

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
December 6, 2011 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order. We will commence with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed with the Order Paper. Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to December 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada.

Established in 1991 by Parliament, this day marks the anniversary of the day on which 14 young women, in 1989, tragically lost their lives at l'École Polytechnique in Montreal. Their lives were taken because they were women.

December 6 is an opportunity to consider those women and girls for whom violence is a daily reality and to remember those who have died as a result of gender-based violence.

December 6 also represents an opportunity for Canadians to reflect and speak out against violence against women in our society.

Here in the Yukon, we have a high level of violence against women. Compared to the provinces, we have rates of sexual assault that are two to three times higher. Statistics Canada also shows that the highest proportion of spousal violence continues to be in the north. Of those incidents that are reported, women and girls continue to be the most likely victims in spousal violence, accounting for 83 percent of victims.

Increasingly, more and more people, both women and men, are speaking out and taking action and, for this, I am encouraged. By working together and doing our collective part to prevent violence in our communities, we can have healthier communities, safer families and happier children. We can live free of violence.

I would like to thank the many individuals in our communities, especially the front-line workers who work with victims of violence every day. I would also like to thank the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Les EssentiElles, Kaushee's Place, Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, Yukon Status of Women's Council, and the Women's Directorate for their work in our communities to raise awareness about violence through their events and public information campaigns during the 12 Days to End Violence against women, which ends today with this year's annual vigil.

I encourage us all to take strength and courage from one another to speak out against violence when we see it happening and to find the power within ourselves to be agents for progressive change in our community.

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to commemorate this day, December 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. This day helps us to recall the deaths of 14 women murdered in Montreal's École Polytechnique in 1989. Although that tragic day is now 22 years in our past, the event lives on in our memories. This stands out for us as Canadians because it was the very first act of such violence that we had ever suffered as a country. These murders were a symbolic act of vengeance against women by one troubled mind. These students were strong, progressive women who had chosen a path that had only recently been opened to them. They wanted to become engineers.

These women wanted simply to work as men do, with the freedoms and rights of men. The loss of the futures of 14 bright, young, educated women, who would have contributed much to the well-being and advancement of our society, is a loss for all of Canada.

Despite many advances, women still suffer physically, emotionally, economically and even politically in this country. There is sometimes strong resistance to the full integration of women and it is often displayed in acts of violence, disregard and aggression toward them.

It is right and just that we have this day of mourning. Like many tragedies, we cannot forget. We must learn from our mistakes so that we do not repeat them in the future. It is also a day for action where we stand together, united as a country, to say that we do not condone violence against women. We must educate ourselves, our families, our children and our friends about the truth about what happened in Montreal, about the truth of what continues to happen today. Misogynist acts of violence against women will continue if we do not face this reality individually and as a society and say, "No more."

Mr. Silver: I rise today on behalf of the Liberal caucus to join with my colleagues as I did today at noon at the Elijah Smith Building to pay tribute to the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. It starts with November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and December 6, the National Day of Mourning and National Day to End Violence Against Women, culminating with December 10, International Human Rights Day.

Gender-based violence has been brought to the forefront and on to the international and national scene. At this time, we remember all women globally whose lives were tragically ended because of the bias of misogyny, the hatred of women.

December 6, 2011, marks the 22nd anniversary of what became known as the Montreal massacre. For 45 minutes on December 6, 1989, 14 women at L'École Polytechnique were targeted and tragically murdered simply because they were women. Beyond commemorating the loss of these 14 young women, this day represents a time for Canadians to pause and reflect upon the phenomena of violence against women in our society.

For many women and girls, violence is a daily reality. It is estimated that 60 percent of Canadian women have suffered

from physical or psychological violence at some time in their lives, and this is not acceptable.

The 12-day White Ribbon campaign to end violence against women runs from November 26 to December 6. We all have a role to play in violence prevention. As we mark this sad anniversary, let us renew our resolve to prevent and eliminate violence against women.

By wearing the white ribbon, we pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls. Wearing the white ribbon signifies men working to end men's violence against women. I wish to commend the local White Ribbon Yukon organizers, Scott Carlson and Steve Roddick, for their commitment and hard work. If you get a chance to take a look at their video on YouTube, it features local teachers, students and coaches taking pride in embracing their feminine side.

Let us consider what we can do individually and collectively to help heal victims of violence and build a safer future, not only for our daughters, wives, sisters and mothers, but for all women. Respect for girls and women and equality between men and women are preconditions to ending violence. We must teach our children by example that all forms of violence are unacceptable and that we are responsible for our own actions. We must take a stand together to end gender-based violence. I encourage all men to behave in a way that promotes equality, dignity and respect for all women and to help end the circle of violence. We must each take responsibility for building a nation where no one lives in fear because of their gender and where we can all live freely and safely and participate fully in society. Together, we can make a difference.

In recognition of White Ribbon campaign

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the White Ribbon campaign. This campaign launches every year on November 25, which marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The White Ribbon campaign is the largest effort in the world of men working to end violence against women. It relies on volunteer support and financial contributions from individuals and organizations.

The White Ribbon campaign addresses issues of public policy and encourages men and boys to speak out in their workplaces and their communities against violence done to women.

In 1991, a handful of men in Canada decided they had a responsibility to urge men to speak out against violence against women. They were responding to the terrible events of December 6, 1989 at the L'École Polytechnique in Montreal. Outraged by that specific act of hatred and violence and by society's general willingness to turn a blind eye to violence against women, these men chose to act. They chose the white ribbon as a symbol of men's opposition to violence against women.

As an elected representative of Yukoners, as a married man, as a father of three daughters and one son, I am proud to wear a white ribbon.

Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is our responsibility to be role models in working against violence toward women by acknowledging that women have the right to live

free from physical, sexual or psychological violence at all times.

Wearing a white ribbon is a personal pledge to never commit, condone, nor remain silent about violence against women. Each year, men and boys are urged to wear a white ribbon, starting on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, until December 6, Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. By wearing a white ribbon, men pledge to never commit violence again or remain silent about violence.

The elimination of sexism and our commitment to ending violence against women are absolutely fundamental in achieving full equality for all women and in creating communities of peace and safety for women and girls. As men, we can make a choice to speak and act when we know violence is taking place. Our sisters, nieces, mothers, aunts and our children need us to demonstrate leadership and strength in our allied role to challenge and prevent violence through our actions and our words. Without our actions and commitments, women and girls will continue to experience barriers to gender equality.

Men must join women who continue to work tirelessly as victim services workers and transition home workers, who often feel isolated in their efforts. As men, we must speak out against sexism and violence and strive to become allies with women to ensure that gender equality is realized in the Yukon, not least through the creation of safety and respect for all women and all girls. This is a challenge that any man can and should choose to take.

Mr. Barr: I also rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to December 6, a day for remembrance and action on violence against women. Today we men wear a white ribbon to signify our stance that violence against women must end. We are proud to note that the White Ribbon campaign was started by our own Jack Layton.

December 6, 1989 is significant for the deaths by shooting of 14 women students in Montreal. The loss of their contributions to a more tolerant society is tragic for all of Canada. It is vital that, as men, we educate ourselves and those around us about the absolute necessity for understanding the root causes of such violence. Without that understanding, no changes can be made.

I was proud this morning in our community of Carcross to be a part of the men and boys in our community — that has been going on for a few years now — that we got up and we cooked breakfast for all the women of our community and gave them fresh flowers and just pampered them. By doing that with the young boys — educating and being — we are walking our talk as men. Women face misogynist acts daily, from seemingly minor sexist jokes to sexual assault and domestic violence. Until there is an attitude by everyone that women truly are equal in our society, violence against women will continue. This is a day calling for action, as well as mourning. Active changes must occur on a very personal level. When we see bullying of women in the workplace, when we refuse to contribute to the unpaid work done by women in the household, when we don't vote for a woman because she is seen as a

weaker candidate — those are times when we must remember the 14 young women in Montreal.

In recognition of International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise in the House today in honour of International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The United Nations General Assembly declared 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons. The aim was to raise awareness about the need for full participation and equality for everyone. The following year, the General Assembly named December 3 as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The theme this year is, “Together for a better world for all: Including persons with disabilities in development.”

The Health and Social Services department supports people with disabilities in a number of ways. The family supports for children with disabilities unit promotes early intervention to increase a child’s lifelong learning potential, coordinated access to supports and interventions, and inclusion of children with disabilities in community life. Community adult services unit provides employment counselling, income assistance, and supportive outreach services. The department also houses a suite of decision-making legislation to protect Yukoners, whether temporarily or permanently disabled.

The *Adult Protection and Decision-Making Act*, the *Care Consent Act* — which applies to children as well as adults — and the *Public Guardian and Trustee Act* help protect the rights of Yukoners who are unable through disability or illness to make decisions for themselves.

As well, through its mental health services, palliative care program, residential care programs and respite care services, the department offers support to Yukoners at all stages of life and at all levels of ability. As well, almost every other department in government offers some form of assistance to help Yukoners dealing with disabilities. For instance, Education offers special programs for students who need special supports as well as financial assistance to students with permanent disabilities to cover their costs.

As an employer, Government of Yukon abides by a policy that governs its dealings with employees who have disabilities. In part, it says: Yukon government is committed to upholding the duty to accommodate the needs of employees with disabilities, pursuant to the *Human Rights Act*, in a manner that respects the dignity of employees with disabilities. Accommodation of such needs is intended to support a work environment where everyone’s contributions are meaningful and productive. This is what government is doing with regard to persons with disabilities. These programs and acts fit within the greater principles of social inclusion, but social inclusion is the responsibility of everyone — individuals, communities and governments. I was reminded on Saturday when I met with a person who has a disability or, as I would like to think of it, as a person with a different ability, how far the city has come in meeting the challenges of persons with disabilities and how far we have yet to go, even within the city.

That is simply because, at the four-way stop on Second Avenue, there’s no disabled parking and, when the snow condi-

tions are similar to what they were on Saturday, it’s almost impossible for a person in a wheelchair to actually make it across the street in the time given with the light. So we have come a long way, but we have a long way yet to go.

