpleasant he doesn't want to speak to it.

It's interesting — the Premier's references to the Auditor General of Canada and us — because it's not this side of the House that criticized the Auditor General. It's not this side of the House who says, "That's just her opinion. We have others." You haven't heard that from the Liberal Party. That was the Premier's opinion being expressed on the Auditor General's report on the Premier's misguided misadventures in the wonderful wacky world of asset-backed commercial paper. Certainly it's not this side that has criticized the Auditor General; the Premier has and perhaps he'll continue to. Within just a few months we'll have a new Auditor General, and perhaps the Premier will criticize her or him as well.

The Premier likes to answer a different question than the question that was asked. It's an old debater's trick: don't answer the question, answer a different question of your own choosing. I don't think it's fooling anyone, and it's certainly not fooling anyone on this side of the House. From what we hear, it's not fooling very many Yukoners either.

The Premier mentioned when he was on his feet — he talked in terms of great concern about how the Official Opposition — the Liberal caucus — would treat the issue of government employees and collective agreements. I would remind the Premier, since he likes talking about previous Liberal governments that none of us actually served in, that we might as well look back at the previous Yukon Party government. That's the only government that rolled back employees' salaries by two percent and then froze them that way for two years. That's how the Yukon Party deals with collective agreements. It just sim-

ply rolls them back — a two-percent rollback, then freeze it. Why did the Yukon Party decide to do that? We'll never know. Perhaps we should ask the Deputy Premier, because she was the executive assistant and in a senior advisory position to the Premier of the day in the Yukon Party. Perhaps we should ask the Member for Riverdale North because he was working there as well. I believe it was the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that suggested that I was somehow whispering these thoughts in the former Yukon Party Premier's ears, and I'm sorry to disappoint that minister and this government, but I was working at the time for the Yukon Chamber of Commerce and witnessing this happen — witnessing the Yukon Party government of the day say, "We have to roll back salaries. There isn't enough money to pay our employees."

I will admit to one thing, because I did work for that government and, in 22 months, I will absolutely admit to failing to ever come up with a good explanation for why they had to do that. There was no reason to do that. It was mean-spirited and it was done. So the Yukon Party doesn't stand on very firm ground when it wants to talk about the treatment of its employees and honouring collective agreements.

Again, for the Premier, what is the current-year deficit — the surplus or deficit for the year — in the budget that's in front of us right now — that number in brackets of \$25,675,000, at the bottom of page S-1, the surplus (deficit) for the year? Without going into a long discourse about previous governments and what the state of the world was in 2002 when they came into power, can the Premier just answer that simple little question? What does that number in brackets reflect?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I really appreciate the Liberal leader enlightening us on those things of the past. He missed renewal — when it comes to standing on one's record in relationship to employees. The Yukon Party government is very pleased we have negotiated now three collective bargaining agreements in the course of our two mandates.

Now, let me once again caution the Liberal leader. To be a prudent financial manager, one cannot just ignore all the requirements that will be needed in calculating the fiscal framework. It's not a matter of convenience; it's a matter of doing what's necessary. So if we go through it all, and what's before us, here's what we're actually dealing with. We have a net financial resource position to the positive — to the positive, Mr. Chair. That is critical. The documents before the member show that that net year-end — net financial position is some \$67 million.

But let's go further. Standard and Poor's has provided a credit rating for the Yukon, which is AA, a very high rating globally, Mr. Chair. Our tax revenues have grown some 65 percent since taking office, despite the consumer price index increasing only by 11.6 percent, and this is during a time that we have provided tax breaks for Yukoners.

Over \$5 million annually we have put back into the pockets of Yukoners. We currently have approximately \$260 million in cash and investments on hand. That's over a quarter of a billion dollars that we have to the good in this territory.

We have investments that have earned us somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$19 million to date, including the asset-

backed commercial paper investment, which has earned us well in excess of \$1 million to date.

The Liberals have stated on the floor of the House and publicly, to whomever is unfortunate enough to be within listening range, that the Yukon is broke. How can we have any discussion, any debate, any constructive interaction on that basis? I have just articulated the financial position of the Yukon Territory, as of March 31, 2010, vis-à-vis the documents before us, and these are yet to be finalized — these are yet to be duly audited and presented in the form of the public accounts, yet the Liberals say we are broke, and I have just presented to this House the financial position.

Let me go over them again for the benefit of the member opposite. He asked — I guess he doesn't look — what is our financial position at year-end. It is \$67.4 million.

I've informed him that we have a double A credit rating. You think, Mr. Chair, that Standard & Poor's on a global basis would provide this territory a double A credit rating if we were broke? We get a double A credit rating because we are good fiscal managers and we are in a very healthy net financial position.

Does the member not recognize what 65-percent growth in tax revenues is all about — even though the CPI was less than 12 percent and at the same time there were significant tax breaks for Yukoners each and every year? Does the member not recognize that \$260 million of cash, plus investments, is on hand here in the Yukon and the member says we're broke? How can this be, Mr. Chair? This is a fruitless discussion.

I guess the Liberals have a purpose and the purpose is lost on the government side, because I don't think Yukoners are that limited in their knowledge of reconciling their bank account. Those Yukoners who are in business, who do have to do financial statements, those Yukoners who are living in the Yukon today who experience what's going on here each and every day — I don't think they're that limited. I think Yukoners are very astute and the Liberal leader will answer for these things. The statements made will definitely be statements where the member is held to account.

Mr. Mitchell: I will agree with the Premier on the last thing he stated before he sat down: Yukoners are very astute and people will have to answer for their statements and their actions.

The Premier stands here and talks about the savings account, as he puts it so often, the net financial resources at the end of 2009-10 of some \$67 million, knowing that, no doubt also on his desk, is the other budget we'll get to — or perhaps get to — in this sitting, the next budget he tabled, which is *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*. There's more to come, Mr. Chair, but that's the first supplementary for 2010-11.

That supplementary already shows projected net financial resources at the end of the current year of just half of that \$67 million — \$33.6 million for 2010-11. So the Premier, who likes to talk about spending trajectories — well, he has gone, in just a couple of years, from a 2007-08 actual of \$165 million in net financial resources at the end of the year, to 2008-09 of \$151 million, to a 2009-10 original estimate of \$122 million and to a revised estimate for 2009-10 of \$67 million. Now he's

down to a \$33-million estimate in this vote that we'll get to a little later this sitting, perhaps this week, of \$33 million. Does the Premier not see a trend there? Does he not see a problem with going from \$165 million to \$33 million, in just three years? That \$33 million does include, of course, our remaining investment in the restructured notes from the asset-backed paper — not the most liquid investment in the world, Mr. Chair — the 30-day investment that's now an eight-year investment.

So the Premier has said: "All these numbers are still subject to the final certification by the Auditor General." It gives us cause for concern. We did have a briefing from Finance officials, but does the Premier now expect, for this final budget — this year-end closing budget in front of us, the one that shows the \$25.6-million deficit — to see any significant change in that number when the Auditor General finishes her good work? I know the Auditor General has been working with the Department of Finance diligently. She's quite happy no doubt that we finally have all the numbers from the Yukon Housing Corporation and that we were finally able to close off the previous year-end, the 2008-09 year-end. Does the Premier expect to have a significant change in this deficit for the year from the \$25.6-million deficit that is currently showing?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Is the member not aware of how this process works? Is the Liberal Leader actually saying to this House that he doesn't understand what business the Auditor General conducts? Surely the member recognizes that we've presented the numbers to the Auditor General, and the Auditor General will provide her opinion. The past Liberal government got her opinion, and it was qualified. It was qualified because of capping leave liability. I can tell you that the Liberal leader is really, really creating himself a problem.

The year-end balance is on the documents, clearly — clearly typed on the pages of the supplementary estimates. The trends for the fiscal framework of the Yukon that goes out into multi-years are clearly reflected and shows what the trends are and shows the savings account.

Now, let us reflect back on being accountable. It wasn't that long ago that the Liberals in this House were berating the government for not spending more money. They were calling on the government to invest money in health care centres because the money we have is growing mouldy in our pockets.

They were calling on the government to invest in other areas, such as increasing the annual grant to Yukon municipalities, which, by the way, the Yukon Party government did and has been increasing each year for a five-year period. I believe we're in the third year now. The Liberals voted against that, yet here in the pages of *Hansard*, they're calling on the government to do exactly that — do what we already had done and they voted against.

This is not a place for idle conversation.

Here's another one from the Liberals: we have millions of dollars in surplus in the bank — this is what the Liberals said then, demanding we spend more money. And the list goes on and on.

This cannot be a constructive discussion whatsoever. It is fruitless. I think the member opposite should let others across the floor engage in the debate. We might make some progress

then but, for now, I don't think there's much more the government side, or I as minister, can provide the member. He has the documents, he has the explanations, he knows what the net financial resource position at year-end is, he has the documents that show what the multi-year estimates are and the trends therein, and the list goes on and on.

Surely he knows what the Auditor General does. If he doesn't, then maybe we've got a deeper problem than first expected. Therefore, the government side is clearing the discussion.

Chair: Mr. Fentie.

Mr. Mitchell: No. That's Mr. Fentie; this is Mr. Mitchell.

