

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, October 27, 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.

Introduction of visitors.

Returns or documents for tabling.

Reports of committees.

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to work with the Government of the United States, and any other governments and agencies with obligations under the Pacific Salmon Treaty, to ensure all steps provided for under the treaty to regulate pollock fishing off the coast of Alaska are acted on so fewer chinook salmon are caught in the by-catch in 2011 and beyond.

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

THAT this House calls on the Government of Canada to be transparent about the actual details and substance of negotiations with the European Union on the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement, known as “CETA”; and

THAT the Government of Canada provide clear assurances that it will not trade away the authority of local governments to use procurement to achieve economic, social, environmental sustainability and other valid public policy goals.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to reinstate the popular ecoEnergy retrofit program as it:

(1) helps Canadians afford to make their homes and businesses more energy efficient; and

(2) helps Canadians, who want to do something concrete to combat climate change, reduce their carbon footprint.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Youth homelessness

Mr. Mitchell: On October 29, 2007, I asked the previous Health minister, who now sits as the Independent Yukon Party member, if he would support the development of a youth shelter. I didn’t get a real answer from him. Let’s fast-forward to three years later. Yesterday, I asked the current Health minister if he would support the development of a youth shelter. We didn’t get a real answer from him either. Let’s now put the question to the Premier since he’s responsible for Executive Council Office, which oversees the Youth Directorate: is there anyone in this Yukon Party government in support of establishing a permanent youth shelter in Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As I have stated here in the House many times and to the member opposite many times with regard to housing the homeless here in the Yukon, we are working through Health and Social Services in conjunction with all our stakeholders on issues of homelessness here in the Yukon through the *Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy* and the development of that strategy to ensure that we do provide services for a wide cross-section of individuals in dealing with homeless issues throughout the Yukon.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, the responses from this government show a lack of understanding about this issue and an unwillingness to commit to what is really needed.

This government has been doing studies to try to understand the needs of at-risk youth for eight years. We know what these kids need. They need a permanent youth shelter. They need a place that will provide the services, programs and support to help them succeed. What they need is for this government to commit. The safety of children should not be measured on a day-by-day or overnight basis.

Will the Health minister commit to integrating social programming and life-skill development into a permanent youth shelter?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I think the member opposite is maybe finally getting the story; he’s finally cluing in. The issue with regard to homelessness is that it is not just a roof over their head. We have to ensure that we can do the wrap around an individual as to why he/she is homeless. We need to know what the situation is. We have to know the education required, how we can educate that individual, and how we can provide employment. If there are health issues that have to be addressed, how can we do that?

Mr. Speaker, as I stated previously, under the social inclusion process, under the development of that strategy in conjunction with all the stakeholders, those issues will be addressed.

Mr. Mitchell: I’m glad to see that after eight years, the minister finally understands the question. Now, it is important that if something’s done, it should be done right. When a youth shelter is built, it should include all the components necessary to make it a success. As many studies have shown, and as the minister now seems to understand, a youth shelter should provide more than just beds. Today I had the opportunity to tour the Sarah Steele Building and see the temporary youth shelter located there, run by Alcohol and Drug Services. These

dedicated workers are doing the best they can in a challenging environment. It is clear, however, that admitting homeless youth and youth at risk through detox is far from ideal. Is this government prepared to commit today to building a dedicated, permanent youth shelter?

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite, we are committed on this side of the House to the development of our social inclusion strategy, which includes addressing and dealing with issues of homelessness for all Yukoners throughout the Yukon. I will say that we are working with our partners, the other stakeholders involved, with many of the NGOs in dealing with these individuals in one form or another to ensure that each issue is being addressed. We are working with those individuals.

We are hoping, quite frankly, that we'll have this information available to us, and that when we have our symposium in January of next year we will be able to address many of these issues and move forward on these things and act on the recommendations coming forward.

Question re: Kwanlin Dun child welfare

Mr. Mitchell: Well, same minister, new topic. I have a follow-up question for the Health minister regarding the department's relationship with Kwanlin Dun First Nation.

Last week we asked the minister to provide an update on the progress that has been made to resolve the First Nation's concerns about the welfare of their children. The minister indicated at the time that discussions had not yet been initiated. We all agree that our first concern is for the welfare of our children — all our children. There is a public concern regarding the safety of children and of staff and we hope that this issue can be resolved quickly.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services provide us with an update?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I'm pleased to advise the member opposite and the House that our officials are meeting with officials of Kwanlin Dun on this very serious matter, and we are looking at trying to come up with a solution that will appease both the Kwanlin Dun First Nation, and ourselves and ensure the safety of the children.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that response and it does sound like progress is being made.

We appreciate the challenge that must be faced here. When a child is in danger, the government must respond. It's an obligation that is written in law and it cannot be refused.

We have no doubt that the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Chief of Kwanlin Dun First Nation, as well as officials within both governments, are most concerned with the best interests of our children. The minister said last week it is utmost on his mind.

There are several options available to address these specific concerns. There are also knowledgeable individuals, such as the child and youth advocate, who could help craft a solution that would be acceptable to all. Has the minister looked outside his department, as well as inside, for input on an acceptable resolution for all concerned?

Hon. Mr. Hart: We are working with all facets available to us so we can ensure the safety of the children on

Kwanlin Dun land. We're also looking to ensure the safety of our staff, as there are calls there. We are working with Kwanlin Dun individuals, based on a request from those individuals for our assistance. Through the Department of Health and Social Services, we are assisting those individuals where we can to ensure we can provide services, where required, to assist the children on Kwanlin Dun land. We will continue to do so now and into the future.

Mr. Mitchell: We appear to be getting somewhere today. We're actually getting information. Now, our children's welfare must be our first concern. Having said that, we can't allow government officials to come into harm's way while doing their jobs. This is a sensitive issue that runs the risk of escalating out of control if it is not resolved to the mutual satisfaction of both governments. We would like to see this resolved as quickly as possible, and we have no doubt that the minister wants this as well. We have been waiting to hear what the minister's plan is for dealing with this specific issue and we hope that his plan includes a means to avoid this kind of standoff from occurring in the future.

What assurances can the minister provide this House today that social workers will be able to provide necessary services on Kwanlin Dun land or that the First Nation will be able to provide these services themselves?

Hon. Mr. Hart: For the member opposite, as I stated in my first response to his question, our officials at both levels are working on this situation. We had a meeting recently at the First Nation's request, as well as our own. We did make some headway. Further negotiations are being undertaken. We anticipate being able to work forward on this issue and ensure that we can move forward.

As I stated in this House previously, we are in charge of dealing with the safety of the children, both on Kwanlin Dun First Nation and our own land. Until such time as the Kwanlin Dun First Nation draws down on that, it is our law that takes precedence. As I stated, we are working with the officials to try to alleviate this situation, and we are working with other aspects that are available to us in an effort to try to resolve this issue in a manner that's applicable to both governments.

Question re: Procurement policy

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, procurement — the buying of goods and services — is a key element in the tool kit of government. Procurement policies can be set to stimulate key industries, create jobs or help achieve valid environmental, social or community economic goals.

Currently, the Government of Canada and the European Union are quietly negotiating a trade deal called CETA. The Europeans' biggest demand is access to procurement by municipal and subnational governments.

Has the minister responsible for municipal affairs and the current Our Towns, Our Future review done any analysis of the potential impacts this proposed trade deal could have on the long-term financial sustainability of Yukon's municipalities?

Hon. Mr. Lang: We certainly are aware of the question the member opposite put on the floor here this afternoon. We're monitoring it to make sure that ramifications aren't negative to us in our jurisdiction, but we are certainly aware of

the negotiations and, as they move through the negotiations, our department will be in contact with the federal government to make sure that we are represented at those talks on a level that is appropriate for our government.

Mr. Cardiff: I have some information to assist the minister, so I'll file a legal opinion on the issue. I hope that he pays attention to it and will look into the matter and also put government lawyers to work on this issue. As per usual, these trade negotiations are very secretive, though a copy was leaked from another round of negotiations that indicates procurement, hiring, and contracting by municipalities are being negotiated away by Canada in exchange for access to Canadian pork, beef, and grain producers by the European markets.

Talk about hindering long-term municipal sustainability. This trade deal could mean municipal governments will not be allowed to prefer local procurement or local hire. As well, municipal contracts could be challenged granting EU-based corporations the right to sue municipalities over contracts.

The EU is home to the largest private water corporations in the world, so we can expect this trade deal to have implications in the provision of water and waste management. How is the *Our Towns, Our Future* review, which is looking at the long-term financial stability of our municipalities looking at —

Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Lang: I'm sure there are many lawyers involved in these negotiations, and I'm sure all these lawyers would have a point of view and would have an answer to all our questions. What I'm committing to do on the floor here today is represent our jurisdiction as well as we can through the Government of Canada, if we see anything that would be detrimental to the territory. That's what I'm committing to do this afternoon. There will be many, many lawyers involved, at many, many levels, in negotiations of this size, and I'm sure the Canadian government has a fleet of lawyers working on it as we speak.

I would say to the member opposite, we as a government, internally, will monitor whatever goes on with these agreements to make sure they don't marginalize our municipalities or the jurisdiction of the Yukon.

Mr. Cardiff: I want one more commitment from the minister. From the minister's responses it's safe to say that at least he's aware of the deal. I can tell the minister there are concerns coming from the Association of Yukon Communities and from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities. The Union of British Columbia Municipalities recently passed a resolution, which I will also file and which calls on the Government of Canada to prevent the European Union access to municipal and subnational procurement. They're also calling on their provincial government to negotiate a clear and permanent exemption for local governments from CETA.

Will this minister be negotiating a clear and permanent exemption for local government from CETA, or is he willing to accept that anything that comes out of the current review of long-term municipal financing could be invalidated by corporate-friendly international trade deals?

Hon. Mr. Lang: No final deal has been made, so for the member opposite to insinuate there is a deal made — they

are just in the negotiating stages at this point. No final deal has been made and there are negotiations going on as we speak, I imagine. As the government of the territory, we will monitor what goes on at these hearings and we will keep our internal department working on monitoring it.

I'm sure that, as we get further into this, there will be questions asked and we'll answer those questions when they're asked.

Question re: Great River Journey

Mr. McRobb: Yesterday the Economic Development minister actually answered a question in this House. I must admit, he caught us off guard. Nevertheless, it was quite refreshing to finally get some information we could work with. Now, before he gets too pumped, the praise must be tempered with the proviso that he didn't answer all the questions. He couldn't tell us whether the money provided to Great River Journey was secured or unsecured. He said that's a matter for the courts to decide.

Balderdash, Mr. Speaker — surely government must know the answer to that question before it dished out half a million-plus taxpayers' dollars to a start-up business venture.

Will the minister now confirm that Yukoners will get nothing back from the \$576,000 he invested?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: It's interesting that he admits that I caught him off guard, once again. I apologize for that.

The Yukon government was advised on October 19 that the Great River Journey Inc. had officially filed for bankruptcy protection. The assets are now in the possession of the trustee, which has scheduled a meeting with creditors for October 28 at the MacBride Museum.

Economic Development and the Department of Tourism and Culture supported Great River Journey in its development stages, but do not have the mandate to be a source of investment capital or to provide ongoing operation and maintenance funding for the project.

The member opposite may remember that in this House, he was critical some time ago of not investing in such things and now, of course, he's complaining because we did invest in it. Economic Development has provided \$576,581 since 2005-06 to Great River Journey and to the First Nation Investment Corporation to support the project. I do hope that the member opposite isn't being critical of the four First Nations involved in this.

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, still no answer to a simple question, yet the minister has had an extra day to dig up the actual answer to that question. Obviously, he's not willing to share it with us — so much for being open, accountable and fiscally responsible. Yukoners deserve to know the answer to the security question so they know whether or not their money is gone completely. Yesterday, he said it was a matter for the courts to decide, but he has got it backwards — that decision was made before the government even advanced the money. The question of security would be integrated into the documents that were signed between the government and the proponent.

So will the minister now agree to table the signed agreements?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Perhaps I should explain what I just said a little bit more clearly. We do not have the mandate to be a source of investment capital. There is a very small amount in there that was put in, in terms of developing or helping to adopt a business plan or this sort of thing. But the programs that the member refers to are grants. They were grants to Great River Journey; they were grants to First Nation Investment Corporation, et cetera. Again, we don't reveal when somebody is having business problems. I have a feeling that this program may rise again. We certainly hope it does, but we are not a source of ongoing investment capital. That's not what we do.

Mr. McRobb: We can now assume there will be zero dollars back. The minister just doesn't want to say it.

Now, something else the minister said yesterday was that his department invested \$576,000 into the now-bankrupt company. He added that it's the maximum allowable under the strategic industries development fund. But according to the strategic industries development fund document available on the department's website, the maximum allowable is only \$500,000.

So the minister said \$576,000 was the maximum allowable, but that's \$76,000 more than what the department says. Can the minister explain why the maximum allowable limit was exceeded in this case?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Of course, the figure I'm giving includes some funds that were advanced for development of a business plan, et cetera. He's lumping a large number of different programs and claiming that it exceeded one single program. But again, for the member opposite, what the Liberals have clearly said is that they would read every business plan, they would read all minutes of boards and committees, they would make decisions, they would make analyses, and they would make those decisions. No wonder their idea of economic development was to cancel the Department of Economic Development; they didn't need them; they wanted to do it themselves.

Question re: Great River Journey

Mr. McRobb: Same issue. The Economic Development minister just assumed we would read all business plans. I would go on record to say that we would read the business plans when we stood up and announced more than half a million dollars of Yukoners' money, with words to the effect that this minister said, "All is set out in the business plan. Based on that, Great River Journey would be a financially and environmentally sound, sustainable and long-term business." Those were his words. Yes, if we stood up and said something so detailed that applied to any specific business plan, you're darn right we would read it.

We still don't know if the monies were secured or not; instead, the minister attacks us for not being pro-business. We don't have the time to argue. Was the money secured or not?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Perhaps the member opposite should take a closer look in his dictionary and see the difference between a grant and a loan. I've said that a number of times in the House; perhaps he should go back and read *Hansard* to get a better understanding of that.

The Liberals would do a detailed analysis? That's interesting. They did a marvellous analysis last spring of our tourism industry and declared it a total failure. In fact, it was one of the most successful in all of Canada. That one didn't work out too well for them either.

Mr. McRobb: We can always tell when the government is stuck for an answer. That's when they deny, deflect and attack, such as we just heard.

I want to ask the minister about something else he said yesterday. He said the commitment from the Department of Tourism and Culture toward this venture was conditional on the company receiving private sector debt refinancing plus an additional investment.

He further added, Mr. Speaker, "...neither of which has materialized, so that matter is still sort of debatable."

In the question that followed, the Tourism minister identified that the actual number was \$118,000. I ask this Minister of Economic Development if he can explain why that money was forwarded upon a conditional clause that was never met.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Mr. Speaker, I think he is aware of the fact — although he asked me the question — that it is more aptly asked of Tourism and Culture.

The \$118,000 has been advanced from Tourism and Culture since 2006-07. The Liberals have made it clear that they would read all minutes, and they would interfere with boards and committees. He has already stated that they would read and digest every business plan. I guess that's why the Liberal government, in their very short term, also disbanded the Department of Tourism and Culture. I guess they felt they didn't need it either.

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, let's clear the air. I shall repeat what the minister said yesterday: "...an additional, roughly, \$100,000 to support Great River Journey's restructuring, marketing and sales efforts. The commitment was conditional on Great River Journey receiving private sector debt refinancing and additional investment, neither of which has materialized, so that matter is still sort of debatable. But the matter is now in the courts; the company has filed for bankruptcy."

Those were his words. This begs the question: why was the money given on a condition that was never met?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Certainly, the money would be advanced only when the condition was met, and that's why we have a Department of Tourism and Culture, that's why we have a Department of Economic Development, that's why we have good economists and good business analysts to do this work. I again have to question why the member opposite would question all of these people, but we have learned over the last few weeks what the Liberals did in the past and what they would do in the future. They would interfere with boards and committees, they would keep their fingers in, they would read business plans and make all of those things. One only has to look at that short-lived Liberal government and what they would do in the future. Part of what they did was fire 11 deputy ministers in 22 months. Good work. How much money did we lose on that? I invite the member opposite to enlighten the Yukon public on that financial loss.