For that reason, it’s up to every one of us to look around and see how we can include our friends, neighbours and family members who have disabilities.

In recognition of the Department of Highways and Public Works

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to pay tribute to Yukon’s Department of Highways and Public Works and its many employees in Whitehorse and the communities, who worked around the clock to clear Yukon’s roads following yesterday’s strange and severe weather conditions.

Yesterday morning it was raining throughout the territory, and this was followed by a blizzard that dumped lots of snow on top of black ice. Last night on my drive home, I passed two vehicles in the ditch. By this morning, the south Klondike Highway and Alaska Highway had been plowed. As I speak, Highways and Public Works is blading and sanding the roads that still have travel advisories out.

Thank you to them and to the Highways and Public Works crews who were busy throughout the night to make our roads safe. We appreciate their work.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I rise today to table two documents. The first is a letter addressed to myself and the Minister of Environment from the Chief of the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation, the Na Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, and the Gwich’in Tribal Council regarding the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* and their proposed schedule for continuing and concluding consultations.

The second document is a letter from myself to the same four chiefs indicating the government’s agreement with the basic schedule and proposing a meeting between myself and them.

Speaker: Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Ms. Stick: I have before me the *Minority Report on Whistle-Blower Protection* that I would like tabled at this time. Thank you.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Hon. Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I believe the document that the member just tabled was attempted to be tabled in a previous session. A previous speaker ruled that matter out of order since the committee had not concluded its work. I’d ask you to review that matter and report to the House.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: I will take it under review and report back.
 Are there any petitions?
 Are there any bills to be introduced?
 Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the principles of rehabilitation, healing and reintegration of offenders found in Yukon's *Corrections Act* should be respected in our justice system and restorative justice approaches, such as pre-charge diversion, First Nation justice committees and community-based policing are effective; and

THAT the Minister of Justice should urge the federal government to withdraw the omnibus crime bill, C-10, the *Safe Streets and Communities Act*.

I give further notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Justice to respond positively to the recommendations made by Yukon women's groups to the Review of Yukon's Police Force 2010, found in the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council Report and Recommendations, and *If My Life Depended On It: Yukon Women and the RCMP*, in the review of policing in the Yukon and to Yukon women, by:

(1) ensuring gender equality on the Yukon Police Council, and by naming to the council one woman nominated by Yukon aboriginal women's groups and one woman nominated by Yukon women's groups;

(2) establishing a public complaints process that is community-based, accessible, transparent, accountable and has timely reporting;

(3) increasing resources and supports for the public safety of aboriginal women;

(4) committing resources for a legal advocate position to assist women victims of violence;

(5) investigating whether primary aggressor legislation is appropriate for Yukon;

(6) establishing a sexual assault and domestic violence response team that includes medical support and access to victim services;

(7) increasing training and resources to ensure more effective prosecutions of women assault charges;

(8) establishing a women's court watch project to monitor woman abuse cases;

(9) ensuring RCMP compliance with a civilian complaints model is part of the contract agreement with RCMP;

(10) enhancing the community orientation of Yukon police members and officers in cooperation with First Nation leadership and municipalities; and

(11) ensuring all Yukon RCMP members and officers receive training on interviewing women victims of violence, youth, and people with disabilities, violence against women in the north, First Nation culture, and the historical and contemporary RCMP and First Nation relations.

Ms. Stick: I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce effective whistle-blower protection legislation, guided by the submissions and deliberations of the Select Committee on Whistle-blower Protection, so that government employees who act in good conscience to report unethical or possibly illegal activity within the workplace will be protected from discipline or retribution for doing so.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to consult with Yukoners and meet with the Yukon College Board of Governors to resolve the issue of endowment lands for the college that:

(1) ensures Yukon College has adequate land-based resources to accommodate any future expansion it may undertake; and

(2) ensures the remaining land reflects the needs and best interests of the community.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to enable the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, or SCREP, to fulfill its mandate to propose changes to the Standing Orders of this Assembly, make progress on legislative reform and improve decorum in the House by:

(1) ensuring that the chair of the committee calls a meeting in the near future;

(2) giving its members on the committee a free hand in determining matters;

(3) allowing the committee to schedule a sufficient number of meetings to deal with these matters; and

(4) providing the committee with sufficient resources to properly carry out its work.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to explain, by way of ministerial statement, the additional expenditure of \$8.1 million on the new Correctional Centre contained in the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* tabled last week.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the private sector and the placer mining industry to encourage the development of a local gasification facility to burn waste oil.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to regulate the practice of midwifery in Yukon and to ensure the costs of midwife services are covered under the Yukon health care insurance plan.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to implement a comprehensive Yukon water strategy with goals including:

- (1) improving access to safe drinking water;
- (2) increasing data collection and information sharing about water resources;
- (3) protecting the quality of Yukon's groundwater resources; and
- (4) planning for current and future needs.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister? This brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Yukon economy and environment

Ms. Hanson: In February of this year, the House was honoured by the presence of the Rt. Hon. David Johnston, his Excellency, the Governor General. In the Governor General's address to this House, he discussed the importance of sustainable economic development and the historic nature of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. He praised the past leadership role taken by the Yukon in this area. He was clear: sound economic planning means sound environmental planning. The two are not separate. What are the Premier's plans for sustainable economic development and for growing a healthy local economy for our friends, neighbours and our children?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the member opposite for the question. This government believes very much in sustainable development and the importance of joining the environment and economic development. That's a good reason the Premier decided to have me sit as Minister of Environment and Minister of Economic Development.

Sustainable development, at its heart, sees the protection of the environment and the development of the economy as two heads of the same beast. We have a number of actions that have been undertaken by the Department of Economic Development, in terms of diversifying our economy and, through the Department of Environment, we promote a number of activities to protect the environment.

Ms. Hanson: Previous governments heard from Yukoners that they wanted sustainable economic development and that this development had to be underpinned by a healthy environment. As a result, the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment was created and was given an integral role in sound economic planning. This mandate included acting as a public forum for economic and environmental issues, reviewing major policies, strategic legislative and program initiatives — not leaving it internal to government, but allowing the public to have a voice — functioning as the central advisory group to the government on the Yukon economic strategy.

Under previous Yukon Party governments, this council was ignored and then disbanded. This contravenes Yukon laws — it is required by legislation — and it undermines our economic planning in uncertain economic and social times.

Mr. Speaker, we have here an opportunity to provide leadership. Will the Premier commit to re-establishing the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment and allowing it to provide valuable assistance in planning for our economic future?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, at this time, the Yukon government has no plans to reactivate or restructure the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment. As issues arise, the Yukon government seeks out or receives advice and counsel from a full range of sources, including boards and committees established under the UFA, First Nations, municipalities, and non-government organizations.

Ms. Hanson: We have seen the result of ad hoc decision-making through past Yukon Party governments and what we were hoping for with this new government was that there would actually be a new vision. The Yukon requires leadership. Leadership in challenging times is not done on the fly, nor is it accomplished without solid, strategic economic and environmental planning. Leadership should rely on the advice of Yukoners and people with real knowledge and expertise, inside and outside of government. In the absence of a comprehensive plan, in the absence of the Yukon economic strategy, and the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment, how will the Premier provide leadership?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: We heard loudly and clearly from Yukoners during the election that they want a strong, healthy, diversified economy and the protection of a healthy natural wilderness. We see those priorities reflected in our mandate, both in terms of our platform and our actions going forward.

We've undertaken a number of activities on the innovation and diversification of the economy — innovation to determine that we proceed with the development of a knowledge-based economy that reflects the importance of the environment and the development of clean climate technology in the territory.

Question re: Restorative justice

Ms. Moorcroft: Yesterday the Minister of Justice, in his Reply to the Speech from the Throne, spoke with feeling about the conditions of children and adults with autism spectrum disorder and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Does the minister support a restorative justice approach that keeps people with mental health conditions, autism spectrum disorders and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders out of corrections facilities?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: In addressing the member opposite, the government has made great progress toward implementing recommendations in *Sharing Common Ground — Review of Yukon's Police Force — Final Report*.

The preliminary construction has begun on the secure assessment facility, the facility that will replace the Whitehorse RCMP detachment cells, providing a high standard of care and supervision of persons detained by the RCMP.

I did attend the session by Shannon Moroney and was touched deeply, and those are things that I'm taking under consideration.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to believe — although that was a fairly vague answer — that the minister does support

a more progressive model of justice than the incarceration of youth and adults with conditions that cannot be changed. It has been proven over and over that this segment of our society is best kept out of custody. Mandatory minimum sentences and the incarceration of youth is costly and counterproductive. The Canadian Bar Association has spoken out against the federal government's crime omnibus legislation, the *Safe Streets and Communities Act*, which does not make communities safer. Indeed, the State of Texas, which has tried such punitive measures and found that mandatory penalties and minimum sentences are extremely costly in the long run. Is the minister aware of the findings from the Texas experience and will he agree that to implement the federal Bill C-10 will be too costly for Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to respond in part to the part about keeping these people out of custody. We have a number of programs at the present time operating through Health and Social Services that are specifically tailored to keep young people out of jail or custody of any kind. And we're looking at other options that we hope to be able to announce in the very near future to do just that, to help these — not only young people, but people with disabilities at a later time in their life.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the federal Bill C-10 will eliminate the ability of the judiciary to exercise any discretion in their sentencing decisions. Programs such as those the members opposite have spoken about would not be available given the provisions in Bill C-10. First Nation people are already over-represented in our jails and this bill is likely to increase the numbers of aboriginal inmates. This is contrary to the Gladue decision. I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that crime rates are decreasing without these vengeful actions. Yukon's restorative justice approaches such as pre-charge —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I believe it's contrary to our Standing Orders and to past rulings for a member of this House to refer to the actions of another government in Canada as being "vengeful".