Chair: Sorry. Mr. Mitchell.

Mr. Mitchell: There are many things that I don't mind being called, but that is one of them that I prefer not to be. This is really unbelievable. The government wishes to withdraw from debate less than an hour after it started debate because it can't answer the first and most simple question that we've asked.

You know, there are a couple of things I'd point out for the Premier's benefit, because he seems to have a very selective memory of history when he talks about leave liability being capped by the previous Liberal government and that leading to a qualified audit. The previous and the previous Yukon Party governments also capped leave liability and received qualified audits from the Auditor General of the day for the same reason. So I don't think that that's really doing much to educate people to talk about one government. It was done for quite a period of time.

The thing that really concerns me, and the thing that should concern all Yukoners who are listening to this debate today, the thing that should really concern Yukoners is that, when the Premier was on his feet just a short while ago, in his attempt to explain the overall financial picture of Yukon and in his moving around from number to number, he actually said, and asked, do we not understand that the Government of Yukon has, on average, some \$260 million in the bank?

Surely the Premier's not going to move from accrual accounting to cash accounting at this point and simply look at a number in a bank account. Surely the Premier can get an explanation from the officials who are present that the vast majority of that amount — in fact all of it, except for the \$67 million that was projected at that point in time in net financial resources — is required to be there because it offsets current liabilities of the government.

Is the Premier actually standing in this House right now and saying, never mind the \$25.6-million current year deficit; never mind even the \$67 million in net financial resources — soon to be \$33 million when we look at the next budget book — and saying, let's just look at the cash in the bank account, or the cash that's invested: it's \$260 million.

It doesn't matter, Mr. Chair, because the vast bulk of it is offset by liabilities. Certainly the Premier doesn't want to just look at one aspect of this. I hope when the Premier is next on his feet he will indicate that he at least understands that basic issue, that it's not of value to us here in this House today to tell

us how much money exists in total financial resources without looking at the offsetting liabilities.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Mitchell: I think the Member for Kluane, rather than what he just said, is indicating the Premier is trying to buffalo us through this discussion. He must be confused with the lunch he had today, but he won't buffalo us on this debate this afternoon.

It was a straightforward question I asked the Premier, because he ominously said in reference to a report that should be tabled in this House in some three weeks — the Auditor General's final report on the year completed, 2009-10 — said we don't know what that will be, don't know whether the Auditor General will dispute the figures. Surely the Premier has confidence in the figures that were submitted to the Auditor General. We know from Finance officials that they have a very strong belief that those will be the figures that will be accepted, including the \$25.6-million deficit, including the reduction from a much larger number a year earlier — I think it was at the end of the estimate, at the beginning of the year 2009-10 — of \$122 million in net financial resources at the end of the year to \$67.4 million.

If the Premier has any reason to believe that the Auditor General is not going to accept the numbers that were presented, he should let us know now in the interest of full disclosure, because we're accepting at face value that the number will be close to the \$25.6-million deficit of the 2009-10 year. So if the Premier believes that's going to change, he should say so when he's next on his feet. I'll put it in the form of a question: does he believe so?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I believe this is actually fruitless, Mr. Chair. I would encourage the member to go into the *Hansard* and read the record and then come back in here and apologize for the statements being made. He knows what was said.

I hear the Member for Kluane piping up off-microphone, which is pretty much standard procedure for that member. It's obvious what the Member for Kluane is telling his leader sometimes.

Anyway, Mr. Chair, I don't even think the Liberal leader understands what financial assets are and what they mean to the Yukon Territory, frankly.

No matter what, the Liberals voted against those assets, the creation of those assets, and what keeps those assets maintained and what provides those assets to Yukoners, who access them on a daily basis. The Liberals were against that, no matter what. The bottom line is they don't even reflect on the fact that, in many cases, there are funds that are time limited — none of that is part of their debate or discussion. They don't recognize that the country itself collaborated jointly on the Canada economic action plan to deal with the global recession — and the Yukon has done quite well, one of the only bright spots in North America during this period.

I think the best way for me to respond is we'll wait until the member has a chance to read *Hansard* and then he can sit down with me and decide how he wants to deal with some of the statements he has made.

Mr. Mitchell: Any time the Premier wants to walk down to my office — it's just out that door and around the corner — I'll try and explain the financial statements to the Premier because, as long as he holds that position, he should have a better understanding of what they are.

Did the Premier go out and ask Yukoners if they wanted to get into the borrowing business big time? We are now able to borrow up to \$300 million in total borrowing, according to the changes that were made by the Finance minister — up from I think a previous \$138 million. Counting the \$100 million — because that applies to the consolidated debt of Yukon — that is being borrowed by the Yukon Development Corporation and the \$67 million that has been authorized for the Yukon Hospital Corporation to build the two community hospitals and the nurses and visiting specialists residence across the river, plus perhaps the other \$50 million the Yukon Hospital Corporation has been requesting — what is the current amount of the authorized borrowings and what is the amount left this government can borrow, if they so choose?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The member has just listed off a number of projects, and I'll try to put this in context.

The Liberals say we're broke, but the member has stated that there are a number of projects ongoing, so either the Liberals oppose hydro infrastructure, oppose hospitals, and oppose other matters, or they would be telling Yukoners how they would — considering that the Yukon, in their view, is broke — meet those demands. We're far from our debt limit, Mr. Chair. It's not unusual that debt limits are changed by the federal Finance minister; in this case, both Yukon's and the N.W.T.'s were raised.

I want to go over something for the member opposite, and it has to do with amortization. I will articulate a definition of "amortization" here. Amortization is the systematic process of allocating the cost of tangible — let me emphasize "tangible" — capital assets to expense for the periods in which they provide benefits. How many times has the member heard the government side express that exact thing? The government has stated that we are doing this in a manner where, during the course of the useful life of these assets — which are going to be assets that provide services, and will be accessed by Yukoners today, or once they're completed, and long into the future — we are spreading, or balancing, that cost out in the same way as this definition: the systematic process of allocating the cost of tangible capital assets to expense for the periods in which they provide benefits.

These are decisions that governments make. The Liberal Party, however, says we're broke. That means they would not be investing in hospitals, I assume, yet the Liberal leader has stated a number of times that he would not build hospitals in Dawson or Watson Lake; he would build an expansion here.

I thought we were broke, Mr. Chair. Where is the Liberal leader going to get those multi-millions of dollars? Maybe he has something else up his sleeve that nobody knows about. On and on and on we go.

We have paid down debt. We have paid down debt considerably since being in office. The difference is what we're investing in is hospitals and hydro and infrastructure that Yukon-

ers will be using long into the future. The past debt that we were paying down was debt, such as the cost incurred to pay employees their wages, debt incurred by failed enterprises.

The member even went on — and I don't mean to split hairs, but the member went on about the Yukon Party capping leave liability.

The only two governments — in 1999 and 2002 — that capped leave liability were the NDP and the Liberals. We're not even talking about factual issues here. This is indeed a fruitless exercise. We're very proud of our fiscal record; we're very proud of the fiscal position the Yukon is in. In the fiscal year we are discussing at this moment, the net financial resource position of the Yukon at year-end is some \$67 million, and our final balance analysis, duly audited — this is important, because the public accounts for March 31, 2010 have yet to be tabled. The Yukon Party government has brought in \$150 million more than it has expended. That is quite a fiscal record if you compare us, not only to the governments of the past here in Yukon, but compare us with jurisdictions across the country. We are one of only two jurisdictions that has a net financial resource position. That is definitely a record we are proud of.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, Mr. Chair, the Premier's right about one thing: it's fruitless to have this debate because the Premier hasn't answered a single question that has been asked. Not one, Mr. Chair, and when he reads *Hansard* he'll see that he hasn't answered any of the questions asked, he's answering questions of his own choosing. I think we should just give the Premier the opportunity to stand over here and ask a question and then he can run over there and answer it. Then we can say, "Asked and answered." I'll tell you, let's make something clear. The Premier keeps saying that we voted against budgets and so we're against everything in those budgets. Well, we have voted against budgets. You know why? Because they are confidence measures and we have no confidence in this Premier. We have no confidence in this Minister of Finance and we have no confidence in this government. Yes, we voted against budgets. They are confidence measures and we're voting "no confidence".

As to the rest of what the Premier said when he was on his feet, I don't think there's much that he had to say. Oh, I will point out one other thing. Since the Premier talked about governments in 2002 and in 1999 — I think he said — cap leave liability. There's only one of us — between me and the Premier — who served as part of those governments that did so, and it is this Premier. He did. I didn't. The Member for Porter Creek Centre is laughing at that. He realizes the Premier has been caught and he's laughing at the Premier, but it's not a laughing matter.

We'll move on. We asked how close we were to the new borrowing limit of \$300 million. We heard an answer with an amount. We talked about how these things are raised from time to time. We asked what the current debt is; we won't get an answer. The Member for Kluane wants to know what the Premier is hiding; we won't get an answer to that either.

We asked why Yukoners weren't asked if they wanted to get into the borrowing business big time; we didn't get an answer to that. We asked if the numbers will change significantly

in the Auditor General's report, because we thought the Premier might have been preparing us for something; we didn't get an answer to that. We would ask when the Premier became aware that last year's budget was a deficit: was it November, December when during the year? We won't get an answer to that.