Question re: Municipal sustainability review

Mr. Cardiff: I want to revisit some of what we were talking about yesterday in Question Period as well.

In the *City of Whitehorse v. Darragh*, the B.C. Court of Appeal decided that an official community plan, or OCP, trumped the citizens' right to hold a referendum on any matter as written in the extremely democratic *Municipal Act*. In December 2009, the minister wrote Ms. Darragh saying, and I quote: "I appreciate the time and energy you have personally invested to seek clarity on this issue."

The time and energy was months in court. The court costs were thousands of dollars just for Ms. Darragh and even more for the city, or rather, Mr. Speaker, the taxpayers. She sent the minister a bill for the legal advice that she received as he sat on the sidelines. I'd like to know if the minister has paid the bill yet and why — when he had the power to get involved in the discussion and to act as the minister and stand up for the *Municipal Act's* democratic revisions — he sat out and let the court decide?

Hon. Mr. Lang: In addressing the member opposite's question on a court case, that was decided in the highest court in this part of the land. They made a decision and this government will stand by that decision.

Mr. Cardiff: This is a consistent answer that we have heard from the minister and he won't stand up for the *Municipal Act* and the provisions in it. He would blindly follow the decisions of the courts and would lead one to believe that if the courts ordered him to jump off a cliff, he might even do it. Now, another court action recently ended up in the B.C. Court of Appeal — the *Town of Faro v. Knapp*. This dealt with land issues, zoning and rules under the *Municipal Act*. The cost to the citizen of a protracted eight-year-long battle was over \$100,000. The municipal government spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars on fighting this issue in the courts. Again, the minister and his predecessor did nothing. What I'd like to know is, is this a deliberate strategy or just plain indifference? Should Yukoners who have a complaint with their municipal government expect lengthy court battles as the norm under this minister's watch?

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Before the honourable member answers the question, Leader of the Third Party, from the Chair's perspective, the honourable member is personalizing debate. I know it wasn't the honourable member's intention, so just rise above that, please.

Hon. Mr. Lang: This government will recognize the courts in our land. Everybody has the right to go to court, but part of the right of going to court is that they make decisions. By the way, it costs money to go to court, but everybody in the land has the right to go to court to resolve the issue of the day if they feel wronged in any way. I'm not going to pick winners and losers in that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cardiff: Yukoners also have rights under the *Municipal Act*. The minister should stand up for those rights. We're all Yukoners; we're all neighbours. The courts are necessary and some disagreement inevitably must be settled in

court, but there has to be better ways to resolve disputes than going to court. That's what the government thinks.

The minister has presided over the decay of local democracy, where citizens' complaints will feel the full weight of the legal system against them, and that will have a chilling effect on our communities. There's an alternative dispute mechanism that was and is available to the minister, and that is the Yukon Municipal Board. The act gives the board an important role in resolving issues.

Why has the minister not called on this board, as it is within his power to resolve issues before they spiral out of control and land in the courts, at huge expense to citizens and to municipal taxpayers?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Again, I repeat: every taxpayer, every citizen in our communities has the right to go to court. That's a right I'm not about to debate on the floor of this House.

That is a democracy; that is part of the right of being a citizen of the Yukon, and I'm not going to pick winners in that. That's why we have courts.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY**GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS****MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS****Motion No. 1217**

Clerk: Motion No. 1217, standing in the name of Mr. Nordick.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Klondike THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a homeless shelter in downtown Whitehorse.

Mr. Nordick: We are debating this motion today urging the Government of Yukon to develop a homeless shelter in downtown Whitehorse. Let me explain why. There are many reasons for homelessness. Homelessness is, in fact, frequently caused by tragic life occurrences, like the loss of a loved one, loss of a job, domestic violence, divorce, or even family disputes. Other impairments such as depression, untreated mental illness, post-traumatic stress disorder, and physical disabilities are also responsible for a large portion of the homeless.

Many factors push people into living on the street. Acknowledging these different factors can help facilitate the end of homelessness by helping us devise strategies for intervention.

Adequate and affordable housing became the social and economic right of every citizen in Canada after the ratification of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* in 1996. Despite this, tens of thousands of Canadians are still living on the streets, in abandoned buildings and public spaces and wilderness areas.

In Yukon the problem has not been so visible as perhaps elsewhere, but we know that it is with us — not in great num-

bers, but with us nonetheless. The soon-to-be released Whitehorse housing adequacy survey tells us that. Walking down certain Whitehorse streets tells us that.

Homelessness was not a significant issue before 1980 in Canada, but with the changes in policies of governments under fiscal pressure and other social factors it has become a severe problem in Toronto and other major cities across Canada. We have an issue of homelessness here in the Yukon. While it is not confined to Whitehorse, nevertheless it is centred here.

There is evidence that social injustice arises in relation to homelessness and poor or marginal housing. This is vividly illustrated by even a quick look at the various professional materials and articles on the topic. People are marginalized and excluded by the fact of their homelessness. Many have complex needs, many of which are the different consequences of homelessness and others which can be seen as part of the cause.

Drug problems are common among single, homeless people and alcohol addiction problems among older, homeless people are extreme. In general, about half of these individuals have physical health problems, and high levels of mental health problems are not uncommon.

I'm going to list just a few of the many initiatives that this government has undertaken in relation to these issues. The Women's Directorate, in conjunction with the departments of Health and Social Services and Justice, has formed an interdepartmental working group to look at relevant issues for women in the Yukon and best practices in the area of women and substance abuse. In 2009, this government released a report, entitled *Improving Treatment and Support for Yukon Girls and Women with Substance Use Problems and Addictions*, with 12 key recommendations.

In response to the recommendations in this report, this government is offering training on how to address the unique needs of Yukon women and substance abuse and addiction issues.

The response to this training has been fantastic, with over 200 front-line service providers and program managers in Yukon government, NGOs, and First Nations participating in training in 2009. This government released the booklet, *Be Prepared to Talk to Your Children about Drinking*, a tool to help parents discuss drinking and drinking-related issues with their children. We partnered with the RCMP. Yukon Liquor Corporation undertook a blitz and inspections targeting minors in bars, supported by posters and pamphlets for licensees and the public. With licensee input, we updated the responsible server training program and added a self-study version.

The program focuses on server responsibilities, recognizing signs of intoxication and ways to identify and manage difficult or intoxicated persons, as well as how to deal with minors and over-serving and overcrowding.

The Yukon government has put \$63,908 into the youth investment fund to contribute to 22 projects for youth, including youth camps, physical programs and cultural events. Many of the programs are designed to help youth susceptible to at-risk behaviours, or those who are considered to be at risk. Youth investment fund applications will continue to be processed twice a year.

A third psychiatrist was recruited to join Yukon's mental health providers in 2009. An internationally renowned researcher and educator trained Yukon substance abuse workers, counselling professionals and other service providers in women-centred care in February 2009.

The Yukon participated in the 2008 National Dialogue on Resilience in Youth. We developed a new resource manual, *Making a Difference – Working with Students who have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders*. The Yukon government launched the alcohol and drug information referral service — the abbreviation is ADIRS — a 24/7 addictions crisis line in response to recommendations from the *Yukon Substance Abuse Action Plan*.

Alcohol and Drug Services will assist in the delivery of pregnancy-related issues in the management of addictions training to health care providers to assist them in working with pregnant women who have addiction issues.

We've increased public awareness of the early signs of mental illness in young adults during Mental Illness Week, with *ReachOut Psychosis*, a music and spoken word performance.

New monies support increased services to children with special needs, with an increase in funding of \$100,000 to the Child Development Centre. The centre provides speech and language services, social and emotional development and integrated therapeutic programming for children from birth to preschool. The Child Development Centre will use additional funding to hire a psychologist.

This fiscal year, the contract was increased by 3.5 percent, which was previously agreed to. The money for the psychologist was given last year as a one-year agreement with no guarantee of money in the next fiscal year. The decision was made to include money this year. Their rent also increased, and we increased the agreement for this as well.

We continue to increase public awareness of the early signs of mental illness in young adults during Mental Illness Awareness Week with *Dirty Laundry*, a one-woman play.

Health and Social Services contributed funding to the establishment of a therapeutic wilderness camp operated by the Kwanlin Dun. We developed the funding policy, including going to a three-year model, for non-governmental organizations. We've increased funding for the autism program. We've provided support for the waterfront kitchen project.

\$5 million in funding over three years is committed to Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services. This provides unique outreach services to some of the hard-to-reach population in Whitehorse and also provides travelling services to 10 Yukon communities. It is not unusual to see that most homeless people are unemployed or marginally employed. They are frequently engaged with our justice system, correctional and social services and other agencies. These are costly forms of intervention.

I want to talk a little further about what causes homelessness. I believe that there's a strong consensus in Canadian literature on this subject that the causes of homelessness are structural. For instance, unemployment can be very difficult for many individuals to cope with — the weakening of family ties

coupled with family violence and addictions to drugs, alcohol and gambling, in some cases.

The legacy of residential schools causes crisis situations for parents, forcing them to seek temporary shelter with their children. Lack of stability and shelter is often devastating and, in turn, leads to further problems. Combine these with the economic pressures of the rising cost of living and you have a combined set of problems. These issues have led this government to undertake many initiatives in order to alleviate issues such as unemployment, violence and housing for Yukoners.

The Women's Directorate has doubled the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund from \$100,000 to \$200,000 since 2004. The prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund has allocated \$100,000 yearly to projects designed and developed by aboriginal women for their communities.

The Women's Directorate and the Department of Justice co-hosted two train-the-trainers sessions in the use of two northern and culturally relevant videos and an accompanying training manual in support of violence prevention, which concluded the long-term violence prevention public education campaign.

Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods has received 350 complaints respecting 210 properties since the office opened in late 2006, with the following results: activities voluntarily ceased in 26 locations, 48 tenants were warned, and an additional 38 tenants were formally evicted as of September 2008. I was just thinking that that comment is pretty amazing. When you think of 210 properties, I am amazed — 210 properties and 350 complaints; safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation has worked and is working in this community.

The street crime reduction team — an eight-person RCMP street crime reduction team pilot project was established in 2007 with a budget of \$485,000 per year for three years. Building on the success of the three-year pilot project, crime reduction will now be permanently embedded in the operations of M Division as part of the integrated crime reduction strategy.

The Department of Justice will provide new funding to support an integrated crime reduction coordinator who will lead the program and work closely with the watches to ensure focused patrols of crime hotspots, close monitoring of prolific offenders and intelligence-led policing. The RCMP's crime reduction operations will be conducted by members of the duty watches which will be increased to more optimal levels with the addition of four new members.

We've provided funding for six community-based projects that will help prevent violence against aboriginal women. The prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund has doubled the funding to \$200,000 yearly for programs and events designed and developed by aboriginal women for their communities. There's the implementation of a priority social housing policy by Yukon Housing Corporation for individuals leaving abusive relationships and seniors from rural Yukon who require relocation for medical reasons.

We developed a fund for high-risk young women called "the prevention of violence against aboriginal women" with an annual call for proposals — \$200,000 to assist NGOs and First

Nations to implement harm reduction initiatives for young women living in high-risk situations.

We stabilized funding for two of the Yukon women's shelters — the Dawson shelter and the one in Watson Lake — and counselling non-government organizations for the next three years to allow service providers to concentrate on providing services, rather than finances.

People need affordable, accessible housing that allows them to maintain links with health and social services, with educational, recreational and vocational services. Housing leads to improved health and decreased substance abuse and fewer conflicts with the law. A shelter is one of many options that my government is examining in efforts to meet the many competing demands of those who would be considered homeless and those who are precariously housed. This government is committed to finding a solution that will meet different needs.

While my motion speaks to the need for a shelter, I have to stress that we don't begin with a building. We begin with doing our homework and identifying the nature and degree of the problem. In working with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, we have undertaken significant research to give us some of the very answers we need in order to make rational, well-informed, evidence-based decisions. The work is nearly completed.

The reason I said we don't begin with a building is that the experience of a shelter in Canada can be demoralizing. Let me quote from a recent study: "Many people have said that shelters are a true example of Christian charity. People who say this have never visited a shelter. It isn't wonderful to sleep on a cot in a makeshift dormitory; to line up with strangers for a shower and to have to undress in front of them; to be afraid to fall asleep while listening to coughing, crying and angry muttering around you; to have to leave in the morning, no matter what weather, even if you are sick. Above all, it isn't a wonderful place to be alone."

This is not our vision of a shelter, yet the members opposite would have us rush into a solution that may very well end up looking something like this. It may well be that ultimately our work will lead us to conclude that no single approach should be taken. That should not be construed, as the members opposite seem to have done, that we are not committed to addressing the problems of homelessness. Our commitment is clearly demonstrated by the work undertaken over the past year to collect data from Yukon residents on the housing challenges they face. The Whitehorse housing adequacy survey was undertaken to help us understand the breadth and depth of the issues facing homelessness and those who could be at that point at any moment, and also to provide us with information we all require in order to make informed decisions. The report, expected to be released within the next couple of weeks, once the Yukon Bureau of Statistics has finished its work with it, will provide us with an in-depth look at some of the complex factors that can lead to homelessness or make obtaining affordable and accessible housing difficult.

We know the lack of safe, affordable, and acceptable housing can affect a person's physical and mental health and their sense of connection to the community. That is why this government, in partnership with the Yukon Housing Corporation,

has increased its housing portfolio by 158 units for approximately 40 percent. The Yukon Housing Corporation operates 576 social housing units in 10 communities.

The fact is, since 2005, this government has invested over \$100 million in new affordable housing. To be more specific, let me break it down per construction. In Whitehorse, we added 32 new units to our stock with the family-focused building in Riverdale, which will house single parents and children. We worked with the Women's Directorate on this family housing project. This group has been identified as having the largest need for housing. The intent is a development that will include amenities that benefit the positive growth and development of families. This includes recreational areas, suitable fencing, enhanced interior design and layout specific to the needs of young families.

We added six more family units in the Ingram subdivision and will be starting construction shortly on another six units in Takhini. We have a new 30-unit seniors building underway in Whitehorse on the riverfront to replace the aging 13-unit Alexander Street residence, and there are more plans for more housing for seniors in Whitehorse. As well, we have constructed 48 new units for seniors near Yukon College and another 24 affordable housing units for students and families, which Yukon College manages.

In Haines Junction, we added nine seniors units; in Dawson, a new 19-unit residence is under construction to replace Korbo Apartments, making a net gain of six more housing units in Dawson City, once the 13-unit building is decommissioned.

In Watson Lake, we are building 12 new seniors units; in Teslin, a new eight-unit residence is under construction; in Faro, we are completing six new seniors units.

Building seniors housing in rural communities is important because our seniors buildings are built to promote independent living and the opportunity for seniors to reside in barrier-free environments, thus enabling seniors to remain in their communities. The five-year trend shows that all communities have grown in overall population size, and the people over 50 years of age in each community are forming a larger percentage of the overall demographic.

We're also working with the Department of Health and Social Services on a new seniors Abbeyfield project in Whitehorse. We worked with the Department of Health and Social Services to build a new children's receiving home. The children's receiving home is a temporary home for children and youth who have been removed from their families because of abuse or neglect, and who need a period of assessment and stabilization.

Since 2002-03, the Yukon Housing Corporation has loaned over \$71 million to Yukoners to help address housing needs. Almost all of this money is repayable with interest, save for a small percentage of repair loans that have subsidies to further assist applicants who need it most.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to our Yukon Housing Corporation projects, we've been involved with Habitat for Humanity. Habitat for Humanity is an important partner in housing, and Yukon Housing Corporation will continue to work with this organization in a proactive manner to address the need for af-

fordable housing. In addition, Yukon Housing Corporation will provide, free of charge, ongoing technical assistance to the organization to assist them to build to a SuperGreen standard. Yukon Housing Corporation allocated \$120,000 to purchase land in downtown Whitehorse to be used by Habitat for Humanity to build their triplex.