Speaker: The Member for Copperbelt South, on the point of order.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that the term "vengeful" is an unparliamentary term, and I would ask that you consider whether you will in fact rule that the word "vengeful" would be unparliamentary. I think this is an appropriate description of the state of affairs.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: I will take it under advisement and discuss it later.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, Yukon's restorative justice approaches, such as pre-charge diversion, First Nation justice initiatives and community-based policing are effective measures to support healing and dignity over incarceration and

retribution. We want to see, and as the Yukon Party stated in its election platform, they want to see —

Speaker: Order please. The member's time is up. Ask the question please.

Ms. Moorcroft: Again, I ask the Minister of Justice, will he support justice, not vengeance, and urge the federal minister to withdraw its omnibus crime bill?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, in addressing the member opposite, Bill C-10 has raised questions in the Yukon and nationally around increased costs related to courts and corrections services as a result of changes to mandatory minimums and conditional sentencing. Fortunately, our government has been proactive in preparing for the future of correctional needs by implementing the *Correctional Redevelopment Strategic Plan* which, among other things, has improved our ability to absorb more inmates without significantly increasing costs.

If we want to talk about Bill C-10 specifically, there are things built in there like: the *Protecting Children From Sexual Predators Act*; the *Penalties for Organized Drug Crime Act*; Sebastien's Law, the *Ending House Arrest for Property and Other Serious Crimes by Serious and Violent Offenders Act*. We are prepared; the Yukon is prepared. We are not expecting a great increase in costs, and this government is committed to working.

Question re: Dawson City hospital

Mr. Silver: I have a question for the Minister of Health and Social Services about the model of health care that will be used in the new Dawson hospital.

Dawson residents are very pleased with this new health care infrastructure in the community. We are less than happy, however, with how this project has been implemented or with the government's decision to set up the facility as an acute-care hospital.

The government's direction and lack of community input on this project is one of the main reasons why I am standing here today. Residents have been recommending for the last year that the government look at turning the Dawson hospital into a collaborative health care facility, one that will allow the community nurses to play a larger role in the delivery of health care. Open any journal on modern medicine today and this is the model. We have a unique chance to show that the Yukon government is on the cutting edge in rural community health care.

Is the new Minister of Health willing to look at changing the model of health care delivery in the new hospital?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, at the current time, we have an open dialogue with the Yukon Hospital Corporation with regard to the future of the hospital in Dawson City and we will continue that dialogue.

Mr. Silver: It was quite obvious at the Yukon Hospital Corporation's AGM in Dawson last month that the local medical community has many unanswered questions, and they felt that they had very little input into the programming at the new hospital.

I can tell the minister that there are a lot of unhappy medical professionals in my community and they want to be heard.

Under the previous Yukon Party government, they were not. This minister has an opportunity to improve the situation by simply listening to what the people have to say. The acute care model lacks the accommodation for the scope of local nurses' training and abilities, and that is the issue here.

We would hate to see local nurses forced to sell their homes and leave the community because of this, and this is the danger that our community is facing. Could the minister speak of any plans his government has in mind to remedy this situation?

Hon. Mr. Graham: The hospital in Dawson City will be providing six beds and offering a number of services, everything from stabilization to monitoring and observing, acute medical and mental health intervention and other care as required in a number of different areas. I know for a fact that there is ongoing consultation between the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Dawson City medical services group, and hopefully they'll be able to work out a process by which both will be able to move forward with the hospital in Dawson City.

Mr. Silver: I'm unsure about the medical hospital group the minister speaks of.

Health care professionals with whom I have spoken over the last year are very disappointed in how this entire process unfolded. Their input was ignored and they were told not to talk to the media, not to criticize the government and just simply toe the line.

They think there is a better way to set up the hospital, and I agree with them. Health care professionals and residents alike want to see a collaborative health care model adopted by this new facility.

Let's put money and focus into health promotion as opposed to illness treatment. A collaborative model allows work within the schools and community organizations to promote healthy living, and it would be less costly in salaries and recruitment, as we already have these nurses in our town. It is also the environment needed to recruit doctors who are community-oriented and who are willing to stay and be part of the community.

The current plan will mean higher paid, fly-in doctors who will spend their salaries down south after their rotation is complete.

Will the minister meet with health care providers in Dawson and hear from them directly? Will he commit to doing that?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, I don't know exactly where the member is getting his information from, because he is talking about two different things. Discussions are currently taking place with the Dawson City health centre staff regarding the model of care that will be put in place in the new Dawson City hospital.

As for a collaborative model, we're already beginning that system — or, it has been in place for a number of years. Health prevention, health care at a very young age, we all know will reduce the cost of hospital care in the future. So, yes, that's something that we are promoting.

I'm not sure where the member is coming from and I've made a policy of meeting with anybody who wishes to meet

with me at any time I'm available, and I will continue that policy.

Question re: Whistle-blower legislation

Ms. Stick: Yukon government workers are the real face of government programs, services and policies. They do their jobs with professionalism as they serve the public in a wide variety of fields. On taking their jobs, they swear an oath of confidentiality and loyalty. But what if a government worker witnesses something that is an imminent threat to public health and safety? Do they stay loyal and keep their mouth shut, or speak out and chance losing their job and source of income?

The Yukon has no effective whistle-blower protection. This needs to change. Will this government be crafting rules on protecting whistle-blowers in the interest of employees and the greater public good during the 33rd Legislative Assembly?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I wish to thank the member opposite for the question raised. First off, I would also like to add our sincere thanks and gratitude for the very professional work that our public servants do on behalf of Yukon citizens, day in and day out. It is indeed very important work and it is, in fact, work that is valued daily by the Government of Yukon.

With respect to those individuals who feel aggrieved through actions taken by Government of Yukon, there are provisions within current statutes and within respective legislation, and pieces of policies within our own collective agreements, whether it's the *Ombudsman Act*, *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and so forth. There are provisions available for employees who feel aggrieved and are seeking refuge.

We are committed to whistle-blower protection and, in fact, I believe that letters were sent recently by our Premier to the respective leaders of the opposition parties, asking that they put forth members interested in sitting on a select committee that would oversee recommendations for whistle-blower protection.

Ms. Stick: I don't think we have received that letter yet, but I thank the minister and we look forward to receiving that.

In May 2007, the Government Leader established a Select Committee on Whistle-blower Protection and that committee received submissions from former public servants, labour, chambers of commerce, the Ombudsman, which we just spoke of, and the Public Service Commission.

The Legislative Assembly has a wealth of materials that Yukoners contributed in good faith to the select committee process. We don't have to study this again. I know from speaking to colleagues and hearing from other members on this side of the House that government employees are still being told not to speak up against the government. My question: will this government be taking the submissions and recommendations from the select committee process and developing rules, and if so, what time frame?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As I just mentioned, or referenced in my first response, we are, in fact, committed to whistle-blower protection, and as I articulated earlier, our Premier did issue letters to both the Leader of the Official Opposition and also the Interim Leader of the Third Party, with respect to ob-

taining members and their participation on a select committee that oversees recommendations that would formulate what that whistle-blower protection would look like. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the information and all the work that was done by the previous select committee that oversaw this very important issue; however, that work was incomplete. It was not signed off by all three respective political parties within the Legislature, so we are hoping that we are able to reconvene. There are a number of new members. It is a new government and we certainly look forward to receiving new responses from the Official Opposition.

Ms. Stick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; we look forward to receiving that letter. We will be happy to provide names for this committee, as I'm sure the other party will too. I am hoping that there are clear timelines and that this is something that we can be looking forward to sooner rather than later. Is the minister able to give us an idea of what the timelines are for this?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to hear that members of the opposition will indeed be participating on the Select Committee on Whistle-blower Protection.

We look forward to their participation and coming up with the terms of reference that will oversee the protection and oversee the timelines to be determined. It will likely be through the Government House Leader that we'll be coming up with a motion that will determine who will be participating on this committee this sitting.

Question re: F.H. Collins Secondary School reconstruction

Mr. Tredger: I and many students, teachers and parents were dismayed to hear yesterday that the construction of the new F.H. Collins high school will experience yet another delay. This time it will take another two and a half years to have it finally open. I trust the staff, the school council and the building advisory committee were fully involved in this action.

The previously announced opening of this much-needed school was just a few short months ago. My concern is first for the children and the teachers, while they are waiting for the building to be completed two years from now. For years now, the facility maintenance and upgrades have been postponed because we were to get a new building. Now we will be working in a school that is in need of extensive repairs and has been partially demolished.

Speaker: Question.

Mr. Tredger: What measures has the minister made to ensure the safety and convenience of our children and teachers while they wait for the final completion of the building?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I have to start by reiterating what I've said in media interviews over the past couple of days, as well as in a meeting yesterday morning at 7:30 with the building advisory committee and the school council. That is that the Yukon government is firmly committed to replacing the F.H. Collins Secondary School. We mentioned it in our platform, and it was in the throne speech delivered by the Commissioner in front of this Assembly last week. It's something that is very, very important to every member in this House, and, of course, many of my constituents. The F.H.

Collins Secondary School is decades old. It has turned out many fine graduates, a number of whom sit in this Legislature, including me and the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. We are proud graduates of the class of 1986. We are asking that school to give us two more years. I can assure all members of this House that the safety of the children and the teachers — and the learning environment there — is of utmost importance to us as well.

Mr. Tredger: Thank you, Mr. Minister. I know a number of our constituents were concerned that the delay meant that F.H. Collins might be built in another spot. I appreciate your assurances.

The Auditor General in her report on the Department of Education stated the department lacked long-term facilities plans. This further delay in building F.H. Collins is just one of the many projects that this government has announced and then delayed. Many announcements of new construction projects have come suspiciously close to election time.

Will the minister assure the House that the new high school will now be completed within the two-year time frame?

Hon. Mr. Kent: A number of expenditures have been made on that project already. I guess we would refer to them sort of as the "white collar expenditures of design." We have spent approximately \$1.3 million on design already. The site works that occurred after the sod-turning a few months ago that really kicked off the construction portion of the project — we spent approximately \$400,000.