Can we get an update on the asset-backed commercial paper investments that have been restructured? I think they are now showing on the books as some \$25 million. Is that the amount that is still showing on the books as an expected amount, were these to be sold today into the markets?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, Mr. Chair, I see that the Member for Kluane has lots to say. Well, we go about our business by not Googling people. We go about our business as a government that recognizes that our employees provide a great service and when one of them exercises their right to freedom of speech, we do not take issue with that as the Member for Kluane does. We do not single people out — for whatever purpose unknown — in the manner the Member for Kluane has when it comes to the board of trustees of the Hospital Corporation. We don't make accusations that the hiring office for the Department of Highways and Public Works is at the Adult Warehouse. We don't do that; we have respect for people. I would hope that one day the Member for Kluane recognizes what that means should they ever fall into government.

The Member for Kluane mentioned shame. It is shameful when you attack employees and citizens in that manner. It is very shameful, and we've apologized to the broader public on behalf of the Member for Kluane, who seems not to grasp what it is that the member is doing. I'm sure it's at great consternation of his leader who knows all about that, because I'm sure he's hearing about it.

We don't run around following the dictates of the federal Liberal leader when it comes to the long-gun registry. We don't do that. We stand by our verbal commitments to Yukoners, and when it comes time to back those commitments up, we do so with action. We don't muzzle our members, even though the accusations from the members opposite — the Liberal Party — are quite consistent. We don't do that, but we witnessed in this House how it does work. The Liberals showed us an example of muzzling one of their colleagues who did not have the opportunity to stand and represent his constituents in Old Crow. We don't incorrectly reflect on matters before this House, as the Liberals do on a regular basis.

Now to deal with the asset-backed paper. Governments had been investing in asset-backed paper for many years. The investment we have to date — even though the Liberal leader has stated to the public that we have lost this money — has actually earned us \$1.8 million plus. We fail to understand how the member can extrapolate that into a loss. Yes, the short-term notes have been exchanged for long-term notes and, upon maturity, the long-term notes will be worth principal plus interest. I suppose if one wanted to speculate for the moment, should they become suddenly worth more than they are at maturity, and there is, in the interests of the public, a benefit and a profit to be gained, one might sell them, but other than that speculative approach, we will wait until maturity and allow them to

earn the interest they earn; therefore they are part of our assets, earning us money along with other investments.

Once again, the member has a lot to say about these things. Too bad it is not factual in terms of what's really going on, and I think the problem the Liberals have is they are quite envious of the fiscal position that the Yukon Party government has created for this territory and they want to get their hands on that very envious fiscal position that the Yukon has to date. We as a government are going to continue to do our job, as elected to do, and this was one of the things we were elected to do: put our financial house in order.

By way of a long list — a litany — of examples of how we've done that and what the outcomes are, it clearly shows that the Yukon's fiscal house is indeed back in order.

The member takes issue with spending things down. Surely the Liberal leader understands that the northern strategy trust fund was sunsetted; therefore it would be spent down. The northern housing trust is a fund that will be spent down. There's a long list of other funds that will be spent down.

Coupled with all that, there is the constant annual revenues that come in; there is the need to do our revotes, which is an accounting exercise that every government must go through. I can say we are quite strict in our approach to revotes because we are ensuring that all departments participate in prudent financial management in dealing with their budget estimates during the course of the fiscal year, but there will be variances. That is a fact of life that happens with budgets, especially for government.

There will be accounting procedures and measures we must deal with; there will be the calculation of the effect of change of tangible capital assets — that is full accrual accounting, by the way, and the government is following the guidelines of full accrual accounting, as I think most jurisdictions are now. All jurisdictions in Canada have now implemented the very same accounting measures and processes.

Through it all, all these calculations — the spending-down of funds, the existing liabilities, the assets we have, our revenues — we are at this point in time in a position that is extremely healthy. We have a savings account.

If we were to extinguish our liabilities as they are — if you look at the documents before us, including the fiscal framework that goes out until the year 2014, they clearly show that the estimates are trending always to the positive. There will be variances during the course of a fiscal year and we all recognize that. The upside for us is we have the capacity these days in the Yukon to deal with the unforeseen, the unplanned and, in doing so, we can address issues in the public interest in a manner that possibly past governments historically in this territory couldn't. We are able to do so because we have increased the fiscal capacity of the Yukon considerably — doubled it, Mr. Chair.

I can only admit — the government side can only admit — what is factual. Our year-end is looking very good. As far as the Auditor General, the member knows full well that the Auditor General will review all matters presented and placed before her and will provide an opinion — very similar to what a corporation would go through with its auditors. They provide an

opinion. We find that opinion to be important of course, but the public accounts are the final balance figures. And the final balance figures are the year-end, once all matters have been concluded. That's something we wait for because that will give us the actual numbers and indeed the actual starting numbers for the year after the fiscal year of 2009-10. As always, they are our start numbers going forward.

So if the member wants us on the government side to admit that the Yukon is broke, we can't do that. The member says so. The Liberals say we're broke but we can't say that, because we're not. If the member would like us to admit our year-end is actually a deficit — no, our net financial resource position at year-end is in surplus. I'm not sure what else I can provide the member opposite, other than he might want to sit back and reflect a little more on the fiscal framework of the Yukon and where it's going, because this is something he'll have to explain in the public — what all this means. Speculation won't cut it.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, you know, this Premier will stand on his feet and say almost anything on the floor of this House, other than answer the straightforward questions that we ask. I think the Premier said that the asset-backed commercial paper has earned some — I believe it was \$1.8 million that he quoted, but I could be corrected. It was one point something million.

I'm finding it hard to believe that he's saying that without presenting the other side of the picture, which is that that \$36-million investment is currently sitting on the books as worth some \$25 million. So if you earned \$1.8 million and you dropped \$11 million, what have you really done?

I hope the Premier doesn't overlook this because it would not be very business like. It would not impress the business people he says are sitting up and taking notice. We've heard from a lot of those business people and they are very concerned about where this Premier is taking us.

So to talk about asset-backed commercial paper, in that investment having been a good investment and only an extension of the term, is turning a sow's ear into a silk purse. That's what the Premier is trying to do, and it's not a very good little transfiguration that he's trying to accomplish there. The Premier never did answer on where we were at with the borrowings that he has authorized through the Crown corporations, regarding the new limit of \$300 million. I hate to give him more questions — he hasn't answered the first six or seven. I think I'll just sit down and say that we'll all look forward to the Auditor General's report at the end of October. I think the officials in Finance are probably doing a very good job of presenting the numbers to the Auditor General, and it will probably be very close to \$25,675,000 in deficit. The Premier could confirm that for us now, or the Auditor General can confirm it for us on October 31. It's up to him.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, once again, the Liberal leader has suggested that asset-backed paper is on the books based on a write-down. The member knows that that's not the case. He knows full well that that's not the case. I could read him the definition of a "write-down", but that probably wouldn't prove to be constructive.

Now, if the member is suggesting our fiscal position before the effect of change of tangible capital assets and other matters that need to be calculated to actually create and present the true fiscal position of the Yukon, no, the government is not going to do that. In fact, nobody in business would do that. That's not how accounting is done.

We are worth what we're worth. The fiscal position of the Yukon is not based on half measures, someone's view, someone's opinion. It's based on a lot of effort and work and calculation to get to the actual financial position of the territory. The actual financial position of the territory as of March 31, 2010 is some \$67 million. That's the net financial resource position. That's why we are defined as one of the only two jurisdictions in the country that has a net financial resource position because of that. This is all based on public sector accounting, guidelines and standards — not a political view or some other measure. It's based on the guidelines and standards that we must follow.

It also goes on to show that the accumulated surplus position of the Yukon is over \$500 million. I've heard the Liberals opposite say, "You can't sell that stuff." No, and why would you? Those assets are for public use. They serve the public, something the Liberals have a hard time understanding — what this public interest is all about.

To them, the public is a tool to be used when they have a desire to discredit the government.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: On a point of order.

Mr. McRobb: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, about an hour ago the Leader of the Official Opposition pointed out how the Premier violated the rules, which is Standing Order 19(g), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member", and I believe we just heard the Premier violate the same clause again.

Chair's ruling

Chair: On the point of order, there is no point of order; it's just a dispute among members. Mr. Fentie.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Chair, Guinness gracious! I see the Member for Kluane is quite sensitive about this. I would be if I were the Member for Kluane, also.