I'm going to read an e-mail that was sent to the Premier of this territory. It states: "Dear Premier,

"I was pleased to hear that you and the ministers visited the Phoenix Rising site yesterday. As you saw, this project, with the help of your government, is bringing hope to three Yukon families — families that would never be able to have a home to call their own. If this project did nothing more than bring hope to these families, it would have been a most worthwhile project. However, because of the many partnerships Habitat for Humanity Yukon has forged, this project is benefiting many people in our community:

"(1) Yukon Women in Trades and Technologies are running training sessions in the north unit. They are teaching girls and women how to drywall, paint, lay flooring, and do basic electrical work;

"(2) Yukon College has had students in their trades and technology program learning carpentry, plumbing, and electrical work, using this project as a training site. All the rough-in plumbing and electrical, and all the carpentry, except for the decks and porches, was done by college students;

"(3) the Whitehorse Correctional Centre has selected inmates learning valuable job skills by doing the drywall, building decks and porches, insulating, and the siding;

"(4) Yukon Housing Corporation has a SuperGreen building in Whitehorse that they used as a demonstration project for both contractors and the general public. Several contractors have adopted this SuperGreen method of construction. The unit will be extensively monitored so that Yukon Housing Corporation can study and document the value of this construction.

"Many of the students from Yukon College have been snapped up by various contractors who have seen the students' work first-hand. In addition, one of the inmates from the Correctional Centre was hired on his release by a local contractor.

"As you can see, this project has been an enormous benefit to the wider community and we thank you for your support."

Do you know who sent this e-mail to the Premier? It was the secretary for the Habitat for Humanity Yukon.

Another way we are helping to house Yukoners, combat homelessness and provide more housing is through our rental suite program, with repair and construction funding. This program provides a preferred interest rate for loans to homeowners who have an accessory suite in their home. Funding can be for full modernization or to upgrade health and safety items to allow the suite to conform to bylaw requirements. In times of low vacancy rates or for dedicated renters, funding can be used to construct a new suite. Yukon Housing Corporation's technical officers will conduct site visits and provide technical advice through the repair or construction process.

We also help with our rental rehabilitation program, which provides funding for rental property upgrades. This program provides preferred interest rate loans to owners of rental ac-

commodations. These may be single-family rental units or multi-unit residential complexes. Use of funds for upgrading energy efficiency and barrier-free accessibility is encouraged. A full range of technical expertise is available from Yukon Housing Corporation. Health and safety upgrades must be addressed on all of the projects.

Once we have all these pieces, we will consider how best to address the situation, and what a shelter will look like, and how it best contributes to social inclusion. In the meantime, it is important to underscore that no one goes without shelter. There are beds for those who need it, but we know we can do better. The Whitehorse housing adequacy study is a tool for planning, as well as for learning. Those who participated in the study did so in the hope that it would not only stimulate further questions and discussions but, more importantly, would act as a catalyst for action.

Resolving the issue of homelessness is not something that this government can do alone. We are working with our partners on the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, who make this an important mission. We'll continue to partner with the Salvation Army who works with a significant part of the population facing these issues. We will work with other non-governmental organizations who are involved in the lives of some of the individuals we were speaking of here today. Indeed, we work with many NGOs that this government funds with many millions of dollars to ensure the necessary programming that must proceed hand in hand with any physical accommodation.

When I say the word "homeless," what picture springs to mind? Television coverage of Vancouver east side streets littered with abandoned individuals; individuals who look rough, living under the slabs of cardboard; multi-layered individuals pushing shopping carts aimlessly up and down city streets.

In Whitehorse, you might have a different picture. Those few individuals who participate in risky behaviours wandering the streets, pulling up on a piece of pavement when they can go no further, or tattered tents and cardboard down by the river. Perhaps it's the youth who wander the streets, frequenting the 24-hour coffee shops, hanging around schoolyards late at night.

Those are the people we see, but what about the people we don't see — the people who are crashing with friends because they can't afford rent, people living in tents because accommodation is just not available, or people who are one month away from eviction because of not being able to pay rent? Many people need homes and one solution will not be appropriate for everyone.

A homeless shelter in the downtown area may meet the needs of a few but not the many. We need to consider housing for individuals with mental health issues. These individuals could be young or old, or may find it difficult to find housing because of the stigma around their health status. We need to build in housing for individuals with cognitive disabilities who may need supported living accommodations. Our seniors may need varying levels of housing. The transitional shelter is another component of the larger picture.

We need to look at the future when many young adults in our care will require different supports. We need to broaden our view of homelessness to consider housing in general —

low-income families, single parents, the working poor, low-income seniors who may not require assistance with day-to-day living. All these individuals need housing that is safe, affordable and accessible.

We are working on that. We are acting on that and we are succeeding on that. In order to meet this wide variety of needs, we need to take our new data, examine it carefully and talk to the people — the support agencies and the non-governmental organizations. We need to talk among ourselves. Housing is not just a Health and Social Services issue. We are working with our partners at the Yukon Housing Corporation and our partners in Justice. As a government, we recognize our responsibilities and are working hard to meet them.

A new project currently underway will replace Alexander Street and double the available living units. We look ahead to the construction of the Abbeyfield units. There are NGOs in the Yukon working on housing issues to help keep their clients housed. Options for Independence is looking at expanding available units it provides. Challenge is looking at creating housing for some of its client groups.

We all recognize that this is not something that one organization can solve. Again, I cannot stress how complex an issue this is and no one can say that the issue of homelessness has not been on this government's agenda for the past many years. What has become clearer as we move forward and this government considers this problem is that structural problems, unemployment, poverty, addictions, family dysfunction or the dissolution, and so on, require a broad range of non-housing as well as housing interventions if they are to be remedied.

A famous African poet and civil rights activist once wrote: "The ache for home lives in all of us; the safe place where we can go as we are, and not be questioned." There are two elements in this little quote: the place and the means by which it is made safe. How those two elements relate to each other is one area where we are focusing our energy, but it is fair to say that that is what this government wants for all Yukoners — a safe place to be.

As we work to create those safe, inclusive places, we need to be cognizant that the money invested in our social welfare programming has risen by more than \$13.6 million over the past five years — an increase of about 26 percent. Presently, these costs exceed \$66.4 million, which is a serious commitment for a small jurisdiction.

Unfortunately, homelessness cannot be fixed simply by money, although it helps. If dollars were the solution, there would be no homelessness in the Yukon or Canada. We also recognize that we need to do more than just provide the physical structure. We need to design interventions to prevent homelessness in those risk groups. This will require cooperation between all levels of government, as well as NGOs. It will require a better understanding of the root causes of homelessness in Whitehorse and a better understanding of what works — something that we're already pursuing as part of our social inclusion strategy. It will require a better understanding of the root causes of homelessness in Whitehorse and throughout the Yukon.

Understanding this issue and all its complexity means understanding the story of the people who are homeless. The Minister of Justice spoke recently during debate about the common client research project, which is currently underway. The common client research project is a multi-department project, which is designed to build a broad picture of the needs and service use among clients who are “common” to four departments: Justice, Health and Social Services, Education, and Yukon Housing Corporation.

The intent of the project is to determine the service use patterns and the needs among a small group of high service use common clients in order to determine better ways of providing resources and services. The intent is to understand the picture and characteristics of these high-use clients so the government can be better focused in its interventions, which will help improve the outcome and life of those clients.

As the Minister of Justice has recently indicated, a workshop on the common client research project was held April 3, 2009, with Dr. Julian Somers, Ph.D. Dr. Somers is an associate professor at Simon Fraser University and a director with the Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction. More than 60 participants attended from Health and Social Services, Education, Justice and the Women’s Directorate, including senior management and the direct program managers, plus members of the common client working group.

Based on feedback and learning at this initial workshop, an interdepartmental research project has been undertaken that will inform policy response to the needs of our common clients to better coordinate the government’s response to their needs.

The common client research project is designed to start with a cohort of Justice clients and expand outwards across departments with a focus on the family as well on the individual. A steering committee comprised of representatives from the departments of Education, Justice, Health and Social Services, the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Women’s Directorate has been tasked to work on research projects regarding common clients to help identify the scope and the services they access.

The *Working Without Boundaries* report was developed by officials from the departments of Health and Social Services, Justice and Education and was completed in 2004. It is informing the work on the common client project. With the assistance of the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, which has a mandate to undertake this kind of research via the *Statistics Act*, electronic data from the Justice cohort will be linked to data from other departments in a way that addresses and protects privacy concerns.

Understanding their housing and shelter experiences and needs is an important part of that picture and this will be yet more information that will assist the government in determining a multi-faceted response to the homelessness issue in Whitehorse and the Yukon. It is also an excellent example of how a number of government departments are working together toward a common and better understanding of the clients we serve, the service they receive, and the nature of their complex needs.

I know the Minister of Health and Social Services has some more information he’d like to put on record with regard to this motion, and I look forward to listening to the input from the opposition members on this subject. Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: You know, normally when I rise on a motion day, I say that it is with pleasure that I rise to speak to the motion. I can’t say that today. It’s with no pleasure that I rise to speak to this motion, because there can be no pleasure in having to talk about homelessness and poverty. There’s certainly no pleasure for those who live in poverty or with homelessness and there’s no pleasure in speaking about it. But the issue, however, is extremely important.

This is a very short motion: “THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a homeless shelter in downtown Whitehorse.”

We’re a little taken aback by the lack of detail in the motion; it’s very vague. There are no timelines; there’s no discussion of programs or supports; there’s no mention of operation and maintenance funding; there’s no indication of size; there’s no discussion of there being plans. It’s almost a motion that says we should start to talk about it. I find that surprising, because just seven days ago, I rose to speak to Motion No. 1123, which urged the Yukon government to support the efforts of the Northern City Supportive Housing Coalition to build supportive housing for the homeless population in Whitehorse with some additional discussion of budgeting, operational funding, working with all levels of government, non-governmental organizations, First Nations and stakeholder groups. The government side strongly chastised us for not having sufficient details; for not having operating and maintenance numbers, although the application had included such information. Then they came back a week later with a much less specific, more generic motion.

When he spoke to his motion, the member said that it’s more than just a building, and I can heartily agree with the member. It is about more than just a building, but if you’re spending a night on the streets of Whitehorse or any other community without a roof over your head, I have to tell you that a building is pretty important to the equation.

Yes, there needs to be work toward assisting people to never be in such a situation. Yes, there needs to be programs in place to assist people out of such a situation. Yes, there needs to be counselling; there needs to be addictions programs. There needs to be all kinds of things. We can agree on that. But the member did come forward with a motion that “urges” — “urge” is a word that indicates emphasis, necessity, urgency — “the Government of Yukon to develop a homeless shelter in downtown Whitehorse.” When he spoke to his motion, he said there are a lot of things one has to do before having a shelter, so I’m not sure which position the member holds.

The member made reference several times to the Whitehorse housing adequacy study. I find that a little shocking, because the non-governmental organizations such as the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, the housing task force, the other organizations that have put forward proposals such as Challenge Community Vocational Alternatives and the Northern Cities

Supportive Housing Coalition have been eagerly awaiting that information — that data — that the government has promised for so long to collect and has been, in fact, collecting and collating. It sounded like the member — the sole back-bencher in the Yukon Party caucus — is aware of this information, has been privy to it — because he says, “when this information comes out, we will see how important this is”, and we’d have to ask why a government private member has access to information when many others who are working in non-governmental organizations and as volunteers have not been able to get this information. So, when the member says that we need to have the data before we know what we are going to do, we do have to say that this government has had eight years to come to grips with this problem.

I am positive that if the members opposite — either the member who introduced this motion, who obviously believes that this is an important topic or he wouldn’t put it on the floor of this House, the Health minister, the previous Health minister, the previous Health minister to that — had they met with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition eight years ago, I think they would have been told much of what the member told us here today — that there are issues with affordable housing; that there are many reasons for homelessness: family break up, divorce, depression, other mental illnesses, fetal alcohol syndrome disorder, addictions to drugs and alcohol, lack of adequate education. None of this is new; none of this is shocking or surprising as a result of new undertakings and new studies.

The fact is that poverty and homelessness, or lack of adequate housing, are intricately tied together. A lack of safe and healthy housing — or any housing at all in the case of homelessness — is an absolute determinant of poverty. Regardless of how people start out in life, if they have reached a position where they don’t have any permanent housing or safe and healthy housing, you can be assured that they will soon be in abject poverty, if they’re not already there.

We have to say that there has been eight years of this government with very little programming or educational and other opportunities being provided for homeless people.

Mr. Speaker, just a couple of weeks ago, it was the national Poverty and Homelessness Action Week and the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition — their many partners and many individuals who volunteer with them — put on a week of programming, as well as some very visible activities such as the photo project and the people who go out and try to find a place to stay, who are not normally homeless people. Some prominent politicians were certainly out there taking part, along with other well-known Yukoners, to try and draw attention to this issue. But this happens every year and every year we give tributes to the week in this Assembly. We pay tribute to everything this side of sliced bread in this Assembly; yet we come back a year later and we give the same tributes and the same problems continue to exist.

In his opening remarks, the member said that unemployment can be difficult for many people to deal with. I would have to ask the member: does the Member for Klondike think that unemployment is not difficult for some people to deal with? Is there anybody who finds unemployment to be a walk

in the park, unless it’s a walk in the park to look for a place to sleep?

Yes, unemployment is difficult for everybody to deal with. Whether the unemployment rate is eight or nine percent, as it has been in recent years nationally, or seven percent, which is the range it has been in Yukon, first of all, those percentages don’t reflect the people who have quit looking for work. People who are homeless in this territory and the people who are going to the shelters don’t even show up in those statistics. You have to have been looking for work within a certain period of time in order to be considered unemployed.

None of us should ever think we have a low unemployment rate — it’s 6.9 percent or 7.1 percent — because that rate doesn’t even reflect the chronically unemployed.

It doesn’t reflect the people who are challenged by substance abuse or mental health issues. There are so many other reasons why people end up just giving up. Those statistics paint a rosier picture than the reality; in fact, I saw a program just yesterday reflecting what was going on in the United States. It talked about their unemployment rate being just under 10 percent, and it said in fact if you actually count in all the other people — the people who are working only part-time because they can’t find full employment, the people who have quit looking for work, the people whose unemployment is expired — it actually adds up to at least 17 percent, and in some places it can be as high as 25 percent. This problem is bigger than any statistic will ever tell us.

In fact, the member talked about a number of programs that are going on, and I want to be clear about something: there have been things done. It has been eight years that this government has been in office. The member made reference to additional housing that has been built: seniors housing, additional housing in communities — there has been good done. There is more housing stock and more new housing stock than there was previously.

Certainly, there are many hard-working officials in the Department of Health and Social Services, in the Yukon Housing Corporation, within the Women’s Directorate and the Department of Justice, in the Department of Education — all of whom are dedicated to their jobs and dedicated to their clients who are doing good things. So we are not going to stand here today and say that this government has done nothing; however, we will say — and it’s fairly obvious in a market where housing prices, for those who are fortunate enough to own houses — have gone up and up and up, in a market where the average cost of rental housing continues to go up — and I think we’ve just recently saw statistics that it went from \$750 to \$775, I believe was one statistic — that the disparity between those who have a safe place to call home and those who don’t, in fact has gotten worse. It has increased. I can agree with the Member for Klondike that we should urge the Government of Yukon to build a homeless shelter, but there’s a lot more we should do.

There are many aspects of dealing with homelessness and people at risk. The Member for Mount Lorne and I had the opportunity today, just this morning, to have a tour — and I referred to it during Question Period — of the Sarah Steele centre. We had an opportunity to see the renovations that are going

on within that facility, where programming is taking place — from detox and the intake area to the areas that are being used for the 28-day programming to the small area that has been dedicated for nighttime temporary shelter for youth at risk or homeless youth.

It was clear — because we had an opportunity to meet counsellors and licensed practical nurses and other workers — the people in Alcohol and Drug Services are very dedicated to the job they're doing. It's also clear that it's not an ideal solution, as I said in Question Period today, to have a temporary shelter for youth at risk co-existing within that facility.