Now what we're doing is — we want to make sure that we do the right thing for the students, the parents and the teachers over there by providing the learning model that was envisioned by the building advisory committee. But of course we also have to be sound fiscal managers. We have to ensure that this project comes in on budget and that's the work that will carry on now through my colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

His officials are doing that due diligence right now to ensure we can meet that August 2015 deadline and deliver the learning model that was envisioned by the folks who put in all the hard work to come up with it and to deliver that learning model within the budget that was set aside for that project.

Mr. Tredger: There are millions of dollars wrapped up in beginning projects that are then delayed, altered, and often result in cost overruns. It is a disturbing pattern of ad hoc planning.

We also know that the cost of building is increasing substantially year by year. Will the minister assure the House that there is now enough money in the budget to complete the new F.H. Collins without having to go back for more money — on time and on budget?

Hon. Mr. Kent: That's precisely what we're trying to avoid on this side of the House by delaying the occupancy of the school by two years. We're looking to avoid the cost overruns and the change orders and all of the budgetary over-extensions that may occur. We're doing our best to eliminate any surprises, I guess, with regard to this process.

Again, we want to make sure that the new school that is built on-site, that was envisioned by the building advisory committee and the students, staff and parents, is the one that

meets the goals and meets the needs of not only the class of 2016 but also the class of 2066. We're building this school for a long life and we want to ensure that, again, it's something that serves as a model for 21st century education. That's how the design was envisioned and that's what we intend to work toward.

Question re: Water quality

Mr. Barr: Throughout Canada, the public knows what "Walkerton" means. The deaths due to drinking water contamination at Walkerton happened over 11 years ago. Walkerton crystallized in the public's mind the importance of protecting our sources of drinking water and the need for oversight. In the latest report card on drinking water measures throughout Canadian provinces and territories, Yukon was given a D+, the second lowest grade in the country, and a decline since the 2006 report card. What will this government do to protect our sources of drinking water and ensure public consumption of drinking water is safe?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Health and Social Services has a drinking water monitoring program in place. We are in the process right now of doing drinking water assessments on 20 major drinking water sources in the territory, and we will continue to do that kind of assessment. I think that — that will do for now.

Mr. Barr: I'm glad that you are doing that at this time. One of the reasons for Yukon's poor showing in the report card has to do with the lack of source-water protection. Important areas like wetlands and the headwaters of watersheds are protected in a case-by-case manner. Water management areas in the Yukon have not explicitly restricted certain land uses that might contaminate drinking water sources. Meanwhile, as the high price of minerals continues to fuel a mining and exploration boom, there is more activity on the land, and without a thoughtful approach to source-water protection, there could be major impacts on our drinking water.

Will the Yukon government respond positively to our poor water grade and craft new regulations to protect source water?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the member opposite for the question. Yukon's water resources are important to Yukoners. Water is important in our everyday lives and the health of our communities.

As Environment minister, I look forward to building on the strong record of the previous government with regard to protecting drinking water sources. The previous administration undertook a number of public water projects in communities throughout the Yukon and a number are still ongoing. We know there's more work to be done. That's why we committed to developing a Yukon water strategy in our platform. We heard today in a motion that we would be moving forward on that.

I look forward to developing that Yukon water strategy expeditiously.

Mr. Barr: Yes, we are aware the Yukon Party pledged to create a Yukon water strategy to ensure Yukoners have access to safe drinking water. There are many actors with a hand in our drinking water: municipal governments, First

Nation governments, private operators, individual households and various Yukon government departments.

As Walkerton demonstrated, we need accountability measures and oversights to ensure the integrity of our drinking water. A water strategy is a good place to begin getting everyone on the same page to look at permitted activities near source water, to look at infrastructure, data collection and monitoring, training and maintenance.

How close is the water strategy to completion and how has the government involved all parties responsible for our drinking water in the development of this water strategy?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, on a number of points the member opposite brings up, we agree there is more work that needs to be done and coordination between a number of the players with regard to water resources. Municipalities, First Nations, stakeholders and the private sector all have a role in Yukon's water resources.

There has been some significant attention paid to water issues at the national level. Work was done last year at the western premiers conference and ultimately resulted in the Council of the Federation creating the *Water Charter*. That charter will guide us forward in terms of reducing consumption, increasing efficiency, protecting quality and adapting to the effects of climate change on water.

We're thoroughly committed to proceeding on that water strategy and look forward to working on that.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONSIDERATION OF SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I wish to inform the House pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 26(2), that consideration of a motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, if not concluded today, will take place on Wednesday, December 7, 2011.

ADDRESS IN REPLY TO THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne moved by Ms. McLeod; adjourned debate, the Hon. Mr. Nixon.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Just as a recap from yesterday — I went home last night and my wife was very happy that I thanked her, so again, I'll thank my wife Danielle who worked extremely hard on my campaign. She continues to be my greatest support. I'd also like to extend thanks to my constituents. It is with great humility that I serve you. I look forward to building positive relationships over the years to come.

Thank you to the previous Yukon Party government for a job well done on so many issues. I do take great pride in the fact that the Yukon Party committed to provide services for children and adults with disabilities in addition to the services already provided to my son and other children with autism.

To carry on from yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I just want to re-emphasize the point that in 2006 the Yukon Party made this happen. We are talking about housing. We look back and see the delivery of 113 new senior units. Mr. Speaker, our track record demonstrates we deliver on what we promise. We did not rest on our successes either. We have continued to respond with public sector solutions to this problem.

I know the focus tends to be on Whitehorse, so just let me mention a couple of other recent projects the Yukon Party government is building in some of our smaller communities. We have four new stick frame houses, in Carmacks and Ross River. This government is building three new units for teachers in Pelly Crossing. I mention this to emphasize that the government has been and is currently actively working to address this issue. Housing is a challenge that lends itself to being remedied through partnerships. We are working with Kaushee's Place to advance second-stage housing, which is housing designed specifically to address the needs of women and children leaving abusive relationships.

We are working with local NGOs to improve the housing situation for those with FASD and for others in difficult circumstances. But I believe the greatest opportunities are found in engaging the creativity, the experience and the resources of the private sector. The Yukon Party has always been a party that promotes the role of the private sector in our economy, and this is one area in which I see the private sector playing an integral role. The time has come to provide more opportunities to ensure more large-scale rental accommodations are available in Whitehorse.

To make this possible, we're going to raise title on pieces of Crown land and then we're going to sell that land to the private sector to create and manage rental units. The first rental unit project that is proposed for a piece of government land is in the Takhini area, located between Range Road and Mountainview Drive.

In addition to these initiatives, the Yukon Party government has a number of land development projects throughout the territory. I would now like to turn my attention to another matter facing the Yukon: energy.

I spent time reading and preparing for the discussion on energy. I was reminded of how important energy is not only to our local economy here in Yukon but to the economies of the nation, of the continent and of the globe. Many of the industry leaders I read about were concerned on the global level with the issue of energy poverty, which is when the required infrastructure is not in place for energy delivery, most often electricity.

Many commentators here in Canada, as well as the United States, from Cabinet ministers of national governments to industry leaders, have spoken eloquently about the connection between energy, economic growth and quality of life. In 2007, the Council of Federation stated that "Canada is an 'energy superpower' on the world stage. We generate more hydroelectric power and produce more uranium than any other country on earth, and rank second in natural gas exports. Canada has some of the largest and safest nuclear generating stations in the world and several important nuclear research facilities. With

proven oil reserves second only to Saudi Arabia, Canada is the eighth largest oil producer — and growing."

Canada is the largest supplier of energy to the United States for all energy commodities, except coal, and there is increasing interest in our fossil fuels from consumers in Asia. We are one of the few countries in the world that is not only energy rich, but also fully capable of increasing its energy production in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner. These resources, combined with the intellectual and technological skills possessed by Canadians, have made Canada's domestic and export energy sector one of its biggest economic drivers. My point is that energy is critical to the economy. Indeed, many commentators have observed that energy is important not only for economic success, but also for quality of life.

The World Economic Forum has stated that access to energy is fundamental to improving quality of life and is a key imperative for economic development. In our platform, we spoke to promoting energy self-sufficiency. Our Yukon Party government will invest in a series of projects to ensure Yukoners retain access to affordable energy. In my mind, this is playing to our strengths.

Previously, our party has indicated that in an age of increasing energy demands and decreasing supplies of non-renewable energy, Yukon must take steps to ensure we continue to have uninterrupted access to power. The Premier has stated that a failure to invest in the territory's energy infrastructure will have grave impacts on our economy and our way of life as we move forward. He has clearly stated that our energy needs are real and immediate, and we are committed to investing in short-, medium-, and long-term solutions to ensure that energy in Yukon remains clean and affordable. I think this is a responsible and pragmatic approach. To meet Yukon's increasing needs for power in the short term, the Yukon Party government will ensure the completion of the Mayo B hydro project, the development of an independent power producer policy and net metering to provide power to Yukoners.

To provide for the increasing energy needs of the territory moving forward, this government has also committed to the development of a natural gas industry, as well as geothermal, wind, solar, biomass and hydroelectric projects to meet medium- to long-term needs.

We believe that the Yukon's abundant natural gas resources, in combination with renewable resource development, are the best options to provide electrical generation in the near to medium term. We will accomplish this goal by continuing to responsibly develop Yukon's oil and gas resources for local use within Yukon and for export.

We have committed to reducing Yukon's dependence on imported fossil fuels. We will work with stakeholders and First Nations to develop a common onshore oil and gas regime, and we will work to consider cleaner sources, such as natural gas, as a replacement for diesel fuel in the new electricity generation projects.

Finally, we will continue to implement the energy strategy for Yukon to promote a sustainable and secure energy future.

I want to talk for a few minutes about the world of energy efficiency. Noted academic Dr. Weidenbaum stated, “We need to back off the perennial debate on whether we should adopt a production-oriented strategy or a conservation-oriented strategy.” “Energy production and energy conservation are the twin blades of the same scissors. We need both.” I agree.

Your government will continue to make energy efficiency and conservation a priority to reduce energy consumption, energy costs and emissions. Toward that end, we will be increasing energy efficiency by 20 percent by the year 2020. We will be improving access to energy efficiency evaluations by providing training for energy evaluators, and we will be providing incentives for building owners to carry out retrofits. We will promote the use of energy-efficient products by providing rebates for products that meet energy performance standards.