Again, at the risk of being repetitive: the Liberal leader has a view of the Yukon fiscal position, and he can go out and tell the public what he thinks it is; we will present the public accounts with the actual fiscal position as soon as they are ready. In the meantime, notwithstanding that work yet to be done, and the Auditor General providing her opinion, we have tabled all estimates, which show our fiscal position, which is indeed very healthy. The financial health of the government and the Yukon Territory is one of the best in the country. If you look at our estimates that go beyond 2009-10, as far out as 2013-14, the members of this House and the public will clearly see — readily see — that the very solid fiscal position and the good financial health of the Yukon continues.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, you know, Mr. Chair; it's a sad day when the Premier will move around all over the balance sheet, all over the financial summary and try to use the accu-

mulated surplus to discredit the Official Opposition, because he desires to discredit them, since this is the approved wording in this House now — that's what the Premier is doing. It is sad, because we were warned, by no less than the former Yukon Party Premier, that this day would come. When he saw the Premier change the *Taxpayer Protection Act* as one of his early measures after coming into office, he wrote a letter, which became an op-ed to the paper, saying that soon, that would be what the Premier would do. He would simply refer to the accumulated surplus, which is, as the Premier stated, the buildings, the infrastructure, all the capital assets, none of which are going to help this Premier to squirm out of the situation that he's heading toward, in terms of spending, spending, spending, and borrowing more. So, it's unfortunate that we're not going to get any answers out of this Premier today. It's clear that he cannot answer because he cannot stand to admit that he's now tabling deficit budgets.

Now that we get to the supplementary budgets, he may continue to table budgets that forecast surpluses in the spring but, by the time we get all the supplementary budgets in, we see that they turn into deficit budgets.

Again, the Premier still hasn't answered the question of where we're at with the borrowing limit. It would be nice to hear that number. Perhaps the Premier can dispense with the rhetoric and just stand up and give us the number.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Let me help the Liberal leader. Amendments to the *Taxpayer Protection Act* were so we were able to uncap leave liability, which was a problem, obviously, because the government of the day had a qualified audit because of that, and to allow for the implementation of full accrual accounting, which the whole country has gone to. The member somehow takes issue with that.

I think we're going to reflect now on the fiscal position of the Yukon. When the Yukon Party government took office, the Yukon Territory had budgets in the neighbourhood of \$400 million to \$500 million. At the time, they were having to debt-service or pay interest on debt just for things like employee wages.

Upon taking office, we recognized there was a significant financial problem for the Yukon and its government. We set about to work at that time, those many years ago, to address that issue. What is the result in regard to addressing that particular issue? We've doubled the financial capacity of the Yukon Territory — doubled it. In the conduct of that work, we've also historically increased capital budgets to record-sized levels to address another problem that existed upon taking office: no economy, an exodus of our population, unable to meet program and service requirements for the Yukon public.

We addressed that problem by increasing that fiscal capacity and by investing back in the Yukon. What are the results of that? We now are at record levels of population; we have children returning to the Yukon, obtaining gainful employment. We have stimulated the Yukon economy to create confidence among our public but, more importantly, beyond that, in the investment community.

The result of that is the Yukon. It has one of the best economies, not only in the country, but during a global recess-

sion, one of the only bright spots in North America. These things are the result of hard work, the result of financial management, the result of growing our finances so that we could put them to good use on behalf of the Yukon public. We are now experiencing, because of that work, a significant increase in investment from the private sector. We're talking hundreds of millions of dollars of private sector investment happening in today's Yukon, complementing what the government has been doing over these last number of years.

The result of that is that the Yukon is now, when it comes to mining investment, deemed to be fourth in the world. I believe when we took office we were something like 36th or 34th position. Fourth in the world — another result and accomplishment from the efforts put forward. We were elected to do these things. We were elected to address these issues, and from all that, we have built a fiscal framework that goes far beyond the fiscal year that we are operating in.

So let us go to the 2009-10 fiscal year. Our net financial resources at year-end are, as presented, some \$67 million. We also reflect on the next year, the year we're in, 2010-11. It shows once again that our net financial position is in the positive. If you go to 2011-12, we have another fiscal year where our net financial resource position is in the positive. 2012-13 — we have another fiscal year where our net financial resource position is in the positive; 2013-14 — another fiscal year with a net financial resource position to the positive.

So, Mr. Chair, the member talked about trends. Well, before the member opposite are facts and figures that show the trends. I just think that the Liberals don't like the fiscal position of the Yukon and are doing everything they can to present a different one. Well, the government side is not going to participate in that. The government side takes it very seriously — takes it very seriously to ensure we meet our obligations to the Yukon public.

You can't just change the facts, the figures, the numbers as a matter of convenience. That is suggesting that officials would do something like that which, again, is another example of where the Liberals have gone wrong in their approach.

What's missing from the Liberals is this: they have failed consistently to present to Yukoners how they would manage the finances. They have consistently levelled empty criticism. They have no plan; they have no vision for the Yukon. For prudent financial management, it takes more than just talking about it. We have to present to Yukoners how they would do it.

How would they have doubled the fiscal capacity of this territory? What would they have done with that increase in financial resources?

We make suggestions from time to time about the Liberal Party not supporting things. It's worse than that — the government side is merely trying to present to the public and to this House where the Liberals are opposing investments in this territory and what it all means.

For the member to stand here and suggest that it's just a confidence issue — Mr. Chair, the Liberals can't have it both ways. These investments include schools, highways, bridges, roads, hospitals, hydro infrastructure and the list goes on and on and on. So we're very pleased with the financial position of

the Yukon. It is a surplus position. It is realized through the course of multi-years in the fiscal framework in a surplus position, and it will hold us in good stead because we have created a savings account to be used today and into the future to the benefit of the Yukon public.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Chair, with members' indulgence, I'd just like to take this opportunity to introduce a couple of guests to our Assembly today.

Joining us today are members of Capstone Mining and the Minto Exploration Company. In our gallery are Stephen Quin, president of Capstone; Darren Pylot, vice-chairman and CEO; Gregg Bush, chief operating officer; Brad Mercer, vice-president of exploration; Anne Labelle, manager of sustainability and legal affairs; Jaime Delgado, the mine manager; and Jason Howe, VP of business development and investor relations.

Please join me in welcoming these members of our responsible mining companies in our territory to our gallery today.

Applause

Chair: Is there any further general debate? Seeing none, we'll proceed to the Department of Health and Social Services, Vote 15.

Do members wish a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 21, *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2009-10*. We will now proceed with general debate in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services.

Department of Health and Social Services

Hon. Mr. Hart: I'm very pleased to speak to the supplementary budget today. Of course, the budget is chalk full of items all with Health and Social Services on it, so my speech will be reasonably short today.

There is one health care expense included in the supplementary budget in the amount of \$3,700,000 that is required mostly for higher than anticipated costs for out-of-territory hospital claims and physician claims.

Yukon received invoices for these services very late in the fiscal year and therefore was not in a position to identify the actual cost until that time. Health and Social Services is working closely with officials in Alberta and British Columbia to ensure more timely invoicing occurs in the future so that we can have a more accurate and timely figure in regard to our budget forecasting for these services.

I will say, Mr. Chair, these services are very much needed for many Yukoners and we hope to continue to provide those services to all Yukoners in the future. These out-of-Yukon services are an essential part of providing health care and round-

ing out the range of health services that can be provided here in the Yukon. With that Mr. Chair, I will take questions from the members opposite.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister for his succinct opening remarks, as always. I thank the officials for being here today. In particular I'd like to thank the officials and their extended team who provided us with a very extensive briefing, not so much on this particular budget but on the 2010-11 first supplementary budget, with a lot of detail that we look forward to getting to when that budget is called for general debate.

We don't really have a lot of questions regarding the one line item in this budget — the \$3,700,000 — because we think it has been adequately explained by the officials and by the minister, and we're encouraged when the minister says that officials are working with the other jurisdictions to try and have these expenditures reported to us in a more timely fashion, but we also understand that that's not always possible. We would say that we also recognize that this \$3,700,000, although it's the only new spending in this budget, is not really responsible for the majority of the change during the course of the whole fiscal year from a surplus budget to a deficit budget, although we do recognize that health care in total has played its part in that.

We will take the opportunity to ask some questions on other matters under general debate for Health, because we don't know when the other budget will be called, so we'll do some of it today. We have some questions regarding the Thomson Centre.

We did get some capital costs for renovations in the briefing notes for the budget yet to come, and I don't have those in front of me now. Can the minister say, with any degree of confidence, that we now have a handle on the total amount that those costs are going to be? Does he have a revised projected date for the Thomson Centre reopening, with 19 of the rooms that are to be opened? I would hope that my crack team of support workers and researchers will send in those briefing notes for the other budget, because there are some questions that are answered there and I don't have those briefing notes on me right now.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I will advise the member opposite that the contract for the Thomson Centre has been let; the tender has been provided to Graham, contracting through the Hospital Corporation. So, we haven't received the signed copy back from the contractor yet, but we know that some work has already commenced on the Thomson Centre with regard to windows, et cetera. Demolition is scheduled to start the middle of next week, with the anticipated opening sometime early in the spring next year.

Obviously, we're a little late getting started here compared to what we originally thought was going to happen but, as I said, the tender has been let. We're in the process now of purchasing materials for the 19 units and in conjunction with providing recruitment for staff. We're very confident we'll be able to provide the full complement of staff with regard to the Thomson Centre. In fact, we have been very successful in dealing with the local graduating class of LPNs and I've been advised that it's also becoming much easier for us to attract regis-

tered nurses here to the Yukon. Again, as I stated, we anticipate no difficulty in providing services for the Thomson Centre. We look to have it underway. We would like the training to take place early in February so that we can open shortly thereafter.