First of all, the intake scenario is very awkward. Youth at risk must first present themselves to Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, make contact through a telephone line, and be referred and escorted to the Sarah Steele Building.

Then the actual intake is the same intake as it is for detox. There's a very small waiting area and the workers there told us — it's no secret. They were speaking in front of the deputy minister, so we're not talking out of turn here. Sometimes what happens is they are taking in an intoxicated person who has shown up at detox simultaneously with the arrival of a young person who has fled a bad situation and is looking for help. And they're doing it in an area that's not much bigger than the area within which you are sitting today.

There's no privacy; there's no confidentiality. It's certainly a better situation than there being no opportunity for emergency shelter for a young person, but it's not the right opportunity. It was clear when the workers told us about the challenges and said, "We do what we can, and we do as we're directed," that they didn't think it was ideal either — that there needs to be a separate place for youth at risk or homeless youth.

Now, again, I don't know by the member's motion whether he is speaking of an omnibus sort of shelter — one shelter in Whitehorse that will deal with all problems, all people — or is he speaking specifically of adults, not younger people? He did not really speak. He made one comment about supportive housing. We tried to talk about two very specific supportive housing projects last week, and there didn't seem to be a lot of interest on the side opposite in being supportive of the supportive housing projects. So we're not certain exactly what this motion is intended to address, other than it will urge the government to develop a homeless shelter.

Then the member goes back to talking about all the things that need to be done before we do that. We were of the belief that those things had been getting done, or should have been, over the years.

We're concerned that, while the motion speaks to urging the government to do something, the lack of detail might indicate that it's just a concept; that the government is now getting ready to begin, to commence, to start to entertain the notion of doing something. That, after eight years, is certainly a concern.

I'm going to go back to the *More than a Roof* document, which was a call to action for a youth emergency shelter or safe home. There are things recommended in that document that really apply to more than just youth. That report was published in March of 2007. It says, "Homeless people need a safe place to stay, ranging from one night up to six months; emotional

support — understanding and respect for where they are in their personal journey from childhood to adulthood." Well, we could just paraphrase that and say, "in their personal journey through life."

"Understanding and respect for their culture and life experience; help with sorting out next steps through action planning."

While this was geared to youth, many of the things we find in this report can be applied to many homeless people. Many homeless people, not only youth, will couch surf or use sexual favours to secure short-term shelter, especially in the winter months. There has been community feedback that indicated that the term "emergency shelter" does not convey the necessary emotional support that homeless people require.

Respondents to this study stated that it would be important to have a downtown location and for the shelter to be open 24 hours and for there to be transportation and pick-up available when necessary. At least the member is talking about the shelter in downtown Whitehorse.

Let's be clear: the issues of poverty, homelessness, substandard housing and people at risk exist not only in Whitehorse, as has been pointed out, but they can exist in many Yukon communities. We've all seen this, but the capital city, because it's the largest population centre in the territory, obviously has the largest number of people who fall into this situation. It also acts as a magnet to the communities.

People come, and they leave rural Yukon, and they come to Whitehorse, and sometimes that's the very disconnect — leaving a community where they have friends and family, relations, people who know them well and care about them and landing up — for whatever reason that they originally come — looking for work, pursuing education, perhaps getting away from a bad situation at home, but there's a disconnect that often happens that actually aggravates the problem.

Putting something in Whitehorse, just on a numbers basis, is essential. The Member for Klondike, when he was talking, said that the face of homelessness looks different in Yukon, perhaps, than it does elsewhere. He said that when we look on TV and when we think of people on the downtown east side in Vancouver and the people who are in the difficult areas of Toronto, that's what we think of — people who are slumped on sidewalks or sleeping propped up against buildings, and that the face is different in Yukon. I have to tell the member that it's not so different in Yukon. It's not necessarily different at all.

I would encourage the member to walk around the less-developed areas of the Whitehorse waterfront. Certainly in the summer and well into the colder season, if you walk through any of the treed areas, you'll find little campsites, you'll find fire pits, you'll find evidence that people are living there because they don't have a safe place to call home. We've all seen people outside the liquor store and outside the grocery stores trying to ask people to give them a loonie by assisting people with their groceries. We know that many of these people are dealing with substance abuse issues. Well, yes, that's a face of homelessness and it doesn't look very different in Yukon than it does on Davie Street or in Pigeon Park. It's pretty familiar.

We should not fool ourselves into thinking, “This is Yukon. We’re different.” This is the Yukon. We probably recognize each other by name more often. That is one difference. Many of us can greet some of the people who are virtually homeless in this territory by name, but they’re still people who are suffering.

Going back to the report I was referring to previously and recognizing it is specifically targeted toward youth, there are other recommendations within it that I think are applicable to homelessness in general and the creation of an emergency shelter. Some recommendations from the report: the safe home should provide safe and secure accommodation; shelter should be made available to any homeless who have no other safe option, particularly those who are victims of family violence or other threats to their safety; homeless people should be able to stay until they are able to identify an appropriate next step for shelter or housing, or their crisis has subsided; the shelter policy should outline a process to accept inebriated homeless in situations that protect youth, staff and volunteers from unsafe behaviour — let’s just say to protect other clients and staff and volunteers from unsafe behaviour.

The shelter should be managed by or have a working relationship with the local First Nation organization for program delivery.

We certainly know, Mr. Speaker, that there is a much higher incidence of poverty and homelessness among our aboriginal community and the percentage within the community as a whole. So clearly, whatever solution is adopted needs close ties to First Nation governments and First Nation organizations if it’s going to have success when it comes to programming and support, as opposed to simply providing an emergency roof over people’s heads.

Getting back to the youth component of this situation, when we discussed it on October 4 in general debate, the Health minister used the phrase “temporary basis” numerous times when asked what steps were being taken to ensure that at-risk youth had a place to stay. The minister gave some statistics. He said, “...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.

On May 3, 2007, the Leader of the Third Party — the former Leader of the Third Party; the late Member for Whitehorse Centre — asked the Health minister whether the government could, quote: “ensure that a suitable shelter is in place by no later than two years from now” and the Health minister could not commit to this timeline. It’s two years later. The former Leader of the Third Party is no longer with us, but the issue still is and we are still debating it. Excuse me, it’s two and a half years later. During all of that time, we haven’t come up with a permanent homeless shelter. We haven’t come to build a permanent shelter for youth at risk. We haven’t built or supported any non-governmental organizations in building any supported living alternatives. We haven’t, in those two and a half years,

come to any decision on how we’re going to deal with severely intoxicated persons.

We haven’t made any decisions on whether a homeless shelter will be 100-percent dry. If you go to the emergency youth situation at Sarah Steele, for example, of course it’s a detox centre and the first thing that’s done, as we learned today, even for the young people who show up for emergency youth sheltering, is they’re given a breathalyzer test to check whether they are inebriated. They are searched and their backpacks and personal items are searched to check for drugs, illicit drugs and alcohol, which of course would be a major threat to the people who are going through detox and rehabilitation programming at Sarah Steele.

The fact is that there is a high correlation between many — not necessarily most, but many — homeless people and alcohol and substance abuse.

We have to ask ourselves: are we going to insist that people already be sober and free of alcohol and drugs before we will accommodate them at a homeless shelter? That’s why the proposal from the Northern City Supportive Housing Coalition was a proposal that would include the ability for people to continue to drink within their own space, within their own room, but not in common areas. Now, we can be proscriptive and say, “Well, we can’t allow that.” But, in fact, that means that we will not provide any support or accommodations for one significant component of this group.

The Member for Klondike indicated that, while he recognized that the issue was real in Yukon, the numbers were small. Well, we’ll soon see the numbers on the survey to which he refers, but I can tell the member that when Whitehorse Connects runs their days several times a year, the numbers are real. I wasn’t able to volunteer at the most recent Whitehorse Connects day because of my obligations here within the Assembly, but I understand that they had several hundred — over 200, I believe it was — people come through the doors, but I have been there and I have to tell you that it does cross the gamut of people at risk. If you volunteer there, you will see people who are clearly suffering from substance abuse. You will see people who clearly are FASD. You will see people who clearly suffer with mental health issues.

Mr. Speaker, you will see people who haven’t had a hair cut, possibly since the last Whitehorse Connects day. It’s amazing to see the pride and joy in someone’s face when they have been given a chit for a haircut through one of our local hair salons or the barber shop that have volunteered to do this for free, or the hairdressers who are doing it on-site. When the people come back, they have a quickness in their step, and the joy on their face after something as simple as a hair cut, which everyone in this Assembly takes for granted, is remarkable.

There are people who come through the door who are hungry and there is food provided. When you see people going through food lines, it doesn’t take much to see who’s really hungry. They go back more than once and put food in their pockets.

You will see people going through the racks to get used clothing, because they don’t have adequate clothing. You’ll see people collecting sleeping bags that have been donated, be-

cause they are going to be sleeping outside. If you're sleeping in a traditional house or apartment, you don't need a sleeping bag. Most of us use them when we go camping or hunting. There are people whose home is a sleeping bag that they carry with them. So I have to tell you that the face of the homeless in Yukon is not very different from the face of the homeless in Vancouver or Toronto, and we should never think, "Oh, Yukon's different. It's not so bad here." The numbers may not be as great because people may gravitate to Vancouver or Victoria because it's easier to survive outdoors in a warmer climate, but people do end up couch surfing, staying with a friend or a relative — often at risk from bad behaviour — but it's real. It's just as real for those people as it is for people in any other community.

Mr. Speaker, there was an expert here — a nationally known and renowned expert, Michael Shapcott, during the Poverty and Homelessness Action Week. I know he met with all three caucuses, including the government caucus. He was on the radio. He was brought up through the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition. He made good use of his time while he was here. When we met with him, he kept apologizing because he was finding it difficult to focus on the answers to the questions we asked him. He kept apologizing and saying, "I'm sorry. I'm really tired and I'm having a hard time making sense. Last night I volunteered to go without shelter and be outside and sleep." He said, "Today, I'm having a hard time staying on topic." He had gone one night without a proper place to sleep. He obviously is a very successful person who has a full-time job — one night without adequate shelter had reduced him to someone who had difficulty speaking in complete sentences.

What chance does someone who is living like that seven nights a week have to go and have a successful job application? How is that person going to go somewhere and successfully enter into a program at Yukon College for upgrading, for retraining, to pursue a career or path as a carpenter or an electrician, if they can't sleep at night and they're cold and shivering by morning?

When Mr. Shapcott was here, he did a number of interviews and I'm just going to quote from one that was on the CBC on October 13, 2010, which we can provide to *Hansard*, if they require it. He said, "I'm really here on behalf of the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition to talk about a very serious issue in terms of housing and homelessness. Before I came, I looked at some of the numbers and the numbers confirm the problems in terms of overcrowding of housing. These are some of the less visible signs of a housing crisis: lots of substandard housing; waiting lists for people to get into housing; sky-high rents in the private sector. Of course, the ownership costs of housing here in the north are every bit as high as in many southern Canadian communities, so all the ingredients are here for a housing crisis."

He indicated in his meetings with us that Yukon could be on the very edge of a much bigger problem if we don't address it sooner rather than later. He did speak — and the Member for Klondike addressed some of these issues — he said, "We talk about a very simple formula. In community after community we talk about doing two things: first of all, we talk about clos-

ing the front door of the shelter and opening the back door. What we mean by that is we have to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place, so people who are living in housing that is unaffordable, we have to make sure that we can ensure that they can actually afford to pay their housing, also put some food on the table, pay for the other necessities of life. We have to address the quality of housing so that people are not effectively being evicted or being forced to live in substandard housing."

He went on to say, "So the first thing we do is we try and prevent people from the downward spiral toward homelessness," and I think the Member for Klondike addressed some of this when he talked about some of the programs that the government, over the years, has maintained within the Yukon Housing Corporation.

Mr. Shapcott went on to say: "... and I have to say, it's not rocket science — the key goal is actually to build affordable housing, to make sure people have a safe, healthy, affordable place to live."

He said there's not one solution that fits all the housing and homelessness needs of Whitehorse, or indeed the entire Yukon. This is not only a challenge for the Yukon government. As Mr. Shapcott said: "We used to have a national housing program in Canada. In fact, in 1973, our federal government adopted one and the federal government became the senior partner in what was an incredibly successful program over about 20 years, delivered close to 600,000 affordable homes all across the country, including here in Whitehorse." He said that over the last 10 to 15 years, there has been a steady erosion of federal support and the cost of that has been in terms of increased homelessness and housing insecurity here and everywhere. So one of the key goals, by bringing visibility to the problems here in Whitehorse, is to say that we actually know what the solutions are. We need to get the federal government back to the table as a real partner in the process.

I'm sure the members opposite will point out when I say that Mr. Shapcott has referred to the last 10 or 15 years, that that includes a federal Liberal government and a federal Conservative government. It doesn't need to be pointed out to us that this has happened under two national parties, and what I say is, "Shame." Shame on both parties at the national level for vacating the field to the extent that they have done.

We do need to have a national strategy. It can't only be done by non-governmental organizations, municipalities, and territorial and provincial governments. It is a federal responsibility, first and foremost.

As Mr. Shapcott says, "The federal government historically has played an absolutely key role." But he also said, "It's not the only government that needs to take a part. He said, "Of course the territorial government, which here does actually administer the Housing Corporation, they're a key partner." He said, "Municipal governments are there. We also need to get the private sector and we need to get the community sector, so ultimately what we need is a collaboration." He said, "If we look at communities across Canada that have had some success in terms of reversing the homelessness, like Calgary, like Kitchener in Ontario, places like Ottawa, what's been the key

to success is that they have a big table. They get all the partners to the table and they really focus on solutions.”

I want to say that in terms of the member saying that we need to have the data and we need to continue to study it, this expert said, “I don’t think there’s really a lot of need to actually go out and take the pulse of the community on an endless basis. I think what we need to do now is set specific targets.”

He also said — and this is criticism of the current federal government — that he’s aware that just yesterday — yesterday being October 12 — “The federal Finance minister delivered his latest financial report and, of course, one of the things he did was he threw his hands in the air and said, ‘Woe is me, we have a fiscal crisis. We’re going to cut back on social transfers.’” He said, “Well, I think one of the things we have to say is some cuts just go too deeply. They hurt communities; they hurt people; and we can’t afford to make any further cuts in housing.”

I will say there is enough blame to go around at the federal level but, right now, it is the federal Conservative government. They are talking about cuts and that is only going to exacerbate the situation.

The Member for Klondike quoted a lot of statistics and numbers. He made reference to a number of programs the Yukon Housing Corporation has put in place. He talked about some of the loan programs, and he talked about millions of dollars in loans that, over the years, the Housing Corporation has provided to Yukoners in order to build or improve their houses and, he indicated, with interest to be paid.

That does help to address one aspect of the issue, which is maintaining a decent housing stock for those who already have it. But I’m sure the Member for Klondike would agree with me when I say I don’t think any of the people who are homeless, who are going to the food bank and Whitehorse Connects, would qualify for those loans because they don’t have a home that they own to begin with. So we have to accept the fact that there is a problem.

Mr. Speaker, when I began speaking today, I referenced the fact that I didn’t know what to make of this motion because it was so vague — Motion No. 1217 saying: “THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a homeless shelter in downtown Whitehorse.”

So we would like to propose a friendly amendment to this motion and we certainly would be open to others who might do the same — to beef it up, to improve it, to make sure that it fulfills the mandate that I believe the Member for Klondike had in mind when he tabled this motion just two days ago this week.

We would like to refer to the fact that, in December of 2006, we brought forward a motion that was, at the time, geared toward youth. Since that time, there have been many motions on the floor for this government to deal with. Last week was a prime example: one week ago today, we debated a motion at length that would have addressed this issue in some detail, specifically one type of housing for people who are currently homeless or living without any safe and healthy house, and that is supported living.