In closing, the Premier has put his faith in me to lead two very important departments: the Department of Justice and the Department of Tourism and Culture. As a minister, I’m humbled to have the confidence of this Premier and my colleagues. I can tell you that I have spent the last month learning about these two portfolios and, trust me, there is a great deal to learn. More importantly, though, I have spent a great deal of time over the last month starting to meet the staff in both departments who work hard on the ground. I am very impressed with their attention to detail, the level of commitment and dedication, their skill and knowledge, and the vision and professionalism of both my teams. As the Premier has confidence in me, I have full confidence in my team that we can build on past experiences to create a remarkable future in both Justice and Tourism and Culture. I truly look forward to working with everyone in both departments over the next few years.

In the Department of Justice, we will be working on things like modernization of the land titles system. We are committed to improving this service so that it meets the modern service standards. We have already been in preliminary discussions with stakeholders and within government to get this project moving. I expect to have a substantive announcement in the near future.

In the coming months, the new Whitehorse correctional facility will open. In consultation with corrections professionals, Yukoners and First Nations, we will be opening the doors to a state-of-the-art correctional facility. There has been a tremendous shift in focus in programming and cultural importance. Our goal is to reduce reoffending by assessing the risk and needs of the offenders by applying processes and programs that have proven effective in reducing that risk and by starting reintegration planning at the earliest opportunity.

I can tell you that I’m also very excited to be the Minister of Tourism and Culture. I had the opportunity to travel to Dawson City last week, and I look forward to travelling to other communities across the territory in the near future. There are some incredible things happening in Yukon. While the international tourism market remains fragile, Yukon continues to remain at a constant. Border crossings continue to rise. Motor coach visitation continues to increase and foreign visitation saw an increase of 7.7 percent in 2011.

Heritage and cultural projects also continue throughout the territory. The paleontology and archeology departments might arguably be the two best kept secrets. I’ve recently toured the centre here in Whitehorse.

With relationships being established within the mining industry, it’s absolutely incredible to see the artifacts, bones and fossils that are being extracted from the ground. I encourage all Yukoners to research and talk to this team.

I am very happy to know that not one, but two new cultural centres will be opening in the very near future: Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre here in Whitehorse, and Champagne and Aishihik Cultural Centre in Haines Junction. First Nations’ culture is so very important to us. I’m so glad that there are venues to showcase such a spectacular culture.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate you as our new Speaker. I want to congratulate my colleagues on this side of the House and my new colleagues on the opposite side of the House. I look forward in the coming years to us being able to have an impact and make a difference in the lives of all Yukoners.

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, I would like to once again thank my constituents in Porter Creek South for providing me with the opportunity to represent them in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, members, guests, merci, thank-you, mahsi’ cho, gūnilschish.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I thank the members in the House for their work to date. It’s a pleasure to be here today to respond to the Speech from the Throne. Of course, it was delivered last week, on December 1, 2011, by Commissioner Doug Phillips. The Speech from the Throne was for the First Session of the 33rd Yukon Legislative Assembly, of which we all have the privilege of being members.

It’s an honour to be here, Mr. Speaker, for the first time on the floor of this House. I have worked for a number of years, Mr. Speaker, in the building at the political level, but never on the floor of this House. So it’s indeed a great privilege to make this step forward and represent my constituents.

I’d like to say, first of all, a little about my constituents in my riding. I represent the riding of Copperbelt North, which is a new riding created by the Electoral Boundaries Commission several years ago. It’s a large riding in terms of population. I believe it’s the second most populous riding in the territory. It’s a Whitehorse-based riding. Whitehorse, of course, is where I was born and raised. I’m happy to now be a member of this Legislature.

Copperbelt North is a surprisingly large riding. It tends to get the focus in terms of its Copper Ridge component, but there are a number of other important aspects to the riding.

We have the Lobird Trailer Court, which has a number of residents who have supported me in the election and whom I have the privilege of representing. There are a number of folks who live along the Alaska Highway, in behind the commercial buildings in that area. Squatters Road and McLean Lake Road are where some of — I believe the term they used to use is — “the colourful five percent” tend to live in that jurisdiction.

One of the gentlemen I had the privilege of running against in the election, Skeeter Miller-Wright — it was a pleasure to meet him and get to know him through the election. He is now a constituent of mine.

Throughout the election I had a lot of help from friends and family, and I would like to recognize a few of those individuals today. First of all, I would like to thank my mother and father, Don and Linda Dixon, for their help, both in raising me and sending me here today. I couldn't have done it without either one of them. My mother, of course, works in the office and I have had the privilege of working with her over a number of years. My father is a welder by trade and now a gold miner, although I believe he is considering a career switch to film, having recently starred in the Discovery Channel show *Gold Rush*.

He had a very integral role in that television show. He played a big role. He didn't have any lines, but some good face time. I think it's the starting point for a big leap for him in terms of his career. I think he's got a burgeoning career. I think Hollywood is in the cards for him.

I'd like to say a quick thank you to a number of people who helped me on the campaign, including my partner Brittany McNeil — I couldn't be here without her support — and, of course, a number of my constituents who supported me all along the way.

The Speech from the Throne delivered by Commissioner Phillips last week outlines a number of issues that are important to my constituents, and we committed to a number of initiatives in our platform that will have a direct impact on my constituents, both in terms of the riding itself and the individuals.

One of the things this brings to mind is the commitment to extending a number of the medical bursaries and medical programs. One of my constituents, Rachelle Blais, is currently attending Memorial University in Newfoundland, in med school, and accesses a number of the programs Yukon government provides. So she was delighted to hear our commitment to enhancing a number of those programs. I look forward to working with the Minister of Health and Social Services on that front.

Copperbelt North is full of a number of young families — families of folks who are from here and were raised here, like myself, but also a number of new Yukoners and people who are new to the territory. Interestingly, there are a significant number of Yukoners who left the territory but found reason and cause in the past several years to move back to the territory. I think that's indicative of the tremendous economic growth the Yukon has experienced over the years and the economic development that has provided prosperity and opportunity here in Yukon. A number of people I grew up with left the territory in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the economy simply couldn't sustain them. There simply weren't the jobs or the opportunities for them here in the territory. So, like so many we've heard about in this House before, they were forced to leave the territory and to work elsewhere. It's very exciting to see a number of them be able to return to the Yukon and return to participate in the growth of Yukon.

Not only has my riding grown over the years — the neighbourhood — but the city itself has grown too — the city in which my riding exists — Whitehorse. Whitehorse has enjoyed a significant growth over the years.

Another issue that's important to my constituents is of course an action item that the previous administration developed, which was support for families with children with disabilities. It was a program that was implemented by the previous administration and one also that we committed to extending the services for in our platform, as well as providing additional funding for therapies, physical renovations to homes, and ensuring that these programs are flexible and family oriented. That's very important to my constituents. A number of them access those programs and have made it very clear to me that they appreciate the work we've done in the past and want to see us continue with that good work.

Another interesting component of my riding is Copper Ridge Place. It's a home to a number of folks from the territory, and they're also my constituents as well.

Another point of our platform that was well-received by my constituents was the commitment to developing a caregiver tax credit. That's something that a number of folks who care for a loved one within their own home are excited to see. I can't help but comment on one of my biggest supporters, Jean Jamieson, who of course celebrated her 98th birthday this past summer, and I very much appreciate her support. She got me a tie when I won the election, Mr. Speaker, and I was happy to wear that last Thursday, the first sitting of the House.

A number of the medical services bursaries and support programs to Yukoners who wish to pursue a career in the medical field — I mentioned a friend of mine and a constituent who is attending the medical program at Memorial University in Newfoundland. I believe a number of my constituents are excited at the prospect of Yukon students having the opportunity to enter the medical field, study and return to Yukon to provide those services in their home, where they grew up.

Let me speak a little now about the departments I've had the privilege of being minister for. First of all, we have the Department of Environment, and we have the Department of Economic Development — two very exciting departments and a very exciting portfolio.

There are a number of initiatives within each of these departments I'd like to discuss a little today, but I'd like to start by saying that, over the past few weeks — my short time as being minister — I've had the opportunity to meet a number of the staff, a number of the officials in the departments. I don't think I've met them all yet certainly, Mr. Speaker, but certainly endeavouring to do so. The Deputy Minister of Environment is Kelvin Leary. I am very excited to be working with Kelvin. He recently agreed to extend his period as deputy minister. I'm very excited to have him and to work with him on many important files in Environment.

I'll speak, Mr. Speaker, now about one very important issue that's very important to me and to a number of the staff and officials in the Department of Environment, and that's the issue of climate change. Mr. Speaker, I've had a significant amount of exposure and experience with this particular issue at the aca-

demic level in my previous academic work. I've never quite got the mastery of the physical sciences side of this issue, but I've had significant experience and exposure with the policy response of governments to this very important issue

Mr. Speaker, climate change is something that is very much an issue that's important to Yukoners as well as Canadians and, indeed, citizens of the world. It's one that impacts us all. It has a particular impact here in the Yukon where we are. As a northern jurisdiction, we're affected by climate change significantly, to a greater degree than many other jurisdictions in the world. The circumpolar north has enjoyed considerable attention recently, and part of that is because of the effects of climate change in the north.

The polar regions are experiencing the highest rate of temperature rise and degree of climate change in the world. The Alaska and northern Yukon region has seen a rise of a three- to four-percent average temperature over the past 50 years. Yukon has both arctic and sub-arctic ecosystems. Disruption from climate change will affect vegetation, fish and animal populations and insect and migratory bird species. For example, Yukon's tree line is advancing, both upslope and northward. Thirty thousand hectares of spruce forest in southwest Yukon have been affected by spruce bark beetle infestation due to milder winter and spring temperatures. Moose are moving northward into new regions. Some migratory birds are arriving earlier in spring, out of sync with other species.