Mr. Mitchell: I appreciate the minister's update. Just staying for a moment with the Thomson Centre, we are talking about the various renovations, from call buttons, to lifting devices, to changes in doorways and so forth. Are the renovations and repairs that were required in terms of building envelope, and also the roof — are those completely accomplished at this point? There are no additional issues there?

Hon. Mr. Hart: With regard to the facility, as I said, the tender has just been let for the construction work to take place on the Thomson Centre to complete all the facilities that will be required, which do include enlarging the doors — that stuff is all part of the tender.

As far as equipment purchase and that, again, that is something that we are in the process of doing currently and that's well underway. We are focusing on long-term items, the heavier-lift items, to get them here on time — at least for some of the rooms that we will need to assist larger clients. Also, we're looking at preparing — as I said, the tender went out, and we look to complete all of the work

As I said, the tender went out and we looked to complete all of the work that was provided for in that tender from the inside to the outside grounds, which would have to be completed next summer with regard to the exterior work.

Mr. Mitchell: Just for clarification, when the minister talks about the work that needs to be done next summer — the outside work — are both the outside and the inside work, in terms of building envelope — that is, the roofing work and the changes, in terms of ventilation and sealing off the building for moisture, in terms of membrane — all off the work that needed to be done because of the previous mould problems that had developed — is that work completed?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Right now, as I indicated, part of the changes of the facility includes the removal of the skylights and, as I stated, Northerm is just currently doing that process to ensure that that portion takes place now, so that they can carry on with the interior work, which includes dealing with the mechanical, also the fire and other aspects, such as the nurse on-call process, to ensure that all of our clients in that facility get the proper service needed.

The exterior work that I was talking about relates mainly to fencing and exterior work to the grounds of the facility that we will obviously not have time to commence, given the time of the year right now.

Mr. Mitchell: Can the minister update us, in terms of the borrowing that has been authorized by letter for the Yukon Hospital Corporation, by letter from the minister responsible — is that now sitting at \$67 million, in terms of the authorization? Was more authorized?

Just doing the simple math, we believe that there are two hospital facilities, one in Dawson and one in Watson Lake — one to cost an additional \$22 million beyond the \$5 million that was previously spent in Watson Lake; one to cost \$28 million in Dawson, plus some \$17 million for the nurses and visiting

specialists residence, so that's \$67 million. Is that the total that has been authorized to date?

Hon. Mr. Hart: We originally provided the Yukon Hospital Corporation with \$25 million for Watson Lake and \$25 million for Dawson City. Obviously, with the bids that came in, one was a little under, one was a little over, but they still stayed within their process. \$17 million was provided for the residence — for them to borrow. Additionally, \$2.9 million was provided to do the renovations required for the Thomson Centre.

Mr. Mitchell: Okay, so \$67 million, plus \$2.9 million — so roughly \$70 million in authorized borrowing ability for the corporation. Has the corporation, either formally or informally — via the chair or the CEO — requested that the government authorize an additional \$50 million, or some other number, toward the necessary modifications for Whitehorse General Hospital? Would this require a separate letter from the minister before the corporation could embark on that?

Hon. Mr. Hart: We have no formal request from the Yukon Hospital Corporation for the said amount that the individual specified, but we have been in conversation with the Hospital Corporation on the need for a new emergency facility.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, I don't want to play a guessing game for a number, because it's actually the chair of the corporation who has floated this \$50-million number, both in his testimony in this House — I believe it was in the spring when he came in, unless it was the fall last year — I think it was in the spring. He mentioned that amount. That was sort of the first we'd heard of it in any official capacity, but I believe it was also referenced in the annual general meeting that my colleague, the Member for Kluane, attended on our behalf. I don't want to play "20 Questions" here, but the minister has indicated there have been informal discussions. Can the minister provide us with more information about the nature of the request or the need that has been identified, including how this would be financed? Would it be with additional borrowings by the corporation, or has there been a direct request to the government to come up with this amount of money for infrastructure, and some timelines as to what has been requested of the government in terms of the needs to do with updates to the Whitehorse General Hospital?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As I indicated earlier, we just had informal discussions with the Yukon Hospital Corporation. We discussed rough estimates as per what this facility may cost. We don't have to beat around the bush. The member opposite will recall that witnesses were in here this spring, and they estimated it was going to be \$45 million. We've had no formal request from the Hospital Corporation with regard to the amount for the emergency room construction. Again, we've only had preliminary discussions with regard to this facility, and we have not discussed how and when this item will be paid for and when it will be required.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, how it will be paid for, I guess we'll come to whenever that's determined, whether it is borrowing or whether it is paid for out of a number of years' capital funds from the government.

I'm interested, though, in pursuing the idea of when the need should be met. We've heard it from doctors; we've heard it from nurses that the need is large and that they're working in adverse conditions, trying to provide the best possible health care to Yukoners, which they do. But for anyone who has been to Emergency or has been in intensive care, we know the areas are undersized for the demand that's now put upon them — not just by residents of Whitehorse, but by residents across the territory, who end up at the major health care facility in Yukon.

Has the CEO and the chair of the board indicated that we need to start this within two years, we need to accomplish it within five years — some range of timeline that they're looking toward?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As the member indicated, in discussions I've had with some physicians with regard to the hospital, they would have liked to have seen the addition to the ER yesterday.

As in many instances of facilities we have in the Yukon — many NGOs — would like to have their stuff yesterday. Of course, we all could use more or less, but the issue is right now, we have traffic flow into the facility that we have to worry about, with the new residence. There's also dealing with privacy that we have to worry about — concerns in the actual ER. As the member indicated, we have to look at the efficiency aspect of the facility itself.

Of course, I wasn't around when this place was designed back then. I'm not going to try to hide behind that, but the facility is running quite well; however, it is also running very near capacity. As the CEO will tell you, running near capacity is when it's running at its best efficiency also. They've indicated that that is something they would like to get into the five-year plan with regard to extension of the emergency room.

Mr. Mitchell: A little while ago, when we were talking about the amounts of authorized borrowings to date, the minister referred to the \$50-million figure for the two hospitals in Watson and Dawson. Although it was originally \$25 million and \$25 million, we now know they're projecting \$28 million for Dawson, \$22 million for Watson, although that's on top of the \$5 million that has already been spent there when it was the minister's department.

Can the minister provide us with an update on what contracts have been let? Is there progress? Is it on time and on budget to date? Can we get a bit of a projection on when each of these facilities will be in service?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Obviously, I'm not in a direct position to be totally aware of where each one of these contracts is at. These contracts are handled by the CEO of the Hospital Corporation and its board of directors. I will tell the member opposite that both contracts have been let for Dawson and Watson Lake. I understand the one in Dawson — I think Dowland is the successful applicant in that particular process and, from what I understand, they are expected to commence work shortly — in fact, very shortly, with the aspect of, hopefully, trying to get some of the services in before the ground freezes. I know some preliminary work was done this summer on the site, so I expect that they will get moving on that facility. As I

said, I would like to indicate that we expect some work to be done on the service centre this year, weather permitting.

With regard to Watson Lake, they're moving along, and I understand they're moving dirt faster than they can keep the weather there. As we all know, Watson Lake is the snowbelt of the Yukon, so we're trying to beat the snow in Watson Lake. We have a very eager subcontractor there who is moving things around. Right now, from what I understand, they are currently on schedule in Watson Lake, and we anticipate, again, in December of next year, the opening of that facility — to be somewhere in the full operation level as of December of 2011, for the Watson Lake facility. Again, I'm led to believe it is moving along according to plan, and it is on time and on schedule.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister for his responses. Some of these questions are difficult because if we ask them of the minister, he says, "Well, it's the Hospital Corporation CEO that is fully apprised of it." And when we ask the questions of the CEO and the chair — and we don't know when we'll next get to do that, but once a year — sometimes we get told: "That's a question for the minister." So the minister will hopefully be patient and excuse me if I ask him questions for which he doesn't have all the answers because, in some cases, he may have them.

Back to these facilities — the O&M costs for the facilities. We've been led to believe by the CEO and the chair of the hospital board that this will be financed, in large part, through lease-back arrangements with the Yukon government for the Department of Health and Social Services space that will be in each of these facilities, plus additional operating grants. Does the minister have any information on what these proposed O&M costs for the fully functional facilities are anticipated to be?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I accept his concern with regard to the hospital, but again, as I said, I'm not in possession of that specific information as far as the numbers go. With regard to the leases, we haven't negotiated the lease for either facility, as neither facility is even coming out of the ground yet.

With regard to Watson Lake, we have transferred the facility that we normally had with regard to O&M to the Hospital Corporation, and anything that they do update with regard to those facilities, we will look at providing our services. We'll be looking at dealing with the Hospital Corporation on a new lease that will incorporate the upgrade of those facilities and also, again, the improved facilities for those areas.