From the motion that we have in front of us today, it’s not clear what kind of a shelter is being proposed, what programs, if any, would be available there — basically this is a very broad motion and it needs some details put into it. For example: our motion on youth shelters had some points that could be combined with the Member for Klondike’s motion and it wouldn’t alter the original intent of the member’s motion, but it would strengthen it; it would provide some focus. There are definitely points from that motion that we could provide to help this motion and make it stronger and more constructive. We know that there’s need for more than a band-aid solution. There’s need for a permanent facility that will cater not only to the immediate needs of the homeless and not only be a safe haven for one night, but that would give access to a safe environment for an extended period and operate outside of just the evening-to-dawn scenario. Right now, for example, we know for the 10 beds the Salvation Army provides, people queue up to make use of those beds. In effect, we have people who are using a very temporary shelter on a permanent basis.

We know that, right now, when it comes to the youth at risk, they almost require a GPS to first get hold of Skookum Jim’s — and Skookum Jim’s is doing a good job with those people, once they’re connected — then they’re brought to detox at Sarah Steele. It’s a very limited situation there, where there are two rooms that are right next door to each other, sharing a common bathroom and a common living area, one with two beds for young men and one with two beds for young women — but they have to leave at 9:00 a.m. every day. They can’t stay there any longer than that.

One of the things we learned today is, yes, they are told of other opportunities. They can go to various NGOs, such as Angel’s Nest, during the day. If they need shelter again the next night, they have to go through that whole process again. They have to get hold of Skookum Jim Friendship Centre and be escorted back to Sarah Steele. They can’t ring the bell again and say, “Hi. It’s me. It’s Billy or Sally. I was here last night. I still am without a place to stay.” They have to go through this whole process again.

We’d just like to see a little more definition in this motion.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Mitchell: I therefore move

THAT Motion No. 1217 be amended by inserting immediately after the words “to develop a” the following words, “permanent 24-hour”; and inserting after “Whitehorse” the following words: “that would incorporate the following objectives:

- (1) provide access to a safe environment for more than one evening at a time;
- (2) provide healthy living alternatives and counselling;
- (3) provide specific programming to benefit youth and adults at risk; and
- (4) provide 24-hour support staff.”

Speaker: The amendment is in order. It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition

THAT Motion No. 1217 be amended by inserting immediately after the words “to develop a” the following words, “per-

manent 24-hour”; and inserting after “Whitehorse” the following words: “that would incorporate the following objectives:

- (1) provide access to a safe environment for more than one evening at a time;
- (2) provide healthy living alternatives and counselling;
- (3) provide specific programming to benefit youth and adults at risk; and
- (4) provide 24-hour support staff.”

On the amendment, Leader of the Official Opposition, you have 20 minutes.

Mr. Mitchell: I won’t need 20 minutes because there are others who want to speak. There are a couple of things that I want to point out. I was critical of the vagueness of the motion. If you’re going to criticize, you should offer an alternative. I am doing that. I am providing some additional steps to make sure we at least have some idea about what we’re talking.

Now, we do this at, I guess, some political risk, but I mean risk into the certainty of what’s happening here. It really doesn’t matter what happens to us; it matters what happens to the people in need. I have not put in this amendment — although I was very tempted to do so — a specific timeline. I wasn’t sure how we could put a timeline in there.

We can say “immediately” — well, what does “immediately” mean? We get into these debates every Wednesday. The member opposite says “immediately”. Does he expect it to be done by the end of the day?

Priority — we have so many priorities that we have no priorities, so there’s no point in saying “as a priority.” We could have put a specific timeline, but we would have liked to have seen it done five years ago, so what timeline would I put? Would we say within six months, within a year? We’re not the government; we’re the opposition. We are suggesting we want to see the government do it. We’ll work with the government on this, as we are with this motion by amending it. We have put in some of the additional aspects that we’ve heard from many organizations need to be there. There needs to be support. First of all, we want it to be permanent — not a temporary solution, not like what’s happening now with youth where the Sarah Steele centre is being used temporarily for nights only to provide a different service. We don’t want to see this appended on to some other service that exists to be done off the side of workers’ desks, so to speak. We think there has to be a safe place to house people in need and it needs to be dedicated to that.

When we say “24 hours,” there are going to be times when people need shelter during the day, not only between the hours of 9:00 at night and 9:00 in the morning. It does get to be 40 below and colder in Yukon, and it is certainly predicted to be that way this winter, so we want it to be available day and night. We don’t want the situation we have right now with youth at risk who have to go from pillar to post to get through the 24-hour cycle with one set of programming in one place and something very different during the day in another, and they have to build a bond of trust with two different sets of workers and counsellors. We think that it’s important that this be permanent and open day and night.

“(1) provide access to a safe environment for more than one evening at a time”. Yes, there are people for whom it is going to take longer to have any other alternatives. If they’re suffering from mental health issues, if they’re suffering from addiction issues, it’s not like we can give them shelter for one night and expect that the next night, they’re going to go off and find a job. All of this is desirable that we’re going to move people out and up, but it doesn’t happen overnight. So that’s number one.

“(2) provide healthy living alternatives and counselling”. I can agree with the members opposite that a shelter is not meant simply to be a place to warehouse people who are on their uppers. It’s meant to be part of an all-inclusive scenario where first we do provide shelter. People need shelter first. Counselling doesn’t work very well on the street corner at minus 30 or minus 40 degrees. There needs to be the opportunity for people to receive advice and counselling for healthy living alternatives.

(3) — there needs to be specific programming to benefit youth and adults at risk. I say that because the needs are different. There is overlap, but there are some different needs between young people and people who are 50 or 60 years old who were once in the workforce and don’t have an extended family out there to help them and have really fallen on hard times.

(4) — there needs to be 24-hour support staff. There are two proposals for supportive living that we spoke of last week. Either one of these proposals, if the government wants to put their money into them, could accommodate that, but whatever we do, we think there needs to be 24-hour service and 24-hour support staff.

For example, we heard today, in the case of young people that, while there has been a second temporary facility on Jarvis Street while renovations have been going in the Sarah Steele Building, there are two youth workers present every night until 5:00 in the morning. If they don’t have a client by 5:00 in the morning, they can leave.

We think that there needs to be something permanent where there are support people in place for 24 hours. We think there needs to be a place where people can go directly so they don’t have to first go to one social agency in order to be referred to another one. People need to know where the shelter is, it needs to be identifiable and they need to be able to go there for intake, whether it is 8:00 at night or 3:00 in the morning.

There’s enough literature out there that I could quote from, but I’m not sure I see the benefit in quoting from lots of studies. The studies exist; we don’t have to study this again and again. If the government will work with agencies such as the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, they have lots of information they can provide. What we need is action. We actually need to have something happen. It would be nice to see something happen while some of us, if not all of us, are still in this Assembly. Had we made a decision two and a half years ago when the former Member for Whitehorse Centre was advocating — one of many times, I’m just quoting one — then the doors would be open today. If we start now and move toward action, then maybe next year during Poverty and Homelessness

Action Week, we'll actually have something that we can feel better about that we have accomplished.

We don't need — as so many members in here have said, at least on this side of the House — to study this endlessly; we actually have to take action. People elect governments to act; they can go to colleges and universities if they just want to study. They expect action from governments. Let's act here today, and let's follow today's action with action to address the issue. Thank you, and I look forward to hearing others speak to this amendment.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I first want to extend an acknowledgement to the Official Opposition: the amendment, as we have received and have looked into it, is certainly a constructive approach, but I think you'll find that the government side wants to also add clarity. I'm not suggesting that we're going to amend the amendment, but I think we have to understand that there's so much more to this area and challenge to our social safety net and the social fabric of not just the Yukon — I think any jurisdiction is grappling with this.

However, in many other jurisdictions the issue is much more severe. So, with that, let me point to the fact that the items as presented by the Leader of the Official Opposition are indeed really quite relevant to the issues and the challenges that governments and society face when we deal with a broad range of social ills that are the precursors, if you will, that create scenarios and situations where people may find themselves homeless — may be in need of shelter, may be in need of counselling and programs, may be in need of other factors that governments and NGOs and other agencies provide to those in society who are challenged for whatever reason.

But we can't lose sight of the fact that there are a lot of programs, a lot of facilities, a lot of counselling, and a lot of areas in Justice that have been reformed, that are actually linked to this very area.

I first want to make the point that "providing access to a safe environment for more than one evening at a time" in many instances is happening in today's Yukon.

It's not, I would say, specific to maybe one age group or constituency in the Yukon, but it is certainly happening in today's Yukon. It's important because we have many challenges out there and I will try to list some as best I can.

They include mental health, the needs of seniors, housing for single-parent families, and many other areas, such as things the Community Wellness Court has undertaken. There are many changes in the ever-evolving areas of policy that address this issue. The second item of providing healthy living alternatives and counselling is happening in today's Yukon, so one would only assume that we would apply the very same to any other new or emerging issues or challenges we are going to meet.

I want to make sure we understand that the last thing we want to do is start duplicating areas that, in the context of ensuring the best results possible — efficiencies and those things are very important, but we don't want to start duplicating programs and services that are available. We want to enhance existing services to meet many changing needs and challenges.

Specific programming to benefit youth and adults at risk: well, again, there are many, many programs that exist in today's Yukon that do exactly that. One would only have to look at the long list of initiatives that are housed in the Department of Health and Social Services on the social side of the ledger and the investments that are being made, and the expertise that is being provided, and the other very important elements of programming and counselling that exist in today's Yukon.

One must, again, be clear on exactly what it is that we are doing in this regard, and, again, not duplicating that which already exists.

Twenty-four hour support staff — there are areas where 24-hour support staff does exist.

I don't want to go on at great length. What I want to say is the government side is going to make every effort to incorporate an amendment such as this into the motion and the action that would be derived out of the motion. What we seek is unanimous support to proceed from this Assembly, not only on the continuing work, because that's part of it — we cannot just simply stand down on programs and services and other initiatives that are already happening and replace them with something else. We must be careful that we integrate what we are doing in these areas and, of course, this is going to be part of our thinking. But the government side certainly wants to ensure that we can incorporate amendments such as this into the motion, so that we can get to that very important point this afternoon and hopefully unanimously pass a motion that this Assembly then would certainly be dealing with in the broader context as we move forward. With that, I thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for his input.

It adds to the context of the motion itself. It's now a matter of finalizing and determining how best we can proceed with what hopefully will be an amended motion unanimously passed.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, we'll wait and see. Obviously, on the other side of the Legislature there is much activity. I'm sure that the creative minds upstairs are beaver away to add further clarity to the motion. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it's not a motion in this Legislature that we need; what we need is action.

I can tell you and I can tell this House that I would not support the motion before it was amended. I'm not going to commit on the floor of the Legislature here, because obviously there are other things at work on the other side of the Legislative Assembly to further amend the motion.

Because I have no confidence in this government on this issue, I can't give a commitment to support anything that this government would do on this issue until I actually see something, and I haven't seen much. The reason why I couldn't support the motion is basically because I believe that it's this government's obligation to provide for the basic needs of our children and our youth who are without parental or family support.

If they can't do that, why should I expect them to make other important concerns about homelessness in this territory a priority? As the member, the Leader of the Official Opposition, pointed out, we witnessed that last Wednesday. The failure to provide for these needs should result in the resignations by

members of any sitting government, and I believe that this Premier, the Minister of Health and Social Services, and the Yukon Party needs to be held accountable for their failure thus far to provide the essential services that are needed in the Yukon.

I'd like to read some excerpts from a number of locally published articles that give evidence of this government's —

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order please. Honourable member, we're speaking to the amendment. I have listened to what the honourable member is saying, he is speaking to the motion itself. If the honourable member would just focus on the amendment, we'd all appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr. Cardiff: I am focusing on the amendment. I don't have any confidence —

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order please. You, honourable member, and I are not having a debate. I am asking the honourable member to focus on the amendment.

Mr. Cardiff: I have absolutely no confidence in this government to do anything productive on this issue, regardless of the amendment to the motion. I don't believe that they could do it and I'd like to read some evidence as to why I don't believe that anything in the amendment would actually be actioned by the government.

On Monday, November 19, 2007 — this is three years ago: "Yukon doctors call for a homeless youth shelter. A new homeless youth shelter for youth topped a list of priorities Yukon doctors are sending to the territorial government following the Yukon Medical Association's annual meeting on Friday. Doctors attending the meeting in Whitehorse voted unanimously to support a motion by Dr. Dan Carew, who spoke of an urgent and serious health need for a safe place for homeless youth to sleep. It has been on the radar screen for awhile now and it has had further press coverage with the unfortunate death of Angel Carlick."

Maybe the Member for Klondike would like to do his homework on that one.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Member for Klondike, on a point of order.

Mr. Nordick: The member just imputed unavowed motives with that last comment. I would ask the member to retract that. That kind of language and accusation I feel is completely disrespectful.

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

Mr. Cardiff: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Klondike said they had to do their homework. All I'm suggesting is that this should have been part of it.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: I think the honourable members are going to have to allow me to review this specific point of order brought

forward by the Member for Klondike. Unfortunately, I didn't exactly hear the full point of order. However, honourable members, just keep in mind that all members in this Assembly are honourable and have honourable intentions. No matter how passionate the debate gets in this House, honourable members must keep that principle in mind: that each honourable member here in this House is doing their very best and putting forth their best efforts.

The Member for Mount Lorne has the floor.

Mr. Cardiff: On August 29, 2008: the fate of a proposed emergency youth shelter for Whitehorse remains in limbo as the Yukon government wants more information before committing \$1.4 million for three years of operations funding. On Thursday, Vicki Durrant, director of the Youth of Today Society — the organization behind the project dubbed "Angel's Nest" — received a letter from the Department of Health and Social Services outlining nine conditions to be met before it would further consider the proposal. At the beginning of August, Youth of Today Society had received confirmation from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation that it would provide a grant to purchase the Hyde on Jeckell hostel property. That money, however, was contingent on a three-year operation and maintenance funding commitment from the Yukon government — something that didn't happen. This is another example of inaction by this government on issues of homelessness.

I could go on and on here. September 4, 2008: "Proponents of a proposed Angel's Nest homeless youth shelter in Whitehorse rallied outside the office of a Yukon Cabinet minister Thursday, demanding enough funding to get the downtown emergency shelter running."

Unfortunately when you read the article, the supporters were ordered by security to leave the area, and it was somebody else — a communications officer — who came out and accepted the group's letter.

How about this, Mr. Speaker? On Monday, August 2, 2010, another piece of homework I did last night: "Want to help Whitehorse's homeless, hardcore alcoholics? 'Forget about another government study,' says Judy Lightening, the manager of the Salvation Army's emergency shelter. 'They study these poor people to death. All they need is a bloody place to stay,' she said."

On September 24, 2010, "Youth shelter residents' treatment 'atrocious'. The new social inclusion strategies trumpeted by the Yukon government last spring is a farce, says the NDP's Steve Cardiff. The Mount Lorne MLA made the remarks today after a decision to move the emergency youth shelter from the detox centre to a social housing unit was made without consulting any related non-government organizations before they did it."

This one is pretty familiar because it's pretty recent. I could read the whole thing in, but, quite frankly, I don't believe that in this instance, the way that they treated the youth, the government treated them well. It's a lack of conscious effort to do something right. There are 10 licensed beds right next door to the temporary youth shelter, which I had the opportunity to

tour today along with the Leader of the Official Opposition, and I still don't understand when I stand there and I look at it and when I've seen inside both buildings now, what the difference is, why the temporary youth shelter was on Jeckell Street next to Angel's Nest.

Every man, every person, has their limit and, despite the fact that I'm still stunned that the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services would support the calling of this motion by the Member for Klondike for debate today, I'm striving today not to reach my limit. What we have is more vague words, most lists of their believed achievements and more excuses for delays and inaction.

I'd like to actually table a document and provide copies to the Legislative Assembly of just what I mean. This is how I feel today about what we're actually doing here in the Legislative Assembly.

I'd like to continue and focus my efforts to actually urge the government to reach the minds and hearts of everyone in this Legislature because, Mr. Speaker, I believe that's where the crux of the problem lies. There are a lot of words but very little action.

In this regard, I'd also like to speak and deliver a message to members of the media. I'd like to actually thank those of them who took on the challenge of telling the real tale of what has really happened here in the territory around this issue and what the discussion in this Legislature has been like. It's a lot of words and very little action. Those members of the media know who they are. We have something in common, those members of the media and me. I know they're feeling weary and they fear there is no hope that their words will stir this government to action.