Yukon's lakes and rivers are changing, including later freeze-up, earlier break-up and other flow changes due to changes in precipitation, melting glaciers and melting permafrost. For example, in the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin's hometown of Old Crow, lakes that were previously held in place by permafrost are disappearing as the land thaws. These effects are very real, and have an effect on citizens of the Yukon.

Coastal erosion is occurring on Yukon's North Slope due to reduced permanent sea ice in the Beaufort. There are rising sea levels and increased severity of late summer storms. For example, storm surges and high water on the Herschel Island airstrip resulted in severe damage and emergency repairs in the fall of 2006, and flooding rendered the airstrip unusable for 10 days in August of 2008.

Yukon First Nations and aboriginal groups throughout the circumpolar region have consistently identified food security as a key concern that relates to the availability and accessibility of the harvest of traditional foods. In some instances, a changing climate may create new opportunities though. For example, a longer growing season may result in new agricultural opportunities in the Yukon.

The effects of climate change are clear and we are seeing them throughout the Yukon. What I have been very impressed with so far in my short time as Minister of Environment is having an opportunity to speak with people who care about this issue and learning about the action being taken by Yukoners and by the Yukon government to deal with the effects of climate change in Yukon.

The previous government developed the Yukon government's *Climate Change Action Plan* in 2009, and it committed

to a number of very important goals and strategies for dealing with the effects of climate change. The first goal, of course, was enhancing knowledge and understanding of climate change in Yukon; the second, adapting to climate change; the third, reducing our greenhouse gas emissions; and the fourth, leading action in response to climate change.

We have had the opportunity to see, first-hand, a number of the initiatives being undertaken under this action plan. It has been very encouraging for me as someone who has followed this issue throughout my academic career to see some real action on the issue. In terms of innovation, technology and innovative responses to the effects of climate change, we can look to Yukon College for a number of cases where we're providing opportunities for the advancement of cold climate technology and the development of innovative responses to the effects of climate change.

The previous government established the Yukon Cold Climate Innovation Centre. It established the Climate Change Secretariat and the Yukon Technology Innovation Centre, and it has supported the Northern Climate Exchange.

There are a number of opportunities, as I've said, Mr. Speaker, that arrive from the effects of climate change, and one of them is the longer growing season we enjoy here in the territory as a result. There are a number of other opportunities I believe the Yukon is uniquely positioned to address. There are a number of innovative folks in the territory who are willing to use their entrepreneurial and innovative spirit to develop technologies and ideas that help Yukoners to deal with these effects of climate change. A few examples we've seen so far I've had the opportunity to support through Economic Development — and I'll speak about these a little bit later — are Northern Windows and Glass, who developed their product, which is a very interesting development, one that allows Yukoners to deal with — it's a Yukon solution to a Yukon problem.

Another important role we undertake through the Department of Environment is conveying these issues to Canada and working with the federal government to deal with a number of these climate change issues. Currently, there's a Canadian delegation attending the Conference of the Parties in Durban, South Africa. That's the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was established in the '90s.

The Yukon delegation there is made up of three members — Kelvin Leary, of course, the deputy minister I mentioned, Ed Van Randen, the assistant deputy minister, and the director of the Climate Change Secretariat, Eric Schroff, who is what they call a "super delegate", meaning he participates in all of the delegations.

Yukon government has been actively participating in the federal-provincial-territorial roundtable meetings leading up to the international climate change talks in South Africa, and it's a very exciting opportunity for Yukon to be at the table in Durban, as well as a number of other Conference of the Parties meetings throughout the years.

We've seen what happens when the federal government moves without support from the provinces and territories, an example of which is, of course, the failed Kyoto Protocol. Hav-

ing our voice heard at the table is absolutely important for the federal government and for the United Nations at large. The Conference of the Parties meeting in South Africa will bring together representatives from over 180 countries, along with observers from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the media. The two-week period includes working sessions of COP17— 17, of course, refers to the number of years that the UNFCCC has been in effect.

The intent of COP is to further the development of a coordinated international response to climate change, including mitigation and adaptation. When we speak of adaptation, those are very real issues for Yukoners. The number of impacts I addressed in my discussion of the impacts of climate change on the Yukon are examples of those.

There is another issue I would like to talk about in terms of Department of Environment. I had the opportunity, in my second week as minister, to visit the Yukon Wildlife Preserve. This is a preserve that we have had the privilege of funding over the years. I think this is a phenomenal organization, Mr. Speaker, made up of very active members who play an important role in a number of fronts. The three that come to mind are education, conservation, and rehabilitation. I will speak about those a little bit. The educational component of the Yukon Wildlife Preserve is one that the original private sector creator, Danny Nowlan, envisioned for this site. He really thought that this was a place for Yukon's children to learn about their territory and learn about the wildlife here in the territory. I'm very happy to convey that that continues to be a goal of the Yukon Wildlife Preserve.

The second part, of course, is conservation, and it provides an incredible habitat for a number of wildlife in the territory. Rehabilitation — the Yukon Wildlife Preserve has a number of very impressive facilities to aid in the rehabilitation of wildlife that have been injured in the course of their lives and would normally have nowhere else to go, but the side of the highway to die. They now have the opportunity to rehabilitate, to gain strength — whether it is following a broken leg on an animal or a broken wing on a bird — there are number of opportunities for them to rehabilitate.

Part of the tour had a tourism component in it as well. It's a very attractive location geographically and topographically. It has an incredible natural landscape that allows for a certain amount of tourism potential. The Yukon Wildlife Preserve organizing committee conveyed to me that they have heard that this is the envy of a number of institutions throughout the world because of its physical and geographical beauty.

Just by nature alone, Mr. Speaker, we have some unique habitats within the preserve whether it be mountain ranges for sheep or plains or wetlands for other migratory species. In short, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Wildlife Preserve is a tremendous project, and I'm very happy and encouraged, and I look forward to working with the Wildlife Preserve operators.

Mr. Speaker, an issue that came up earlier today, which we've had a chance to discuss a little bit, was the commitment by the Yukon Party in our platform, and the further commitment in the Speech from the Throne, to develop a water study for Yukon. A number of initiatives has been undertaken by the

previous governments and a number of which are still ongoing. As Environment minister, I look forward to building on the strong record of the previous government with regard to protecting drinking water sources. The previous administration undertook a number of public water projects in communities throughout the Yukon, and a number of these are still ongoing. There has been some significant attention paid to water issues at the national level. Work was done at the Western Premiers Conference last year and ultimately resulted in the Council of the Federation creating a Council of the Federation Water Charter. The Council of Federation directed provincial and territorial ministers to use the Water Charter to guide their work and outlined four specific goals. Those are, Mr. Speaker, reducing consumption, increasing efficiency, protecting quality and adapting to the effects of climate change on water.

This is an issue that we know is important to Yukoners — the safety of their water and the safety of our significant water resources here in the territory, whether it be lakes, rivers or subsurface water bodies. Water has a number of complex effects on our everyday lives. That's why we committed to developing a Yukon water strategy for the territory. A number of departments are involved in the management of water in the territory. Of course, the Department of Environment is one of them and, in the case of the Yukon water strategy, it will take the lead. There is support from the Executive Council Office, which oversees the Yukon Water Board; the departments of Health and Social Services, Energy, Mines and Resources, Community Services, Highways and Public Works and Economic Development.

In addition, the Yukon water strategy will require input from the public and other governments with water management responsibilities. We look forward to hearing from Yukoners, from municipalities, from First Nations, from stakeholders in the private sector and Yukoners. We look forward to hearing from them about how Yukon's water resources should be managed and how much of a concern it is to them.

I would be remiss in my speech if I neglected recycling. Of course, this isn't something that falls into the Department of Environment specifically. It's spearheaded by the Minister of Community Services, under the *Solid Waste Action Plan*, but recycling is an important diversion method that is important for a number of Yukoners.

In my capacity as Minister of Environment, I'll have the privilege of working with a number of co-management bodies throughout the territory, including the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, RRCs and the First Nations. I've had a chance to meet with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board chair and executive director, and I look forward to meeting with their entire body next week.

I look forward to meeting and working with the RRCs over the next few years, as we get a chance to get out and enjoy the Yukon and see some municipalities and parts of Yukon we haven't had a chance to yet. As I'm going around the Yukon, I look forward to meeting with RRCs. I know a number of our members in this House are former RRC members and their input on a number of files is very valuable.

I'll turn now to the Department of Economic Development. Let me speak a little bit about that department.

It was established, of course, in 2002, with the creation of the first Yukon Party government, the first of the two prior to this one. The modus operandi of the department at that stage was, quite simply, economic development. The economy had, in many ways, left the Yukon. The role of the Department of Economic Development was to develop a strong private sector economy. I think we can look around and see that they have delivered in spades, both because of the input from the department as well as a number of departments that have roles in the economy.

Recently, we weathered the storm of a significant global downturn in the economy. Happily, Yukon emerged quite well from that. But we must remain vigilant in our approach to the economy, as extraneous factors often play a significant role in affecting our economic development.

The Yukon's economy has a number of sectors and each one of them is very important.

The mining and mineral resource sector, in terms of projects that include exploration, development and production, all tend to be, and have traditionally been, the backbone of our private sector economy here in the territory. Part of what the Department of Economic Development is doing is trying to diversify that economy and make sure that other sectors of the economy are able to flourish and have the necessary support to do so.

I can't help but mention the mineral resource sector a little bit more. Its development of late has been nothing short of astounding. The current expenditure forecast for Yukon on exploration is over \$300 million now. That shatters the previous record, on an annual basis, of \$156.9 million, which was last year, 2010. That is an incredibly significant contribution to the economy.

Mineral development expenditure for 2011 is expected to be very significant as well. The historically high prices for gold and a continued rebound of copper prices are helping to drive interest in Yukon mineral prospects.

Year to date, gold prices in 2011 have averaged over \$1,500 per ounce, which is, of course, 30 percent higher than last year. The daily price of gold approached nearly \$1,900 per ounce in August 2011, which is quite remarkable. The current forecast for mineral production value of 2011 is in the neighbourhood of \$450 million, as we saw most recently in the economic outlook. With the Yukon having three operating mines now, and several others in various stages of permitting and feasibility assessment and record levels of exploration activity, the near-term looks very promising for the mining sector.