We expect our 2010-11 estimates to include about \$2 million, which will be transferred from community nursing to the corporation to assist in there, because we'll be using their facility for community nursing, both in Dawson City and in Watson Lake and again, that's to maximize the use of the facility for the benefit of the residents in both those communities.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank the minister for that information. We do recognize that neither facility has risen from the ground yet; however, I believe there is a fairly straightforward plan for each facility. They may not be fully detailed, but certainly the space allocation, I believe, would be known. Since part of the financing of these facilities, in terms of the O&M,

will come from the lease of space to the Department of Health and Social Services, I would think that the department would know the square footage or square metres that the department is planning to lease from the Hospital Corporation. These facilities are due to be open — at least in the case of Watson Lake — as early as December of the coming year. Commercial rental market rates are not rising that rapidly from month to month right now, so perhaps there have been some estimates done by the officials, for the minister's benefit, of what those rental rates would likely be, or the range. Certainly, the department rents other spaces now, some of which might be comparable and they should have some handle on what those rates would be, because those projections would have been necessary for the Hospital Corporation to be able to justify how the building was going to be operated. Perhaps the minister could answer that question, regarding how much space in each facility that the department will be leasing, what the rental range for that space would be?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I appreciate where the member opposite is coming from, I believe, with regard to his questioning on this matter. We're in the process of dealing with the Hospital Corporation on our community nursing needs with regard to both Watson Lake and Dawson City, and it's not quite just as simple as floor space. We have to look at all the services that are going to be required within the hospital that can be jointly used so that we maximize the efficiency of the facility, as well as the efficiency for our clients in both those regions. We are working, again, as I stated, with our personnel and the Hospital Corporation on the details of the facility, our requirements in each facility, as well as providing services that we're going to need within each hospital, and what that will be. Right now we still haven't finalized everything down to the final closet on the door and everything else. In fact, we are working with a few things. It's really important to know that the Watson Lake hospital and health services facility will provide space for much more than acute services as I've indicated in the past. Our services will be included in this facility, but not just Watson Lake.

In Dawson City we plan to do the same thing. The new hospitals will bring many services into one facility. There will be community nursing, a physician's office and a retail pharmacy to provide more comprehensive health care services to all the individuals in each of these communities and the surrounding area. We also hope to provide some additional programming in these facilities that we presently don't have. We're looking at physician offices. We're looking at acute care services, community health programs, in-patient/outpatient laboratory programs and X-ray facilities to be connected with the local hospital. Again, we are coming up to the 21st century when it comes to our X-ray technology. We're advancing quite nicely, especially in our rural areas. We're also dealing with our First Nation programs in these areas as well as pharmacies.

Mr. Mitchell: In the interest of time, I will move on. Perhaps if the officials come up with any additional numbers by the time we get to the next budget — the budget for the current year — we may get further updates.

There have been recently, once again, a lot of issues raised in the public regarding concerns around nursing staff at White-

horse General Hospital. We've heard these issues not just this year, but over many years, and they seem to flare up at different times. They revolve around a number of different issues — one is the amount of hiring of temporary nursing staff, both at Whitehorse General Hospital and within the outlying communities as well — in Watson Lake and in Dawson City.

Another is the shortage, particularly in Whitehorse, of certain disciplines such as OR nurses, emergency room nurses. It seems to be an ongoing series of issues that cause a degree of employee dissatisfaction or stress. I'm wondering if the minister can provide us with some information on what steps the Department of Health and Social Services is taking to try to mitigate these issues.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I'll basically go over the same briefing I provided the member of the Third Party when he asked me these questions. Again, this is something that the CEO and the board of directors for the Yukon Hospital Corporation are in charge of. They're in charge of the policy with regard to dealing with nurses in the hospital, the hiring and firing, as well as who gets what job in regard to the hospital. That is their prerogative, their policy; they're in charge of handing out those positions to their nurses and to their staff. I have seen some interesting, shall we say, newspaper work. We all know that we can't believe everything we see in the newspaper.

I've had this discussion with regard to the nursing situation at Whitehorse General Hospital. Again, I would like to differentiate the fact that the Yukon government, through its community nursing, hires almost every individual who can be hired full-time or full-time/part-time that way. We have casuals, yes, because we need casuals to alleviate our vacation time. I must say that it wasn't too long ago that we hired all of our nurses. We filled all our positions throughout the Yukon.

Right now, I'm advised that Whitehorse General Hospital has two vacancies: one is in OR and one is in the medical unit. I'm also advised that Whitehorse General Hospital has 97 nursing positions, and Watson Lake has seven.

They have some contingencies. The agency nurses are being utilized right now, in some areas, in general nursing. So, yes, there have been some issues with regard to nursing, especially in Watson Lake. Now, I will say, though, that with regard to — again, you can't believe everything you read in the newspaper — dozens and dozens and dozens of complaints. I've been advised that there were 13 grievances over the past year, with regard to Whitehorse General Hospital — 13. Only nine of them are through the PIPS program, and the other four are through PSAC. I really can't discuss what the actual grievances are, for obvious reasons. I mean, I could say it's because the nurses are casual, but I would know nothing of that. It could be a total lie. All I can tell you is that that's what has been filed. Dozens and dozens — anyway, I will go back to what I said previously, and that is that the hospital is in charge of providing the services for their nurses.

I did talk again to the CEO after I read the item in the newspaper and he assures me that, in general, their staff is satisfied with what's happening at the Whitehorse General Hospital. They are working with their staff and, as in many situations, not everyone is going to be happy. I'm sure there are lots

of businesses and branches in this town that have situations where many people are happy working and one or two are not. That's just the way life rolls, and it's also the way, quite frankly, some people are. It is human nature for some people to have an opinion different from the majority and that's why, I guess, we live in a democracy.

Again, I will try to stress as clearly as I can that in our nursing situation, we are working very closely with our recruitment people to ensure that all our community nursing — our LPNs — again, we've had a very successful process.

We have a very successful mentoring program to foster our nursing program. I've actually been out in the field and talked to some of these nurses who are taking our mentorship program. We're very successful in attracting the nurses that graduated from that LPN program. We look forward to providing services from the next class of LPNs, which is going through this fall and for the next two years. So we're very happy with what we're doing as far as our nursing situation goes. And, as I indicated previously, we are very confident that we'll be able to handle the necessary nursing requirements for the new Thomson Centre facilities when they open up next spring.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, I imagine that the Member for Mount Lorne will have questions on this issue as well. I know he is listening very attentively to the answers we're getting now.

One more question I'll throw out there: how many nurses are currently hired, in whatever way you want to report the statistics, on average per month, or give a snapshot right now, through the agency versus locally hired? When the minister is next on his feet, could he provide us with that? That would be informative.

I'm going to move on to some other areas, and I would like to ask about a youth shelter. The minister and I have had these discussions and debates in the past about the need for a permanent youth shelter. The minister has talked about visiting a shelter in Vancouver, and what a shocking place it was to visit. I hope the minister doesn't go too far down that path today, because I'm really interested in the situation in Yukon. In the past, there were arrangements made through Skookum Jim's. There was an arrangement made through the Sarah Steele Building. A number of various interim and temporary arrangements are made. Then we found out just this fall about the relocation into a duplex, next door to the Angel's Nest facility. Why was no one told of the change to this location? What steps are being taken to keep the youth at risk informed of this, and how is this current location staffed and set up to operate?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I think it's a very timely question given some of the issues that were provided. First of all, I'd like to say that our youth are in the current facility on a temporary basis only. We are making some alterations to the Sarah Steele Building to ensure the safety of the individuals there. We previously had our youth at risk in this particular building. It was empty, so we used it as an emergency shelter. I might add that we worked closely with the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre on this temporary issue to ensure that any individual who needed a bed received a bed in an emergency or otherwise. It's a temporary situation; we're not about to announce to the

world that we're there. Skookum Jim's handles all our referrals with regard to youth needing an emergency space. We had a direct line to them, which was on a temporary basis while we made the corrections at the Sarah Steele Building. As such, that's a very important process in which we're making the improvements to the facility for the youth at risk, and for youth in need of emergency facilities on a temporary basis. This is what the facility is intended to be used for. We've had very good success partnering with Skookum Jim in this process, and we've been very successful in providing the facilities to youth who needed it on an emergency basis.

All the renovations to the Sarah Steele Building, including the renovations of administration and outpatient/in-patient and youth areas, are anticipated to be completed by mid to late October, and we anticipate that by the end of this month we'll be able to move our beds back to the Sarah Steele facility.

As I said, this location is just temporary. It was a short-term measure to allow for repairs to be made. There's no change in the number of beds available to youth in the Sarah Steele Building. It has two bedrooms; each room has two beds, for a total of four beds — two males and two females. There are four beds available at the Jeckell Street location.

We're providing the same service at this facility and we're providing the same services through the same agency that we've been collaborating with over the past couple of years. I believe it has been a very appropriate process. We've made some adjustments to the Sarah Steele Building — again, just to upgrade the facility and to upgrade the issues for those individuals and youth we utilize that facility for.

Mr. Mitchell: I think this requires a few more questions, just to get some clarification of what has been undertaken. The minister has indicated the contractual relationship remains with Skookum Jim Friendship Centre to provide the service — they're the service provider in terms of intake.