I hope I'm proven wrong today. I'm not going to commit to anything until I actually see what it is, because I know the Premier intends to amend the amendment.

I, too, would like to offer my support to the many non-profit groups, the community groups, the businesses and the volunteers of this community who do so much to make the Yukon a better place to raise a family. It's time for them, as well, to rise up and be heard, to pick up a pen and talk to a neighbour and tell it like it is. What the Minister of Health and Social Services has said to me is this is the best we can do.

The best that this government can do — and I witnessed it again today — is to house our homeless youth, who are already traumatized, in an adult alcohol treatment centre. That's right — it's an adult detoxification centre, Mr. Speaker. I visited it, as I said earlier, and I'd like to thank the minister for providing the opportunity to tour that. I'd like to thank the extremely capable staff and their dedication, for the care and compassion that they deliver in what I consider the most difficult of circumstances — and it's inadequate circumstances. We should be the laughingstock of the country when we house our youth at an adult detoxification centre. I can't believe it — the fact that the intake for those youth is in the detoxification unit. It almost — well, Mr. Speaker, it did bring tears to my eyes.

It almost — well, Mr. Speaker, it did bring tears to my eye to stand there and realize what those young people have to go through in order to get a bed for the night. It's not a pretty

sight. With the commitment from this government, we could do much better.

I'm hoping that there are people in the media and citizens out there who, like me, recognize this problem and are willing to stand and be heard. I am, despite my fears and my disillusionment, persevering in this House today to once more try to stir the conscience of this government here. I am asking the media if they will themselves, as well, pick up their pens and write mightily so that we can catch the attention of the national media about the situation and hold our Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services to account for what is happening here in this territory when it comes to housing our homeless youth, because I just cannot accept it.

The Member for Klondike, for his account this afternoon, should be embarrassed, as far as I'm concerned.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: The honourable member is personalizing debate. We had a conversation earlier about that, but you have chosen to ignore that. Secondly, we are speaking to the amendment. Please carry on. You have about four minutes of debate left, so do so with some style and dignity, please.

Mr. Cardiff: In the motion and in the amendment to the motion, it says inserting the words directly after "to develop". The Oxford English dictionary provides one definition for the word "develop" — as in "develop a homeless shelter" — and that is to make progress. We haven't seen much progress. I hope today, at the end of the day, maybe we will see some progress.

There has been a little bit of progress. If they did actually make some progress and there was some action, I would be very pleased. I would almost be speechless. We can do more than make progress, and we know the reality of that.

The reality is that the Premier could, with a wave of his pen, fix that problem.

The Member for Klondike talked about the \$100 million that has been spent on housing. That could have provided a safe environment. It could have provided healthy living alternatives and counselling. It could have provided specific programming and it could have provided 24-hour support staff. The Premier could have done that just as he did when he authorized millions of dollars in last-minute cost overruns at the athletes village, just as he did when he borrowed hundreds of millions of dollars to build hospitals without a breath of a consultation or a draft of a business plan. A fraction of that money that this government has mismanaged could have seen a youth shelter realized years ago — years ago.

I know the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation has said he doesn't have a magic wand and it's not a magic wand that's going to help our homeless youth, but it's this government, it's the Premier and his magic wand — which is his pen — that could. I'd like to remind everyone in the Legislature — I know the Member for Klondike is a relatively new parent, at least new in comparison to me, as I am still a relatively new grandparent, and despite being a relatively new parent, I can imagine, and the Member for Klondike as well as the Minister for Health and even the Premier might be able to

imagine, what it would be like to be a parent if your children did not come home at night. Our reality is that some of our children do not come home at night.

So it is the government that is charged with the responsibility of not only providing a safety net, but a nurturing environment where these youth can reconnect to their family if possible, and rejoin and support their community and reach their full potential. We are charged with providing them a safe environment. This is our greatest priority; it is our responsibility; it is our job; it's not something that we can make progress on; it's not something that we can develop. It's something, Mr. Speaker, that we all have to do.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: I had not intended to get up and speak to this amendment; however, after hearing what was just put on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, I must say something.

First off, I'm still trying to understand where the Member for Mount Lorne is coming from. It's almost as if the NDP is in full support of enabling homelessness as opposed to really finding a solution and dealing with it productively.

I think all four of these amendments here are part of a solution and I think that's what this Legislative Assembly should be focused on, not just criticizing and finding ways to try to discredit someone, personally or otherwise, which was demonstrated more than once today — personal attacks. I think the Member for Mount Lorne might be better off to become part of the solution as opposed to being otherwise.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in favour of the amendment, and also of the motion as it would be amended. I think this is a constructive amendment. I think it is also important in this issue to recognize the passion that members have for this subject and the good reason for the passion and concern members of this Assembly have with regard to the issue of people who are homeless.

Certainly, those of us who have never been in that situation are fortunate enough not to have been. A number of housing supports in place. There are a number of efforts that have been made — new programs put in place under the current Minister of Health and Social Services and under me when I was Minister of Health and Social Services. All are attempts to deal with the situation. All are part of the solution in reducing the problems out there, but it should also be recognized that there is a need to look at the supports that are in place to determine what new supports are necessary — much as the step that was taken with the Outreach van being put in place to target resources to people who may not, or were not, accessing the existing resources, services and supports that were there for them.

In my view, the concept of a shelter should be on the same lines: it should not be intended to be a permanent solution for housing needs. It should be for people who find themselves without a safe place to stay. It's also very important that it be set up appropriately so that it is a net improvement to their safety.

Members of this Assembly may not all realize that some of the work and assessment from other jurisdictions has deter-

mined that if this effort to put a homeless shelter in place it is approached with good intention but done poorly, it can create a situation of reduced safety for those people by creating a bit of a negative culture around an area and create a situation where people are not, in fact, any safer necessarily than they would have been on the streets. They are still in an unsafe situation; they are still with a crowd of people who provide great risk to their safety. They are warmer than on the street, and certainly that is an improvement, but the shelter itself is still not an effective and adequate solution in some of these examples to which I am referring.

Again, speaking in favour of the amendment to this motion and the motion, I think it's also important for members to recognize that when the pilot project that the Member for Mount Lorne was referring to and expressing his concern was put in place, it was not intended that it be a permanent solution. It was intended to be immediate action to improve the situation over the course of the winter immediately before it was put into place. I said that sentence oddly, Mr. Speaker.

Let me clarify that. When the solution was put in, it was attempted to be better than what was already in place for the course of the winter, which was just about to begin — an option to provide a shelter at that point in time, where new construction was not feasible due to time constraints, and winter was fast arriving.

The pilot project — working with Skookum Jim — was intended to be a second safety net, to assist government also in assessing the size of the problem of people who are not able to access housing resources or for whom the housing resources in place were not working or not working quickly enough.

But it is important that pilot project not simply be left in place without taking the next step. I also think it has to be recognized — in fairness to those who are dealing with the situation — that there is a genuine concern about trying to make sure the next step is the right one. From the other side of it, I certainly sympathize with where the Member for Mount Lorne is coming from, and I do agree with him that there is a need to ensure that action is taken and appropriate action is taken, rather than simply talking about developing a perfect solution year after year after year.

In moving forward, I think it's important also that government needs to move forward in the right manner, in a responsible manner, in partnership with NGOs such as Youth of Today Society, Skookum Jim, and Many Rivers — to name a few — that have been key partners in addressing the issue of people who are not accessing housing supports, who are living on the street, who are in situations that create risks to their personal safety. The dedication of the people who work for those NGOs and who run those NGOs, is certainly very commendable. I know many of those people personally and the years that some of them have invested into dealing with this, and volunteering their own time, in many cases, and investing their own financial resources, is something that is certainly very commendable and we as elected members should appreciate, and all of society should appreciate, the dedication and commitment of these people.

I think that it's important, in taking the next step in building on what has already been done, to come up with a better solution. It's also very important to work with these NGO partners and, where possible, find a way a solution can be agreed upon with them.

Again, I think that largely summarizes my key points with regard to this. I do think that the amendment to the motion is constructive. I do share the feeling of members that there's a need to take steps here and to not take too long in coming up with a more permanent solution than that which is in place. I think that it's also important to recognize the efforts that government has taken already and particularly that department staff have taken in trying to come up with constructive solutions to the situation. I hope that members do recognize that, in fact, over the last eight years, the Yukon government has done more to deal with the situation than had been done before and again, on the other side of that situation, to recognize that what has been done clearly has not addressed the problem as well as we can address it. We need to determine together what that next step is, rather than focusing and dwelling on what perhaps members feel could have been done earlier.

Again, I sympathize with the Member for Mount Lorne in this. I know that he speaks with great sincerity on this issue, and I agree with him.

There is a problem that needs to be addressed. More does need to be done, but in an effort to try to bring this debate to a constructive level, I think we should recognize the work that has been done by government, by NGO partners and by volunteers.

I would encourage all members to support this amendment to the motion, and I would encourage government to work with those NGO partners, including the Youth of Today Society, Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, Many Rivers and others I have not mentioned here, to ensure that the next step is taken to deal with this situation and a more permanent solution is found, but also so that solution is set up to be adaptable to what its experiences are and how well it's working, so that the intention in setting it up is to adapt the programming, adapt the services, adapt the supports based on the experience of running that program once it's in place.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate here that the amendment as provided is reasonable, but we would like to make one small amendment to that amendment.

I'm not going to spend a lot of time beefing about it. I would like to make this amendment and then I'll get up and make my little speech to that proposal and go from there.

Subamendment proposed

Hon. Mr. Hart: I move

THAT the amendment to Motion No. 1217 be amended by deleting all words after the word "support" in clause 4.

Speaker: The subamendment is in order. It has been moved by the Hon. Minister of Health and Social Services

THAT the amendment to Motion No. 1217 be amended by deleting all words after the word "support" in clause 4.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I got some wonderful news. I'll have to play with it.

We on this side of the House believe that we can live with most of the changes provided by the Leader of the Official Opposition with regard to the motion, but we made one small adjustment. We think that it's a really minor suggestion, but it's something we feel that we can run, depending on how we run or support this, then we'll determine how we will work with it. First of all, I would like to do that. I have my notes with regard to this motion which, I believe, cover all the amendments that were in the amendment. So if you'll permit me, I'll go through my speech that was prepared and basically encompasses all these issues that are addressed in here also.

However, I will state for the record, Mr. Speaker, that, for the member of the Third Party, I would stack up this government's social record in its last eight years against any — any — of that prepared by the Third Party — period.

Now, I'm not going to go any further on that process.

Mr. Speaker, the answer to homelessness is not as simple as opening up a building. A shelter is needed. What should the shelter in Yukon look like? Will it make for a more inclusive society? Will it serve as an effective transition from the street, or do we need to think about shelter differently than mere bricks and mortar?

Homelessness is a complex problem. I don't think that there is a one-stop solution to putting up a structure. I do agree that the issue requires focused attention, and I'm on my feet here to advise this House that I have instructed my department to do just that. But we have not put the issue on the back burner in the meantime. We are working on this issue, Mr. Speaker. Our existing youth shelter, run in conjunction with Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, is not the answer, so we've been told. "Fund Angel's Nest instead," we've been told. "Give Northern City Supportive Housing Coalition — a great place for those who do not want to give up drinking a place to go and live," we've been told — and the list goes on.

We are aware of what the problems are and how serious they can be. Our staff deals with them on a regular basis. We can point out more than 140 separate actions that this government has taken over the past eight years to improve the lives of the less fortunate — more, I might say, than any other government before us. And we plan to still do more during the term that's remaining for us from now and beyond. My colleague from the Klondike provided many examples today in the House of what this government has done over the past.

We've been accused of dragging our feet and offering up the excuse that we need to study the problem. We've been accused of not understanding the seriousness of the problem. Even a comment I made last week about a few people choosing street life was seized upon and thrown back at me as evidence that I or we don't care. It is not a constructive debate to have bits and pieces of issues pulled apart in an attempt to score political points.

For the benefit members opposite, let me advise that Mr. Jack Layton wrote a book called, *Homelessness: The Making and the Unmaking of a Crisis* in 2000. The book outlines the rapidly growing problem of homelessness in Canada. In par-

ticular, Mr. Layton outlines the debate that continues in Canada over whether people choose to be homeless, become homeless because they make bad choices and are not the deserving poor, versus the perspective that puts systematic economic and social factors and social values and attitudes of many Canadians convinced by the first argument.

Without delving into it, all I wish to say is that, here again, it illustrates the point that homelessness is a complex problem; simple one-off solutions are not going to solve it. Careful thought and understanding of the consequences of choices we make as a government is essential. Members opposite indicated that several times today on that subject.

Indeed, during Poverty and Homelessness Action Week, the guest speaker said he would gladly share previous research done in the area with me so that we didn't need to study it further. While I appreciate his willingness to share his experience — and I know that the member opposite discussed how the issues are the same in Canada, I think that that is what is intended.

Now, we also need our own solutions to our own unique problems. In order to do that, we need to know what our problems are. We need solid research to back up the policies and programs that will lead to solutions. That isn't to say that the issues are not the same — the issues that create homelessness or poverty. They are education or the lack of it, homelessness and/or poverty, unemployment, mental health issues, general health issues — and those are the same anywhere in Canada. Having a roof over one's head is all a part of improving life's outcome. Household wealth, family stability, mental and physical health, employment and educational achievement — again, these are all items providing and dealing with providing healthy and living alternatives and counselling.

Nevertheless, I'm not here to say what we need to further to study the issue; it has been studied. We are awaiting the completion of four key pieces of information that will help us move forward on solutions. The Whitehorse housing adequacy study is the first piece to be released. It will provide us with critical insights into circumstances and challenges facing those in our community who are either homeless or precariously housed. Only a handful of attempts to count the homeless have been made at both local and national levels in Canada. These attempts have failed for the lack of consistent definition of who the homeless are, as well as the elusiveness of the population itself. "Absolute homelessness" refers to people living on the streets with no physical shelter, while "relative homelessness" refers to those who live in spaces that do not meet basic health and safety standards. The broad definition of "homelessness" includes those who live in substandard housing or in overcrowded or undesirable conditions; for instance, a woman may live with an abusive man as the lesser of two evils, thereby avoiding being on the streets.

The point is, Mr. Speaker, that one size does not necessarily fit all. I don't like to reduce important issues to a cliché, but this is what the members opposite seem to want to make us do. This study will give us a better understanding of the breadth and depth of issues facing these individuals and also provide us with the information we need to make decisions — informed

decisions — not just reactive solutions that will not meet the long-term needs of our citizens and their specific needs at the time.

For the first time, we will have the data we need to make informed decisions, to help point us in the right direction. We will have the results of the Whitehorse adequacy survey, the *What We Heard* report from our social inclusion symposiums in Whitehorse and subsequent community meetings, a report on the cost of poverty, and finally, the dimensions of the social inclusion report itself.

We will have completed the survey and done the research. I have visited the shelters in Vancouver and St. John's, Newfoundland. They have indicated results with regard to homeless issues. We have reviewed how they deal with their homeless people in both those jurisdictions.

We are looking at taking the best practices from both those areas and seeing how they can work here in the Yukon.

Right now, we are in the final stages of these reports. We expect to have these out in the next two to eight weeks. We will be releasing this information for further public discussion. This means that we can move forward to make evidence-based decisions on the best way to resolve the myriad of homeless and housing issues before us. We are aware there are individuals in our community who are truly homeless. There are those who are living with friends and couch surfing. There are those who are living in trailers and tents, under tarps, in shells attached to garages and other buildings. Their living situations are not ideal. For some, they are inadequate and unsafe. We need alternatives.

We will now have a better sense of the complex factors that lead to homelessness. We know that the lack of safe, affordable and accessible housing can affect a person's physical and mental health and their sense of community connectedness. We are working to develop a comprehensive response to all the housing needs of our citizens. The homeless, our youth, our single mothers, our citizens with mental health issues need safe, secure housing, but may be stigmatized and/or acutely intoxicated. They need a safe place to get out of the cold. There are the disabled, who have multiple needs. Again, these are all items about providing counselling, providing issues, addressing why these individuals are homeless and how we can assist these individuals in this process.