Let me turn now to tourism. The Minister of Tourism and Culture outlined some of the important developments in the tourism industry, but I'll continue on from that. The data for the period of January to August 2011, show border crossings in the first eight months totalled 257,051, which is up from the same period last year. Gains of 7.5 percent were noted in visitation via motor coach. The current forecast for 2011 border crossings from the Department of Tourism and Culture is

320,000, which would represent an increase of 2.7 percent, from 311,000 in 2010.

It's all good news, Mr. Speaker, on the economy. That's for sure.

In the construction sector, we have seen strong year-to-date activity and it appears to be shaping up to be a good year in terms of construction. Permit value data indicates that residential construction is up substantially, almost 60 percent year-to-date from the same period in 2010, benefiting primarily from strong residential construction activity in Whitehorse.

Major projects such as the Watson Lake hospital and cultural centres in Whitehorse and Haines Junction are contributing to the year-to-date increase in the value of institutional permits. The total year-to-date value of building permits is currently \$164 million, which is already significantly higher than May 2011 forecast annual value of \$120 million.

Small- and medium-sized businesses — I should mention as well that the Member for Riverdale South mentioned tiny businesses are also important, not just small and medium — but retail trade is doing well. On a year-to-date basis — January through August 2011 — seasonally unadjusted retail rates in Yukon totaled \$436.1 million. This represents an increase of \$64.8 million compared to the same period in 2010.

That stat indicates to us that Yukoners and those visiting the Yukon are spending money and spending it locally, which is very important. It is important in terms of ensuring that the benefits of economic development stay here in the territory.

In terms of our labour force, Yukon's unemployment rate continues to be among the lowest in Canada with only Alberta currently reporting an unemployment rate equal to Yukon in November 2011. The number of employed increased by 300 in the last month to 19,100, which is a new record high for Yukon. The number of unemployed in Yukon is reported to be down 100 from the previous month with 1,000 persons unemployed in November 2011. Yukon's unemployment rate was reported at five percent in November of 2011, a decrease of 5.6 percent reported in October of 2011. Yukon's labour force continues to grow with the number of people actively participating in the labour force increasing by 300 from the previous month and by 1,000 from the same month last year, to 20,100 in November of 2011.

One of the important aspects of the Department of Economic Development is the Film and Sound Commission. The Film and Sound Commission has done a great job recently in developing the film and sound industry here in the territory. We've seen a number of big budget film and sound projects come through the territory and bring their business here. Most recently, the big-ticket item was *The Big Year*, a film starring a number of Hollywood actors, which was filmed in the Member for Klondike's riding. I don't remember the exact number for their expenditures per day, but I remember it being quite significant. It's a remarkable boost to the economy when you have a project like that in the territory.

The objectives of the Yukon Film and Sound Commission, for those who aren't familiar with it, are to position Yukon to compete in the international market for film location activity, facilitate training for Yukoners to work in the film and sound

industries, provide Yukoners with financial support to enable them to develop commercially viable film productions, provide incentives for sound recording, support industry organizations in the film and sound industries, support marketing activities for the export of film and sound products.

Basically, the Film and Sound Commission has a two-fold approach. On one side they promote the big-ticket items to come into the territory, these larger endeavours by Outside firms. Those bring the big dollars north and to the territory. On the other side, we're also promoting the development of a local film and sound industry.

When we bring these big projects to the Yukon it gives local folks in the industry an opportunity to train and see how others perform. It's a tremendous boost to the economy when our local industry is able to develop as a result of Outside investment. Mr. Speaker, another important aspect of the Department of Economic Development is diversification of the economy. Government of Yukon continues to work to diversify the Yukon economy by identifying and exploring the significant economic development opportunities in strategic industries, natural resources, tourism and culture and research, innovation and commercialization sectors. I've spoken a little bit about the research, innovation and commercialization throughout the day today. That's one that I'm particularly interested in developing.

The Government of Yukon is committed to providing programs and services to support and stimulate the development and growth of Yukon's small- and medium-sized enterprises and, of course, tiny enterprises as well, Mr. Speaker. The strategic industries development fund supports government's commitment to foster the development of Yukon's strategic industries that have the potential of generating increases in Yukon's economic output. The department continues to work with industry stakeholders and the Department of Tourism and Culture to identify opportunities and encourage growth in Yukon's tourism industry and to develop new initiatives that include strategy development, business planning, growing revenues and enhancing export readiness.

Government of Yukon is committed to supporting Yukon's research, innovation and commercialization sector as an area of prime strategic importance to Yukon's economy. I think that's a particular sector of the economy that is relevant to both economic development and environmental concerns, as well. If we can develop technologies here in the territory to address the effects of climate change, it's a tremendous step forward, both in terms of our economic development and our diversification of the economy, as well as addressing the very real and apparent need to deal with the effects of climate change.

I'll speak again about support for small and medium enterprises. We have the business incentive program, the business nominee program, Canada-Yukon Business Service Centre, Däna Näye Ventures' business development program, Däna Näye Ventures' micro-loan program — both those programs are in partnership between Däna Näye Ventures and the Department of Economic Development. We've got the enterprise trade fund. We've got the north Yukon business advisory outreach, Yukon business development program, Yukon entrepre-

neur support program — which we'll see in the budget as one-time funding through the community development trust fund — the Yukon small business investment tax credit, and of course the Yukon venture loan guarantee program.

As I mentioned before, there are a number of programs through the Film and Sound Commission. The film incentive program, for example, was created following extensive consultation with the local and national film and sound industries and is designed to make us a competitive market for film and sound projects.

I see my time is wrapping up, but before I sit down, I'll speak again about the importance of the innovation sector of the economy, both in its contribution to our work in Environment and Economic Development. I'm very excited about the opportunities that the Yukon Research Centre of Excellence, and I look forward to working with the Minister of Education on a number of files that will be affected by that research centre. I look forward to meeting with the staff of the Yukon Cold Climate Innovation Centre and ensuring that Yukoners with innovative ideas have an opportunity to commercialize their innovations and bring them to viable products that could be a benefit to all Yukoners.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to be here, and I look forward to working with the members of this House in a collaborative and constructive manner over the next several years. Thank you.

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, congratulations to you on your appointment as Speaker of this House. It is a privilege to stand here today. I am very aware of the trust and responsibility that has been placed on me by the constituents of Riverdale South. I want to thank all my constituents for greeting me at their doors and sharing their ideas and concerns.

I always felt welcomed, and I appreciated the time that people took from their busy schedules. I would be remiss if I did not thank Glenn Hart for his work as MLA previous to me.

Today I also want to thank my family, my friends and campaign volunteers. The support given to me was so important during my campaign. I am counting on these same people to continue to support me and keep me honest.

It was such a pleasure to have my mother and sister travel to the Yukon from Ontario to share in this pretty big family event, along with my brother, his family and my extended Yukon family. I am very pleased to be sitting in this Legislature with my NDP colleagues. Most I have known for a long time and have great respect for. I'm looking forward to working with them and with our great team of staff.

I would be remiss if I didn't remember those who sat in these seats and who are no longer with us. I speak of Todd Hardy, Steve Cardiff and John Edzerza. I also wish my husband, Ed, could have been here today. He was my greatest supporter behind the scenes. He would have been proud. I also congratulate the other elected officials in this House. It is good to be working with my old colleague from City Hall, the Member for Porter Creek North. Since beginning this job, we have already found ways to work together. I look forward to similar opportunities with all members here.

I welcomed in the throne speech the government's pledge to practice open, accessible, fiscally responsible government and to work constructively with all members of the House to improve the operations of its committees and the proceedings of this Legislature. The NDP, as Official Opposition, is committed to making this Legislative Assembly work for the interest of all Yukoners. The reason I ran in this election was because I wanted to be able to contribute to building the territory's future and to ensure that our growth leads to improvements for all our citizens. I am honoured to be an MLA and I am humbled by the decisions all of us will be making here. Some of these decisions affect what happens in the territory. Others might have national implications, and I am not exaggerating by saying some decisions will affect others in other countries. All our decisions here will impact future generations. We must think beyond our small world in here.

As critic for Health and Social Services and Continuing Care, I'd like to take a few minutes to touch on some of the areas where government services impact the lives and health of all our citizens, from birth to death. Social services should be the path through which people needing assistance are given a hand up and should not be made to feel any less. In the 1980s, the House of Commons pledged to lift all Canadian children from poverty by the year 2000. Poverty has grown in our country and the gap between rich and poor has widened.

In the Yukon, we need only look at the food bank and the increasing number of families who rely on it to make ends meet, month after month. In the Yukon where our prosperity is front-page news, we're missing the inside story: child poverty, homelessness and the despair of many of our citizens. Prosperity for whom? It should be for all.

The costs of poverty are great: increasing medical needs, shortened lives and costs borne by Justice and Health and Social Services.

The social inclusion strategy was developed a few years ago and was a great idea, but it has not achieved its goals because we have not made that strategy a priority. Too often, decisions impacting those on social assistance fly in the face of social inclusion. Madam Speaker, we in the NDP Official Opposition will hold this government accountable on social inclusion.

Continuing care is also where we need to do some work. We need to ensure that as our population continues to age, there is a wide range of services that provides care according to community needs, from home care to full-time care and supervision. We need to ensure our family members receive the best care and live safely, with their dignity preserved.

We have read recent reports concerning Copper Ridge Place and alleged assaults on residents there. I will be raising this question in Question Period. My colleague, the Member for Southern Lakes, has also been talking to family members and to the minister. I am looking forward to hearing how this government intends to remedy this situation. I'm hoping to hear more about staffing levels, security for residents and more oversight that families desire for their family members.

The minister initially dismissed legislation as necessary to improve continuing care, but I hope more research from other

jurisdictions and the discussion about improving the current situation will proceed. We want the safest and best for those in our care. The status quo will not do.