I guess that the youth at risk who previously needed a safe place at night were housed at the Sarah Steele facility. There were two beds available in one room for females, and two beds available in a different room — obviously — for males. That's the equivalent service that is now being provided on an interim basis at the Jeckell Street facility while the modifications and renovations are being done at Sarah Steele. Can the minister provide us with some information? These modifications at Sarah Steele, are they to create a more separate, secure and distinct area within the facility for youth, compared to others who are using the building? What were the issues that required the temporary relocation? At one point, this was publicly stated as being due to overcrowding. That overcrowding could occur at any time at Sarah Steele, I would imagine. And I guess I would also ask the minister — the minister said those that needed to know were informed. How were youth at risk informed of the change, as opposed to the service provider? Or, was it simply a question of — if a youth at risk went to Skookum Jim's, or if it was nighttime, phoned the emergency number, then they were taken to a different facility. Is that how they were informed?

Was there a way in which the general population would be made aware? While this was being done, was there any consid-

eration given by the department to make use of the space next door that's run by the Youth of Today Society, referred to as Angel's Nest?

Hon. Mr. Hart: We already have staff dedicated to managing the available beds. We have an agreement with Skookum Jim's, which refers the youth to the emergency shelter. That's what we've had in the past, and there is no change in that facility. The only change was the location, from Sarah Steele to the Jeckell facility. Skookum Jim's was advised about the facility, and they are fully aware. Skookum Jim's does our administration and intake for our street people. Again, there was no change as far as the issue with regard to emergency shelter for youth on the street. The facility was previously a receiving home that was used by our girls, but there were no clients in that facility.

So we utilized that facility on a temporary basis while repairs were made to the Sarah Steele Building. Again, repairs were made in this facility to ensure the facility was safe. We had to make some repairs in the Sarah Steele Building and wanted to make sure we had sufficient time to make these repairs and ensure the safety of those individuals endures in the future months.

As I said previously, we anticipate the beds will be back at Sarah Steele at the end of this month and that the facility, in dealing with youth at risk and youth on an emergency basis, will carry on as usual.

Mr. Mitchell: The current situation for youth at risk appears to be that there is emergency space made available, based on up to two females and up to two males at night. The contract is managed by Skookum Jim Friendship Centre and housed currently at Jeckell, but normally at the Sarah Steele Building. In the daytime, those youth have to leave those facilities. My understanding is that space is not available to them on a day and night basis, so they make use of other facilities, including Youth of Today Society and various other NGOs.

There have been for quite some time many voices in the community and indeed studies done. I can't think of the name of the study right now. I think it was, *A Place Called Home* — I'm trying to think of the name, but there has been a lot of work done by NGOs and indeed by the minister's department over the last half dozen years looking at the possibility of a permanent shelter for youth at risk.

Is the minister giving any consideration to that solution at this point in time, or does the minister feel that the need is being adequately met by the NGO contract that is in place?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I believe we are looking at this through a new social inclusion strategy. We are looking to be doing an analysis of what our homeless population is. Data is being collected in association with many stakeholders involved in the community. We anticipate coming out with this information and look forward to putting forth a situation in the future that will, first of all, identify the homeless issue with regard to youth and others, and identify specifically where we're having difficulties in this area and what might be the best approach to deal with the situation for these individuals.

As the member opposite knows full well, some people will be homeless no matter what we do; it's their choice — they

want to be. I've had discussions with people in Toronto who provide these services to their people, and they have individuals they bring in, try to assist them and they just go right back out. They just want to remain homeless.

So there are some people you're just not going to be able to assist, period. But for us, we hope through social inclusion that we can reduce the number, that we can assist individuals to be more inclusive in their community — and right here in Whitehorse, for that matter. We are hopeful of developing a strategy similar to other jurisdictions that can provide assistance and will make them feel more included in the community itself.

Merely building a facility — does that answer the question? Not always. We've seen many cases where just building something generates its own O&M, its own everything, and still doesn't meet the requirements for which it was intended. Again, one more reason for us to look at other jurisdictions, check with our local stakeholders on just exactly what they feel might be the way to approach the process, much like we are dealing with the individuals who are intoxicated.

Our task force is out reviewing other jurisdictions, other facilities, other issues, and they will be coming forth at the end of this year with recommendations on how we can handle that situation. In addition, the RCMP are reviewing much the same situation for the individuals that they are holding and how they deal with those individuals when they are picked up.

With regard to this, again, we are anticipating collecting the data on this information, we are anticipating getting input from many of the stakeholders involved, and we anticipate looking at providing assistance where needed. Homelessness is not just relevant to the Yukon; homelessness is relevant across every jurisdiction in Canada. One only has to turn the TV on: Vancouver, Toronto, you name it.

When I was recently in St. John's, Newfoundland, I asked the minister there just how they are handling their situation. They said it's a very complex issue — very complex — even for how they deal with it. The big thing for us is to come up with a way to bring our disadvantaged youth back into the mainstream, get them back to being good members of society. We're looking for all solutions; we'll be looking at all issues. Hopefully we can move forward with some clear thinking on how we can attack this problem — again, taking into consideration what's happening in other jurisdictions to see where we can get the best practices and make something that is a good, made-in-Yukon process or solution to assist those who are homeless.

Mr. Mitchell: I think we're about to have a big philosophical disagreement here, the minister and I. We're not talking about homelessness in general; we're not talking about the hard to house, although we can certainly go there, because that is an issue worth debating.

We're talking about youth at risk. The minister responded by saying that some people will remain homeless no matter what we do. Some choose to be so.

I don't think it's acceptable for us to decide that some youth — kids who are 13, 14 or 15 years old will remain homeless regardless of what we do, or choose to be so. I don't think

that's acceptable. I don't think it's acceptable to simply say some kids are going to couch surf, some should just be at risk to run the gauntlet of people who would take advantage of them — that's not acceptable. I don't care whether we're talking about a Yukon Party perspective, an NDP perspective or a Liberal perspective. That's not an acceptable view when we're talking about kids. We're talking about children who are vulnerable. If the minister wants to say there's no need or benefit for a permanent youth shelter — we don't need it, we can do this in a different way — well, then we can debate that issue. But I'm not prepared to stand on the floor of this House and debate whether it's acceptable to simply have some youth be homeless because they choose to be so.

They may choose not to go to the home where their parents live, or their guardians, because it's not a safe place. But I don't think young people choose to be without a home. I don't think it's acceptable for us to say, "That's just the way it is". Out of all the things that we can do or can't do in this Assembly, that's one we should be able to do.

Now, when it comes to statistics, we've been told by NGOs and by people who work on the front line with kids at risk that it's very difficult to just come up with statistics. The numbers change between summer and winter, because in summer it's easier to be outdoors or to have other options that perhaps appear acceptable; when it's 50 below out, not so much. The numbers change between days of the week. The numbers may be more intense on a weekend when more adults are drinking or abusing other substances and kids may flee the home that may be perfectly safe to them Monday to Thursday, but not appear that way on Friday or Saturday.

I went to meetings five years ago — meetings that were held at what was then Yukon Family Services, now Many Rivers — trying to address this issue, and it wasn't this minister; it was a different minister. Again, there were earnest department officials who showed up at those meetings and said, "We're trying to determine statistically what the answer is." Surely, in five years, we might have some answers to this. What are the numbers of the children who are presenting themselves to Skookum Jim's? Again, that's a scenario where a person at risk has to make a decision to knock on a door — or phone a number, rather, because there isn't a place that's simply there that is identified as the safe place to go. It's not acceptable to say there are young people who choose to be homeless and there's nothing we can do about it. I want this minister to stand on his feet and retract that, and if he misspoke himself, then I want him to explain what he meant. It's not acceptable.

I'm sorry. I've spoken to some of these young people; I've spoken to the people who provide front-line care to them; and I can't accept that as an answer in this House. I don't think anybody in this House can accept that.

We were talking earlier today about women at risk and children at risk. This is part of that equation, to have a safe place to go to, whether it be for aboriginal or non-aboriginal children, because they're children. There are times when people make bad choices and their lives are at risk as a result.

Again for the minister, where are we at in looking for a permanent solution, not a "call this number and be at the Sarah

Steele Building at night, except when you're at Jeckell Street, and then go somewhere else in the day", but a more complete, permanent solution to deal with youth at risk?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Sanctimony has no place in this debate. We all want the same thing. Our aim is not to facilitate street life; we intend to continue to ensure that youth at risk have options. Those options cannot be the evasion of programming. There needs to be positive adult and peer influences.

With regard to homelessness, I did not indicate that youth could not be changed; I said "homeless people" — some homeless people. I will say that we try to assist. We have programming. We have NGOs that do provide assistance to those youth who need assistance, who have requirements. We do have emergency situations when a person might need one night or two nights, and we do work with Skookum Jim with regard to providing that particular information to assist those who need a safe place to spend the night.

Like health care, the cost of social programming has continued to rise exponentially over the past five years. I will state here that the costs have increased \$13.6 million, or 26 percent in percentage numbers. Originally these costs were \$66 million plus, which is a serious commitment for a small jurisdiction. On a gross budget, we expend almost \$39 million plus on children, youth and families just this year alone. It's something we have to work on. Every situation is different; every particular issue is important to every particular NGO; every issue is important to everyone out there. Can we meet all the requirements of every person who needs assistance or wants assistance? Probably not.

We are working the best we can with the information we have, with the facilities we have, to assist all those to whom we can provide our services. That's a wide range of services. We're being asked to provide services to the same level as is being provided in larger jurisdictions outside of the Yukon. Now, I think that it's very important that we look at providing a strategy that will lead to a solution to this problem. I believe that the social inclusion and poverty reduction strategy will get us there. It will provide us with our long-term objective of reducing those needs for youth at risk. It won't happen overnight. It's not going to be fixed overnight.