Again, their needs are complex. Solutions will take consultation, planning and implementation in order to meet them. We cannot do it alone. These are problems that are shared responsibilities with other governments and the community. Personal responsibility plays a role to varying degrees. One response will not meet all the needs. This government will not simply warehouse the problem. We will need to involve a variety of other players in order to meet different needs. Members opposite indicated several times the need to work with all the NGOs that are involved in dealing with the homeless from all venues — mental health, youth, adults — and all those in need with homeless issues or needing shelter on an emergency basis. We need to work with all of them in order to come up with that factor.

We need information from the surveys and research in order to make informed decisions with local policies and programs and local solutions to those problems. We know that there are housing issues in this territory and we have been advised that there are people living in inadequate shelters, as I have indicated.

Without trying to argue that this is solely a money issue, it must be said that this is an expensive problem with expensive solutions. While it is a priority of our government, our budgets are not infinite and we have to carefully examine how to best respond to our needs. We will be taking further action. We are actively pursuing options to meet housing needs. At this time, I'm not at liberty to announce anything other than to assure members opposite, as well as the general public, that this government is taking concrete steps to address the issues. Announcements will come in the near future.

It is important to talk about the fact that housing alone will not be the magic bullet. We need to carefully think about the additional services that we need to provide to people we house. Just putting a roof over their heads is not necessarily an answer to the problems. We recognize that — in fact, we have already made provisions for beds. More is needed. We need to think about the wraparound services required for some of these people and the need to make their housing experience successful, to reintegrate them successfully into our inclusive society.

Their needs could be health related, social service related — perhaps their need is for home care or assistance or day-to-day living skills that may have been lost while living on the streets. In some cases, people are adrift in their loneliness, isolation and fear. We have to be able to find a way to reach them.

Again, this is one of the ideas for providing programs and services to adults at risk, and also youth at risk. For others, it could come down to support from mental health services that is needed or other non-government organizations that can provide a wealth of support for a broad variety of our Yukon individuals.

As I said earlier, the housing adequacy survey will be released shortly. The Whitehorse housing adequacy study is a tool for planning as well as for learning. Those who participated did so in the hope that it will not only stimulate further questions and discussion but, more importantly, will act as a catalyst for action. I can tell you in very general terms that we are talking about approximately 100 people who consider themselves to be homeless — 100 people out of approximately 35,000 to 36,000 people.

One-off or individual demands to support individual programs or solutions is not the answer to the bigger problem. We have to be realistic in any of our responses. We have a youth shelter that is working for us right now and is meeting the immediate needs of our youth and providing the service on an emergency basis. I agree that our detox centre is not entirely meeting the needs of our acute inebriates, but we are close to receiving a report from the task force on acute inebriates.

I would not “jump the gun” so to speak and embrace any other concept prior to getting the recommendations from that task force — which we are, again, expecting at the end of this year, Mr. Speaker.

We will shortly open housing for single parents. We are still discussing housing for individuals with mental health issues. We know there is work to do; we are willing to do it. We want to do it in a manner with the biggest impact on the largest number of people. As the Minister responsible for Health, addressing upstream causes of poor health seems to me to be essential in dealing with public health issues. Indeed, their perspective has historically been the hallmark of good public health interventions.

We want a society where all are included and where all have a safe place to lay their heads at night. The way forward, at least in part, lies in the use of community-based planning, a model that ensures the very people we are talking about have some input into the solutions we choose. There is much more to come from this government, Mr. Speaker.

The issue with the final reports being completed by this year, as well as the study, will provide our department and our staff the vital information that we need to go forward with the symposium in early January of 2011; to have also the stakeholders involved in that process so they can help and put their input into the process, based on the information provided and the information they helped collect.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the subamendment?

Mr. Fairclough: I'll be very brief in my comments. I was hoping that the mover of the motion on the subamendment could explain to the House his rationale for removing just that one word — “staff” — and I'm hoping that perhaps the next speaker on the government side can do that for us. What does that mean and what does just having “support” mean? I'm sure that I have seen the government side caucus getting in a circle and writing a lot of words down and I'm interested to hear it. Why not substitute “staff” with “personnel”? Is “support” strong enough in this fourth bullet? These are some of the things that I wouldn't mind hearing about from the government side so that we could move this along quickly. I think we can; we're not going to not support the motion as it was amended by the government side, but it would be good to hear what the government side means by providing 24-hour support versus 24-hour support staff.

We would have thought perhaps even having “personnel” in there or other wording to take its place, so if we can get that clarification it would be appreciated. I also would like to speak to the motion as amended once we vote on this amendment.

Mr. Mitchell: I just want to reinforce what my colleague, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, just said. It's really a question, which is providing 24-hour support staff. I didn't go so far as to say this should be supported living, which is a concept that's very specific, but that there should be staff or personnel there. If it's the word “staff” that's problematic, perhaps there could be another word that a member from the government side would agree to, such as “personnel” or something. It's the concept of there being people on-site, versus — I'm not sure what “support” is if it's not provided by people.

I'm truly asking this as a question, because it would appear to weaken what I put forward, which is the need for there to be people there day and night — or a person there, day and night — to assist the homeless people. It really is a question I'm asking of the government side. The Hon. Minister of Health and Social Services amended it to remove the word "staff". He can't stand again, but he could request one of his colleagues to stand and explain the reasons, because he didn't really provide the explanation; he just said it was a very small amendment. Perhaps they could suggest another word that would be acceptable, and then there could be a subamendment that would put that in.

I'm hoping to see some member from the government side indicate why that change and what it would mean — what support would mean without it being provided by human beings. This is a human condition we're talking about.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Since my ministerial colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, as was already outlined, cannot speak to this, I will do my level best. I'll be very short. I also wanted to thank the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Member for Klondike and the Member for Copperbelt for bringing all the suggested changes to the respective motion that we are debating here today.

The reference to the removal of the word "staff" is really to provide more options and more flexibility to how we deliver and what could be delivered in terms of support provided. That doesn't necessarily have to be through government staff; it could be through an organization. It could be another option. I think it's to make it a little less prescriptive so that all of those options could be certainly contemplated and that we're not fixed within a certain option.

Given the debate that has transpired here today, I believe that most members, if not all, are trying to get on the same page. I think we just would like to bring it to a vote here today. I think that we're coming closer to an agreement and I think that this is a very important motion. Again, the removal of the word "staff" is to really provide that added flexibility in going toward steps forward. I hope that provides the clarity required for the Official Opposition to make their decision as provided.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the subamendment?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Agree.

Mr. Nordick: Agree.

Mr. Mitchell: Agree.

Mr. McRobb: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Mr. Fairclough: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Cardiff: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yea, nil nay.

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

Subamendment to Motion No. 1217 agreed to

Speaker: Is there any debate on the amendment, as amended?

Mr. Fairclough: I will be brief again in speaking to the amendments to the motion. I'd like to thank the Member for Copperbelt for bringing clarity to this motion through this amendment and expanding on it, giving it a lot more detail than what was first provided in this House. I also would like to thank the government side for their support and the Premier for his support on this amendment to the motion.

We have been talking about this issue for quite some time. For years we've asked questions about it in this House. We've brought forward motions when it came to the homeless here in Whitehorse and I feel that this amendment to the motion brings a lot more clarity and addresses some of the issues that were perhaps missed from the motion as it was presented in this House — for example, having the word "permanent" put in place. I think with all the bullets below, providing access to a safe environment for more than one evening is something that we haven't really voted on or talked a lot about in this House. It was brought through speeches to motions in the past on the floor of this Legislature. We have always talked about providing healthy alternatives and, of course, the government side said that it goes without saying that counselling would be provided and that we don't want to duplicate any of the services that are out there.

I don't think that putting the second bullet on the amendment is saying that at all; it's ensuring that those who enter the unit are provided with counselling. I think it's one of the more important parts of this whole motion itself, and also in providing programming that would benefit all who use this homeless shelter here in Whitehorse.

I did have some questions about the amendment to the fourth bullet; it has been clarified and I understand the rationale as to why the government has brought it forth. They want to know how and what could be delivered, and by having a period after support, it basically does that. I realize that we do need to do that examination.

Whitehorse is not the only community in the Yukon that has this problem; all our communities have this problem. We have emergency shelters in the communities. We've tried to provide the counselling that's needed through the social services, particularly in the First Nations. The communities some-

times have quite a tough time dealing with the hard-to-house and the homeless. Unfortunately, what takes place is a migration to Whitehorse. We see a lot of the community people in Whitehorse here who are homeless.

I know the government side, through the Premier, said that they basically will be supporting this amendment to the motion. I understand the frustration that the Member for Mount Lorne has in regard to this. We all feel it, in the past. I just feel that this is an issue that all of us here need to continually work at and try to find ways to resolve, no matter how tough it is. It doesn't matter who brings the motion forward to the floor of this House. That is why we have spent the energy in bringing forward amendments to this motion, to bring clarity to it. Hopefully, with the support of all members of this House, we can move forward with this motion and actually do something, because it is saying that an action should be done.

I understand that it will have a dollar value to it. Once the government side moves forward with this motion and works on it to provide a home for the homeless in Whitehorse here, they will share that information with us and the public, and we can all look at it, monitor progress on it and perhaps have some input.

As the Premier said, it is constructive and we brought forward those constructive ideas here in the Legislature. I thank the Member for Copperbelt for bringing the amendment forward and all those who support the amendment to the motion that was brought forward by the Member for Klondike.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment as amended?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Agree.

Mr. Nordick: Agree.

Mr. Mitchell: Agree.

Mr. McRobb: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Mr. Fairclough: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Cardiff: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the amendment carried.

Amendment to Motion No. 1217 agreed to

Speaker: Is there any debate on the motion, as amended?

Mr. Cardiff: I would be remiss if I didn't get up, and I expect that the members on the other side of the House would have expected me to get up, given my comments earlier.

I would like to offer my qualified support for the motion, as amended. I would like to respond to some of the comments that have been made about the motion and my position on it.

I would like to thank the Member for Lake Laberge for understanding my attachment to this issue and the emotional feeling that I have with regard to this issue. This issue for me is, in large part, about our children. I recognize well the fact that there are others affected by issues of homelessness, addictions and mental illness — the whole multitude. We talked about all of that a week ago. It appears to me, on the face of it, that the government has done a bit of an about-face from its position last week about the concept of supported housing, and especially supported housing for youth.

Now, I remain to be convinced that there will be some concrete action by the government coming out of this motion. That is why I'm qualifying my support. That is based — as I said in my previous remarks — on the government's record on this. The Minister for Health and Social Services said he'd stack his record up against the record of NDP governments any day. I would remind the minister that he has had eight years and a lot more money at the government's disposal. I think it was mentioned that \$100 million has been spent on housing projects in this territory. That's why my support is qualified — because I find it hard to believe that this government has had access to \$100 million to deal with housing issues in this territory and they failed to respond to the needs of the most precious resource we have in this territory, which is our youth. I just cannot fathom why something more couldn't have been done.

I was glad to hear — I believe I heard the Minister of Health and Social Services say that housing our youth in an adult detox centre — I hope that's what I heard him say — was not acceptable either and that it's a temporary measure. I toured that facility with the Leader of the Official Opposition this morning, and that facility is long past its due date. It's my understanding that there is money for planning to replace that facility, but it's not high enough on the priority list for this government to actually do something concrete in time for it to make a difference.

I also heard the Minister of Health and Social Services for the first time — for the first time, Mr. Speaker — say they are going to do something, but for reasons of confidentiality he can't say anything at this time. That actually gave me hope that there might actually be something real about what this government is going to do.

But I'll reserve my judgement on that. I'm sure that others in our community who are concerned about homelessness in this territory — who are concerned about our young people living on the streets, going from couch to couch, sleeping under a tree, staying at friends' homes — that their issues will really be addressed.

I hope that people who are concerned about those children will continue to apply the pressure. One of the reasons why I feel so attached emotionally to this issue is because it seems to me that I've been asking the same questions year after year after year after year — asking this government to do something. For eight years — it has taken eight years to get to this point. Today is the first day that I really believe that this government has even got an understanding of what the issue is.

Just a few short weeks ago it was, "We still have to get the data. We still have to do more studies." Studies aren't really helping. The issue has been identified for years and years and years. It has been brought up in this House. It has been brought up in the media. It has been brought up by organizations. It has taken eight years to get through to the government exactly what it is that needs to be done and for them to develop something that's palatable to them to do to address the issue.

Well, I certainly hope that it's palatable to Yukoners and for those who are homeless. That was why I was asking other citizens with these concerns to continue to write letters, to put pressure on the government. That was why I was asking the media to continue to write articles to shed more light on this issue. When this government actually does something, maybe they'll write a good-news story.

I know that there are journalists out there who would like to write a good-news story about this issue, but they haven't had the opportunity. There are some quotes out there and I would like to bring one into the Legislative Assembly. It's about the power of the media. It was Napoleon Bonaparte, I believe, who said that he was more afraid — or more concerned — about four angry newspapers than 1,000 bayonets.

The government needs to realize that. The media wants to write a good-news story about this issue but, until the government actually does something concrete and there is some action that actually addresses the problem, these young people need a warm and welcoming situation. I'm talking about addressing youth at risk and a youth homeless shelter.

Quite frankly, despite the best efforts, the compassion and the dedication of those individuals — and I thank them for showing me through the facility today — but despite their best efforts what we're doing — more because of the fact that it's located within an adult detoxification centre — just isn't good enough. Despite their dedication and their compassion — I admire them for the work that they're doing, but the fact that this government thinks that it's good enough right now causes me great concern and I can't support the fact that that's where these kids are going to be going.

I'm hoping that in the minister's action plan, that in the minister's announcements that are going to be made in the near future coincidentally — I hope that there's something in there that's real for those kids. I hope there is a support network for them so they can go and feel safe and feel supported and so they can get the skills that they need to get a job, to go back to school, to learn how to cook, to learn how to support themselves, to learn how to be part of the community and have a community that is accepting of them.

That's why I'm attached to this issue emotionally; it's because it breaks my heart to see those kids and it breaks the

hearts of a lot of other people. We can't continue to allow that to happen, so while I was skeptical — very, very, very skeptical — at the outset of today's debate, there were a few comments made, one of which was the Premier's. Quite frankly, the Premier laid down the gauntlet. I wouldn't want to be the individual in this Legislative Assembly who stood in the way of making progress because, if you remember rightly, as I said in my earlier remarks, the Oxford dictionary definition of "develop" is: "to make progress". I don't want to stand in the way of progress, but I would feel a lot better if the motion actually indicated there would be some action taken, that there were some timelines around it, that there was an actual commitment to doing something within a designated time frame.

I know it's not all about bricks and mortar. I know this is a complex issue, but some of it seems to me to be so simple, because it's right there in front of our eyes. The people on the front lines — I read a quote today from an individual who works on the front lines, who sees it every day.

The Member for Copperbelt talked about the 10 beds at the Salvation Army. One of the things he didn't say is that when the 10 beds are full, you know where they sleep? They either double up or they sleep on rows of chairs — they have to push the chairs together, those plastic chairs; those chairs are difficult enough to sit in, let alone to sleep on — and it's because they have nowhere else to go. So the problem is right there in front of our eyes. We can go down there and see it.

Being one not wanting to stand in the way of progress — and the Premier said that in order for anything to happen, it would have to be unanimous in this Legislative Assembly — so I'm not going to stand in the way of progress, but I want to assure the government that I'm going to be watching closely. I am sure that the media is going to be watching closely. I'm sure that the organizations that want to provide services, that want to provide a supported living environment for those most in need — those most difficult to house, those who are in precarious situations — are going to be watching this government closely as well, because I know I am.

I hope I'm not going to be disappointed, because if I am disappointed, I'm going to continue to ask questions, despite the fact that I'm tired. I'm tired of asking the same questions. I've said that. We've been asking these questions of this government for eight years — about issues of poverty and homelessness, about what we can do to help those who are most vulnerable in our society.

I know that the government has studied and studied and studied. What I want to see is action.

I won't stand in the way of progress. I will, despite my skepticism, support the motion as amended, but I will be watching. I hope that I actually get to see some results. Thank you.

Mr. Inverarity: I rise this afternoon after listening to the debate as it has gone on here and I look forward to bringing some additional comments regarding homelessness here, but first I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing forward this motion this afternoon. In the spirit of cooperation, we've seen a couple of amendments

come by, first from the Leader of the Official Opposition, who brought forward a number of improvements. It's nice to see that those have been supported through the afternoon. In particular, I would like to thank the Minister of Health and Social Services who brought forward the subamendment dropping the one word, but made a significant improvement I think to the actual overall motion, because it allowed for not only greater resources, but better clarity to the original motion that came forward. So first I would like to thank all three members here for the effort that they put in this afternoon.

I wanted to talk a little bit more about something that the Leader of the Third Party brought forward, which was the word "develop" or to go forward, and so my discussion this afternoon is going to focus on how we go forward.

One thing that I noticed about the amended motion this afternoon was that it deals with a shorter time frame for the homeless. What's going to happen tonight? What's going to happen tomorrow night? As progress, we all know — we can only do this in certain steps. I think that it's worthwhile looking at the bigger picture of how we address homelessness over a broader period of time so that they can find a solution to their problems.

The Minister of Health and Social Services, I think, summed it up when he described it as a larger problem, and that it isn't just about getting someone off the street at night, but it's a fact that we have to look at what got them there to begin with. So I'm going to talk a little bit about that this afternoon while I have a few minutes. Before I do, I thought it was important that we look at some of the history just briefly. I know that there was one individual here this afternoon who mentioned that they thought that, in the 1970s and early 1980s, we didn't really have a major homeless problem. The comment struck me as, well, inaccurate, to be frank.

I remember in my earliest youth — I can tell I was particularly young because I was still living in Alberta; I was born in Calgary, so I couldn't have been any more than four or five, maybe six at the time — it was a chilly fall afternoon and I walked out into our garage at the back of the house and there was a whole family living in our garage. I was quite taken aback. I didn't quite know how to see it, but the image of that family — a husband and wife, a couple of children — in our garage — I didn't know how they got there. I was literally dumbstruck — I guess that would be the word. I went in and told my father, and he went out and I guess talked to them briefly, then came into the house and brought them out some food we had and whatever he had. We weren't rich at the time, I can tell you that. It was probably a struggle to even do that.

The next day, they were gone; they had moved on, but they had spent the night in our garage. I thought, how does this happen? I had a roof over my head; I had parents; I had three sisters and a brother, and I thought, "Boy, how did this even come about?"

I was fairly young, and I have to say that, over the decades, the thought has come back to me from time to time, and it was brought forward this afternoon by the comment that perhaps homelessness has only come of age recently. I think the particular individuals I was referring to were recent immigrants to

Canada from Europe after the Second World War. We know we brought in thousands and thousands of eastern European people and Europeans in general who were immigrating to Canada. A lot of them had to struggle to make their way. Over time, as we know, they've become very successful Canadians and are proud to be Canadians.

Then, the other day, I was struck by another one. I don't know if others members of the House noticed this, but I drive north to Porter Creek South in the evening after work, and as I was driving along Second Avenue, there, right across from Pizza Hut on Second Avenue, adjacent to Shipyards Park, was an individual who was camped by one of the trees there and he had set up house. There was some cardboard. He had two dogs that I noticed.

When I say "clutter," his earthly belongings were scattered around him. It struck me as to why would he pick Second Avenue, right across from Pizza Hut, to set up home as a homeless individual. I knew he was homeless because for three days in a row I drove by there, and he was still parked by the tree and then he disappeared. I don't know where he has gone to — if he has found assistance through the social service system or if he has moved on. I have to say I was perhaps derelict in not stopping and finding out. I think we all get a little afraid of things that we're unsure of, particularly in today's world — personal security or whatever. But certainly this young man had set up home on Second Avenue, Shipyards Park, and it just goes to show you that they're real. They are here in the Yukon, and we need to look at how we're doing.

I bring those two instances together because, really, the issue is bigger than that. It's bigger than just someone going and finding a place to stay for a night; it's about how we deal with those individuals. I'm going to talk a little bit about that. Specifically, I'm going to refer to a project. This particular one happened in California. It's about five years old — well, the project has been around since the early 1990s. But they talk a little bit about what we call the Housing First project and it has been mentioned here in the Legislative Assembly a couple of times.

I think that there are public and private solutions to homelessness that have historically focused on providing homeless families with emergency shelter and/or transitional housing, which alone neither end homelessness nor prevent a reoccurrence of homelessness for a significant segment of the homeless population. It is fine — as the Minister of Health and Social Services says — but we need to find out how we solve this problem; how we get individuals off the street and into some type of more permanent and not temporary shelter.

Many homeless families — and we're going to talk a little bit about them because, as I said, it had a significant impact on my youth — were able to move into permanent housing to maintain, but after an episode of homelessness, a high percentage of families are rendered homeless again when they experience that first crisis. Once in permanent housing, many families begin experiencing the same problems that led them to become homeless in the first place. Before long, they are out on the streets again. This has been confirmed recently by a number of factors and many housed families possess the most severe risk

of becoming homeless again — or in the near future. Families in which the head of the household has a history of substance abuse are highly representative among homeless families and are at particular risk for recurrent homelessness. Those who actively use drugs are usually terminated from programs that might otherwise lead to permanent housing. I know the Minister of Justice and I have had some discussions over the last few days about drugs and the significant effect that they have on our population. Further, although a parent may have successfully maintained sobriety in a recovery program, relapse often occurs once they move into permanent housing. There are a lot of reasons for this, but I think it's important for us to focus on how we can get permanent housing for people who are homeless, particularly families.

There is a program that exists in California; I know there's one in Oregon; even Calgary has put in a Housing First program. The one in California, which they call Beyond Shelter, was founded in 1988 in response to increasing numbers of homeless families in the Los Angeles area and the need for a more comprehensive approach to serving them. The agency's core programming, which is Housing First for homeless families, was introduced as an innovation in the field, which has since helped to transform both policy and practice at the national level.

The emphasis is on Housing First methodology and is to move homeless families into a permanent, affordable, rental housing unit as quickly as possible. I'll mention it later, but it's interesting to note that they actually don't own any of the homes. They go out into different communities, preferably where individuals would like to live, and try to find rental housing within that community and integrate individuals on a more permanent basis.

Advocates of the Housing First model believe "that vulnerable and at-risk homeless families are more responsive to interventions and social service support" after they are relocated to permanent stable housing. They also believe that homeless children are served most successfully through home-visitation support for a family unit as a whole, with stable housing provided as the base.

That goes specifically to the subamendment that the Minister of Health and Social Services spoke to, which is to provide 24-hour support. This kind of support needs to be broad. It needs to be individualized and it needs to be all-encompassing so that the individuals actually don't go back on the streets. Thus, the Housing First methodology provides a systematic, direct means for vulnerable and at-risk homeless families to return to permanent housing — rental housing — while still receiving individualized supportive services as they develop or redevelop stable living patterns.

It offers an individualized and structured plan of action for often alienated, dysfunctional, troubled families and individuals, while providing a responsive and caring support system. Specifically, the program facilitates the move into permanent housing for homeless families and then engages the newly housed family in a progressive set of individualized case-management activities and interventions for the time period.

As a family attains improved social and economic well-being — and over the past decade, this approach has been proven to be particularly effective in addressing the combined housing and social service needs of families with a history of substance abuse and many of whom experience ongoing and intermittent problems.

When we talk about families, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that about 90 percent of the families that enrolled in this program were single-parent females. This is an interesting statistic because approximately 50 percent of those mothers were in a recovery program of some sort. In other words, they were suffering from substance abuse, be it drugs or alcohol — which we know is a significant problem. It's interesting to see that the descriptions that I've given aren't that dissimilar from some of the issues that we're dealing with in the Yukon.

It says approximately 40 percent of the homeless being housed were there because of domestic violence. The average age of the parents was about 30, and the average number of children was four.

Perhaps the Minister of Health and Social Services, at some point, could tell us those kinds of statistics for the homeless that we have here — not just the homeless individuals and homeless youth, but homeless families that are living in the Yukon. Approximately 20 percent of the mothers are pregnant upon enrolling and about 25 percent of the families have had a previous history with the Health and Social Services department. I'd dearly love to go on because the program talks about a number of steps. I think there are three steps: intake, screening and assessment. The housing resources and allocation also need to be looked at, and then the time limit.

I want to just touch briefly on the time limit because the discussion this afternoon regarding homelessness focused on — is it one day, or is it two days? How often do these individuals get into the homeless shelter? I think that it's important that if we are going to address it, that we do look at the broader picture with the intent of putting them into some kind of permanent home, be it back with their families or into some sort of permanent structure — a home, where they can get the social services that they need and they can break the cycle of living on the street and become a valuable part of our society.

So on that note, I would like to commend the members of the House this afternoon for passing not only the subamendment and amendment, but I believe that what we're looking at is a rare opportunity to move forward and develop — there's that word that we have talked about this afternoon. The real truth is what's going to happen today on this Wednesday — and we all talk about Wednesdays — is where do we go from here? How do we achieve the goal that I hope will be a unanimous decision in approving this motion? Thank you.

Speaker: Leader of the Official Opposition on the motion as amended.

Mr. Mitchell: I will indeed be brief because we do want this to get to a vote. I would just like to note a few things: first of all, I think it's important that the Member for Mount

Lorne indicated great concern that the intent of this might not be genuine. He was frustrated over the number of times —

Speaker: I apologize to the member; you have already spoken to the main motion.

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, but not since there has been — you can't speak to it as it's finally amended?

Speaker: No.

Mr. Mitchell: I thought you could.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Mitchell: No, it's not my motion.

Speaker: So if the Member for Klondike speaks, he'll close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Nordick: I know the Leader of the Official Opposition was probably going to get up and compliment a lot of members on this initiative and I appreciate that. I want to state a couple of things. Although I agree with most of the comments stated here today, I want to clarify a couple of things. I just want people to remember that, in history, when the feds turned this issue over to the Yukon government, there were two NDP governments and a Liberal government that did nothing — just remember that. They did nothing.

I remember a conversation I had with the Member for McIntyre-Takhini. He was mentioning he was a councillor for Kwanlin Dun First Nation. The Kwanlin Dun First Nation approached the NDP governments of the day and said, "We would like your help with dealing with this issue and we would also like your help in dealing with single mothers and their families." You know what kind of help the Kwanlin Dun First Nation got from the NDP government? Nothing.

This government is taking action. Earlier on, the Member for Mount Lorne mentioned that the Member for Klondike — me — should be embarrassed — should be embarrassed. Well, I'm not embarrassed about spending \$34.4 million on 48 seniors housing complexes. I'm not embarrassed about building 36 units of student housing. I am not embarrassed about investing in the innovative Falcon Ridge affordable housing project. I'm not embarrassed about building 32 units of affordable housing in Whitehorse. I'm not embarrassed about building nine units of seniors housing in Haines Junction. I am not embarrassed about building eight units of seniors housing in Teslin. I am not embarrassed about building 12 seniors housing projects in Watson Lake. I'm not embarrassed about building six senior housing units in Faro. I am not embarrassed about partnering with Habitat for Humanity. I am not embarrassed about building Abbeyfield units. I am not embarrassed about replacing the Korbo Apartments in Dawson social housing. I am not embarrassed about building and replacing double-wides in Carmacks, Ross River and Dawson City. I'm also not embarrassed about building a six-unit social housing unit in Whitehorse. I am not embarrassed about increasing the social housing units on market in this territory by 158 units in the last short while.

That brings social housing units up to 500 — I think if my memory serves me right — over 570 units of social housing. I am not embarrassed about the action that this government has taken — which I might add, was voted against by the members opposite — voted against.

Who should be embarrassed are the members opposite who voted against these initiatives. Then the member opposite also mentioned that I should be embarrassed about building hospitals — hospitals in communities, hospitals that provide acute medical detoxification, which, if left, would cause homelessness.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not embarrassed about providing facilities to provide acute mental health intervention. Without mental health intervention, that leads to homelessness. The member opposite said I should be embarrassed. Well, I am not. Am I embarrassed about providing dietetic counselling in communities? No, I am not embarrassed. Am I embarrassed about providing community nursing to help individuals who could become homeless if they didn't get the help they needed? No, I am not embarrassed by that. Am I embarrassed about providing community mental health coordinators in the communities? No, I am not embarrassed.

I could go on all day with initiatives that we are currently undertaking, have undertaken and will continue to do on behalf of citizens of this territory, but seeing the time, we do need to bring this to a vote and I appreciate the comments from most of the members across the way. Thank you.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Member: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Edzerza: Agree.

Mr. Nordick: Agree.

Mr. Mitchell: Agree.

Mr. McRobb: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Mr. Fairclough: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Cardiff: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yea, nil nay.

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

Motion No. 1217 agreed to as amended

Motion No. 1218

Clerk: Motion No. 1218, standing in the name of Mr. Nordick.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Klondike

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue its initiatives to revitalize the City of Whitehorse's downtown core.

Mr. Nordick: It gives me great pleasure to rise today and speak to this motion. The motion states: "THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue its initiative to revitalize the City of Whitehorse's downtown core."

Mr. Speaker, this Yukon Party government has worked cooperatively and in partnership with municipalities across this territory, whether it be on dike revitalization in Mayo, whether it be Old Crow, whether it be Dawson City, Carcross, Watson Lake. We have worked in partnership with the municipalities and other levels of government to ensure the municipalities get the investment they need to be a prosperous community. To help the Yukon become economically prosperous, which it can only — I guess I was going to say "can only be experienced". I'm trying to find a polite way to put this, but actually I'm just going to skip off that subject completely, and I'm going to be positive. We passed a unanimous motion here today and I won't spend too much time criticizing the Liberals and the NDP for voting against all these initiatives — which I just did.

There are projects under the Canada strategic infrastructure fund, or CSIF, which included the \$18.45 million dedicated to revitalizing Whitehorse's historic downtown waterfront area — the roundhouse train shed renovations. This project is anticipated to be completed this winter. The construction of the trail and parking lot are well-advanced; design and engineering of the wharf are completed, and we are tendering the construction of the wharf this fall. The wharf parking lot and trail development project alone represents almost \$6 million of investment in downtown Whitehorse, which the members opposite have voted against and will continue to vote against.

The shipyards heritage building renovation is a \$668,000 renovation that will bring these buildings back to their former glory for the enjoyment of Yukoners and many visitors. There are also a number of other CSIF Whitehorse waterfront projects that have been completed.

They include First Avenue reconstruction, \$5.261 million for that project; trail reconstruction, \$176,000 for that; bridge lighting, \$79,000; the Kishwoot Island bridge demolition, \$200,000; and the Shipyards Park and concession building is a \$1.3 million endeavour.

At this time, I'd like to thank and acknowledge the partnership with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation in building its cultural centre. This Build Canada project represents \$22.8 million that is invested in promoting First Nation history and culture, as well as Whitehorse's grand waterfront history. We are confident that this magnificent building will be a centerpiece for Whitehorse and First Nation tourism, as well as serve as a local gathering place for all citizens.

I do know my time is very short today, as the first motion took up most of the debate.

I do want to clarify for the members opposite that we take the downtown core of Whitehorse extremely seriously. We partner with the City of Whitehorse. We also partner, like I said at the beginning, with other municipalities — the Village of

Mayo. The Member for Mayo-Tatchun knows how much we've partnered with his community in enhancing his community — like a school recreation facility. We work with communities.

I see the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin — we partnered with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation on improving that member's community — riverbank stabilization, visitor centres, airport improvements — the list goes on — roads, drainage, education. The member opposite is thanking me for everything that this government has done. I wish he would vote for it. That's how he can really thank us; stand up and vote his conscience.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Nordick: I was just reminded that sometimes you could take credit, but sometimes it's better to take responsibility, or you can take responsibility and take the credit. The Liberals pick and choose which one they want to do; it depends who they're talking to. Do we take credit today or do we take the responsibility? Or do we take the responsibility, then the credit?

Mr. Speaker, Dawson City, Carcross, Watson Lake, Mayo —

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

Debate on Motion No. 1218 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.