We have some very important issues to deal with, not only with youth at risk, but youth with disabilities, youth with mental issues and youth with all other aspects that require our assistance. They all require our assistance and again, as I stated earlier, everything is important to one individual or another.

Today in Question Period, we heard about issues with regard to MS. We've heard about issues with regard to children with disabilities, mental issues. We've heard about adults with mental issues. Again, they're very important issues that require assistance from government. This government has expended a tremendous amount of money on providing health care services to all Yukoners. We spread that money around; we spread those services around the best we can to ensure that we can provide the services where we can, and how we can do it is there.

One of the reasons we went out with the social inclusion strategy was to get feedback from our stakeholders to see how we can do this on a much better basis and improve the efficiency of the process without having to expend a substantial amount of larger dollars.

It's an important strategy; it's an important element; it's something we need to look forward to; it's something we need to do — and this is in addition to completing our task force, completing a police force review. These are all issues that affect the community and society as a whole. We look forward to getting this information; we look forward to pounding it around; we also look forward to trying to alleviate some issues. Can we solve them all? Probably not.

We're going to work as much as we can with our stakeholders to try to alleviate as many of the issues and their concerns as possible. Again, some of these things will have to be prioritized because, as I said, it didn't happen overnight and we won't be able to fix it overnight.

I look forward to working on this social inclusion and anti-poverty strategy. I've been very encouraged in looking at other jurisdictions at what they're doing. I look forward to a positive result from the same.

Mr. Mitchell: I'm going to let the minister's comments about sanctimony having no place in this Chamber slide. When the minister reviews the Blues tomorrow, I think the minister will see that I asked the minister specifically about where the government was heading, in terms of continued interim or permanent youth shelter. The minister responded by talking about some people remaining homeless.

Now the minister says he wasn't talking about youth. I would challenge the minister to find very many Yukoners of any age who truly want to be homeless. I'm not saying there are not those who are difficult to house, and those who present challenges, based on having been long-term people who have lived in a lot of different situations and without a stable home to call their own — based on mental health issues, based on chronic substance abuse of alcohol or other, illegal, drugs. So the challenges are definitely great; I do recognize that this minister is not only responsible for a quarter of the budget, over a quarter of a billion dollars, but it's the most challenging part of the budget because it's all people-focused.

I do recognize there are challenges and I do appreciate that the minister has a lot on his plate. Nevertheless, there are many who say, why are we a month from the eighth anniversary of the election of this Yukon Party government and we're just dealing now with symposiums and the development of a social inclusion strategy? Certainly, I think the minister and his colleagues have been hearing about this from year one of the eight years.

We're late in the day — not just in today's day, but we're late in terms of it has been eight years. Yes, there is some frustration. There's some frustration in terms of service providers, in terms of non-government organizations, in terms of clients, and there's some frustration in terms of those of us who sit in opposition to hold this government accountable.

The minister has talked about the social inclusion strategy. The second symposium has been postponed, I believe until

January. Are we on track now to have the second symposium, the follow-up to the one that was held in the spring — now for January — and what is anticipated that symposium will address in terms of solutions?

Hon. Mr. Hart: The member opposite indicated that we haven't been doing anything. Well, obviously I beg to differ with the member opposite. We've instituted approximately 250 items plus, with regard to social inclusion, over the past five years and this social inclusion strategy is merely bringing things together and working. Again, we want to work directly with our stakeholders to get their direct feedback and get in items with regard to providing assistance to those in need and also getting people to be included in the process of their community and/or process in which they live, whether it is in a home or whether they live in a small community.

The member opposite talked with regard to our symposium: we are looking at getting it off the ground. It has been deferred until January of next year and we anticipate it will take place in January. We will have discussion take place much similar to the last one we had, but this time we will be looking at the results that have been collected in the interim. We'll be looking at obtaining recommendations from this group on which areas, also looking to get priorities from this group as to which areas we should tackle first.

These are things that need to be looked at and we look forward to good results from this symposium and look forward to that in the new year. Obviously, it's something that's there. We'll have information. Again, we hope to have data collected in time for this to take place, and we should also be able to be in a position of having the reports from our task force, as well as the RCMP, available for us, as added information to assist us in developing and going forward from that basis.

Mr. Mitchell: Moving on, I'd like to get to some long-term fiscal issues. We understand there's not going to be another extension to the territorial health access fund, the THAF. When the minister is on his feet, he can indicate when that program expires. We also have the substitute program — I'm not even going to try to come up with the full name for that, but the minister can come out with it when he does.

Where are we at with renegotiating the current health transfer arrangements with Canada? I believe the current one ends in 2014. The minister can correct me if I'm wrong.

Going back to the *Yukon Health Care Review: Final Report*, September 2008 — for *Hansard*, on page 11 — it was identified that, at the current rate of growth of health care costs, if nothing is done to control the rate of growth in the health care expenditures or to increase revenues, the growth in expenditures — if revenues don't accordingly increase — will result in a funding gap that could be as much as \$250 million, by 2018.

We're now two years and a month from when that report was published and I'm wondering if the minister can tell us how we're doing, both on the obtaining additional revenues side and the controlling expense side, in terms of fighting the fight to continue to provide excellent services while preventing the gap from growing.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I'm glad to advise him that the Yukon is on a working group, a small working group, that is taking the lead on the renegotiation of our 2014 agreement. Officials have had an official meeting already to discuss an outline of how they plan to proceed with this process and deal with the federal government on a new program in 2014.

This was discussed at our meeting in St. John's earlier in September, and we brought forth an issue that we are going to have to deal with this sooner rather than later, because we're quite sure that we'll have a federal election before 2014, one way or the other. We also realize we could have one as early as next year. So it's important for us to get our ducks in order and be able to come forth to the federal government with what our needs and wants are going to be.

I can tell the member opposite that we're looking at ensuring that we maintain the additional monies we have secured under our extension and have them as part of our base funding from the federal government for the Yukon. That's my initial wish list. It will go up from there.

Yes, are we looking at trying to deal with our expenses as far as they go for the Yukon? You bet. We are currently looking internally as to what ways and means we can look at to improve the efficiency of the services that we provide and provide them at a frugal cost, yet not endanger any of our clients through the process. We are currently doing that, looking at ways to get the job done but get it done more efficiently and reduce our costs overall.

We are now getting several specialists coming up to the Yukon and providing way more specialist services than we had in the past, but of course with that come additional costs. We have more specialists coming up; we've hired a third surgeon at the hospital and we're now doing more surgeries locally. Of course, that requires more funds, so we're getting more demands on the physician and surgical costs at Whitehorse General Hospital.

It is very difficult to look at things. Like I say, we're doing this — items that will not affect us in the long term. We are looking at, for example, the recent Weight Wise program that we announced. We're also looking at a new wellness strategy to be deployed this spring. We're also bringing a specialist to the committee to explain which costs we can remove, which ones are effective. We want them to also assist in the process.

We are looking at working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, as well as the Yukon Hospital Foundation, with regard to a new MRI in the next three years. We anticipate this will reduce our costs substantially by being able to provide those services here in the Yukon versus having to go Outside. We also believe this will reduce our wait times here in the Yukon with regard to MRIs.

Again, having a facility here will enable us to cut down our costs dramatically, in travel and medical costs going Outside. We're also looking at our chronic disease program and looking at ways in which we can keep our costs to a minimum and still provide services to those who need them.

We are also looking at doing more with promotion — again, trying to emphasize prevention. We're looking at telehealth. We're looking at healthy eating and living programs —

things that are not necessarily that expensive that, again, promote the individual taking care of themselves a lot better. More exercise — again, that doesn't mean that the individual has to go out and be a part of a hockey team, or a sporting team or whatever.

We just want the individuals to get out and walk, exercise — something — for 30 minutes a day, three days a week, just to get out, be active and basically get the bones moving. Again: healthy eating, healthy living. I think this is an important item, First Nation or otherwise.

We have a huge diabetes problem in our First Nation peoples. Promoting healthy living and eating programs is very important for those individuals and also our students in the school programs. We feel that these are all very valid and important items that provide long-term reduction in our health care needs and services — if we can promote prevention and healthy living.

These are all items that we feel will provide us with some success and that will reduce our health care cost for Yukon. Is it going to meet our entire requirements? It's unsure right now. Again, these are long-term objectives that have to be reviewed.

I think that they're all things that need to be done, all things that provide us with positive issues. We've gone out on a new early psychosis program, new mental health issues; we continue to provide services in that area and to assist individuals who need our assistance in providing help with their mental programs. Just last year we opened up our mental health ward in the hospital and it is now fully staffed.

Chair: Order please. Seeing the time, the Chair will rise and report progress.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

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

Chair's report

Mr. Nordick: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 21, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act, 2009-10*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

The following document was filed October 4, 2010

10-1-157

Unsolved major crimes: correspondence (dated July 26, 2010 and August 19, 2010) between Don Inverarity, MLA, Porter

Creek South and the Hon. Marian Horne, Minister of Justice (Inverarity)