I am pleased to see — you keep tricking me here — I am pleased to see childcare mentioned in the throne speech. The Official Opposition will be challenging the government to ensure that changes to childcare lead to positive outcomes. Childcare can take up much of a family's income. Yukon's childcare operators have an extremely important task of caring for and educating our children. They need to be supported with appropriate resources to carry on with their excellent work. We heard, during the election, concerns raised that childcare workers need greater access to training and better wages that would enable them to make a career out of caring for our children. The NDP Official Opposition believes all Yukoners should have access to basic childcare services appropriate to their needs and not based solely on what they can pay for. We support the delivery of childcare services for Yukon families though both not for profit and small, private operators with a range of programs. The NDP will be watching to see that the government ensures programming meets the needs of all Yukon parents who require childcare services; proceeds with a review of the childcare subsidy to ensure it is meeting families' needs; supports flexible training options and provides incentives so that workers can upgrade their skills and promotes rigorous health, safety and program standards.

My special interest, or passion, is for the individual with disabilities. I previously worked in this field for 19 years in the Yukon, before becoming a small business owner. People First Society of Yukon spoke eloquently during the campaign about appropriate housing, employment and individual choices. When we plan our projects, like supportive housing, we need to ensure it is done through consultation with groups like People First, the Yukon Association of Community Living and the Yukon Council on Disability. We need to be talking to families who work hard to ensure their adult children are included in our communities. We need to be mindful of the Canada and UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that Canada signed in March 2010.

I am pleased to hear the government will continue to support families with children who have disabilities and ensure proper resources are available. We have paid a lot of attention and provided good services to families with children. This is good. Their needs are often greater and appropriate support is required, but we seem to have forgotten that many of these children remain in the family home long after becoming adults. They continue to have the same ongoing needs, and sometimes new ones, as adults. We need to build on continued support to families caring for their adult children, whether through respite, tax breaks or other programming options.

I also believe that adults with disabilities need adequate income supports. It's not appropriate that many are restricted by the current social assistance regulations and rules. It's not appropriate that they need to fill out their forms and wait for their monthly cheque, as do all other social assistance recipients. Social assistance was never meant as a lifelong financial support program. For many individuals who are unable to maintain

full- or even part-time work, they end up living in legislated poverty. We can do better.

There are many samples in other jurisdictions to look at and adapt for our citizens. I would like to see this government consider an assured income or pension that is more appropriate to this population.

Mr. Speaker, I want to switch gears here and talk about our economy. The Yukon is in a very fortunate place right now with commodity prices at an all-time high. The Yukon Party government has staked their political card to expanding mines and exploration. As the NDP Official Opposition critic for Economic Development, we will be watching how this government manages our mineral wealth for the benefit of all Yukoners. How are we maximizing benefits? How are we ensuring that Yukoners have access to training and mining jobs and that Yukon businesses benefit as suppliers to this growing industry? It's disheartening to see food and supplies being trucked up or flown in from businesses outside of the Yukon. Small business, Mr. Speaker — or tiny business, as I refer to mine — is a major engine in our economy, yet I see no bold signals to this sector in the throne speech. I see little in the way of a plan to really diversify our economy and be creative about tackling unemployment in rural Yukon.

I would also like to speak of another critic role, which is the Public Service Commission. Over the course of this sitting of the 33rd Legislative Assembly, I will be challenging this government to be a good employer. There seems to be — and I heard on the doorstep — persistent and growing insecurity in our public service. On one hand, the Yukon government employs many workers as casuals or auxiliaries on call. Some of these workers remain in these positions for long periods of time — and I'm talking years. These individuals do not earn the same benefits as other workers, even though they may be performing the same task as their co-worker next to them. We understand the need for flexible arrangements in the public service, but when it is a practiced wide-scale and over long periods of time, there's a need to do better.

As critic, I will be scrutinizing the government's direction on hiring. Staff jobs in our hospitals or continuing care facilities should be permanent, unless there is a compelling reason to not do so. I also heard from public servants on the doorstep during the campaign — many shared their concerns with regard to programming and practices, but felt they had no way of bringing their concerns forward safely.

We spoke of this earlier today and I look forward to the Premier's letter inviting us to a committee to look at whistleblower protection. I heard it on the doorstep; people want this.

I would also like to speak about the Ombudsman and the Information and Privacy Commissioner, an office that plays a critical advocacy and watchdog role in the interaction between Yukoners and their government. The Office of the Ombudsman and the Information and Privacy Commissioner is seeing increased numbers of requests since it was created, but has not seen these positions become full time. We all recognize the work is more than part time. If we expect continuation of their excellent services, we need to debate adequate resources to this vital service.

In conclusion, I look forward to working with all members in this House. Though on different sides on some issues, I know we all want to do our best to advance Yukon's interests and represent our constituents. We are all working for all Yukoners. We might differ on how we get there, but we must listen respectively, ask the hard questions and look for ways to work together to produce the best direction and road map for Yukon, for today and for our future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Graham: It is indeed good to be back in the Legislature. It has been a long time and I've really noticed how some things have changed and some things have remained the same.

During my first term here some 30 years ago, I was the youngest MLA, one of the youngest Executive Council members ever, and now it appears, as has been so rudely pointed out by my friend opposite, I could very possibly be the oldest. I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, if that means that I am going to be expected to dispense wisdom, understanding and patience, we may all have a great problem because I know for a fact I lack at least two of these attributes, possibly all three.

In 1978, we were the first government elected under the party system, and the leader of the Conservative Party at that time was the grandmother of a current MLA. Another MLA here today hadn't even been born when I was first elected and sat in the Legislature, and another current MLA is the son-in-law of a person who sat with me in that Legislature.

It's also interesting to see across the floor a member I knew as a kindergarten student, who was beginning French immersion at the same time and in the same kindergarten class as my daughter some 30 years ago.

It's also a pleasure to have served with the Member for Riverdale South on Whitehorse City Council. I remember her as an intelligent, capable person, whose judgment I know came into question when I learned what political party she intended to run for in the past election. I've come to since understand her reasons. I don't necessarily agree with them, but I at least understand her reasons and I look forward — if she's still speaking to me after this — to working with her, and indeed all members opposite in the coming years.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity to thank Porter Creek North for showing their confidence in me in electing me in the recent election, and I also should thank the other candidates who ran against me for running an excellent campaign. We avoided personalities and stuck to policies, and it was a very nice thing to see.

I should also perhaps tell you a little about the riding of Porter Creek North, or as I refer to it, Porter Creek North and Crestview. Crestview is a very important part of the Porter Creek North riding. In fact, the Porter Creek North riding also encompasses almost all of the riding that I represented in 1970-something as Porter Creek West as it represents the western part of Porter Creek. In that area, we have not only residential — we have everything from trailer courts to executive homes on acreages — but we also have a retail area, a commercial

area and two industrial areas within the Porter Creek riding. There's an eclectic group of residents in that riding.

I would also really like to thank my wife for allowing me to run in this election, as we both retired last summer just before the election and were looking forward to spending some time together, doing all the things we hadn't managed to do in the 40-odd years we've been married.

I'm not exactly sure if she shares my disappointment in me being elected, because I really have noticed in the last few weeks that she seems to be extremely happy in her retirement and really hasn't missed me at all since I've been here. I don't know if there's a message in that or not. I also think I will have to apologize to my grandson, Levi, when he's old enough to understand, at least, why his grandpa won't be home to babysit him, as I promised when he was born.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have a confession to make: I'm a Conservative — an unrepentant Conservative. I feel much better having got that off my chest.

I'm a Conservative. I was a Conservative in 1978 when I first ran for the Legislature and, despite temporary lapses from time to time, I'm still a Conservative to this day. I believe that people who earn a paycheque are the people best equipped to decide where their hard-earned money should be spent. Government should not be in the business of extracting even more of their earnings in the form of higher taxes. I believe that fewer rules in the form of legislation and regulation is a good thing. I believe in the freedom of the individual and that people are responsible for their own actions and should be held accountable for those same actions.

Finally, I believe that government should be financially responsible to all taxpayers. I'm a Conservative, but not only do I have a strong sense of fiscal responsibility, I have a similar sense of our collective social responsibility to the vulnerable people in our society. In fact, this sense of social responsibility was one of the factors in my decision to run for the Yukon Party in the recent election. The Yukon Party platform — and this point was reiterated in the throne speech — included a document called *A Better Quality of Life* and made mention of supporting actions such as social inclusion and development of a wellness strategy; addictions treatment and shelter for the vulnerable folks in our society; support for sustainable, patient-centred quality health care; family violence prevention and education; continuing care programs for our aging population; and, accessible, safe services for persons — not so much with disabilities, but as I like to think of them — with different abilities. One of the things I found by growing up with a person with a so-called “disability”, is that they had an amazing ability to teach me new lessons almost every day. I prefer to think of him not as a person with a disability, but he had a different ability.

In furthering these election promises, we are currently in the process of bringing forward the social inclusion and poverty reduction strategy. The foundation of this strategy is based on major reports that were completed during the last two years, including the 2010 Whitehorse housing strategy study and *Dimensions of Social Inclusion and Exclusion in Yukon 2010*,

among others. This strategy has been a long time in development.

It's very important to get the strategy right the first time and it's also very important that we consult at each stage of the strategy, as it will set a long-term vision for Yukon. As well, it will set short-term goals that focus on improving the lives of people experiencing social exclusion and poverty today, reducing the numbers and preventing further social exclusion and poverty in the future. This strategy is currently on track for a release date in the summer or fall of 2012, if no further delays are experienced.

This government is committed to consultation and partnerships with a variety of non-government organizations in the territory that do so many wonderful and necessary things on behalf of all of their clients. This strategy is only one example of the many issues that we have under consideration in consultation with these NGOs. Having said that, we can't lose sight of the tremendous work and dedication our employees in the Department of Health and Social Services display on a daily basis on behalf of all Yukoners who come into contact with the department. In the short time I have been in this portfolio, I've been impressed, first, by the management group that I've met, and then, on a daily basis when I visit a relative in one of the continuing care facilities, I am impressed by the dedication and hard work displayed by employees in our continuing care facilities. I would like to say thanks to all those employees. I think it's very important that we consider what they're doing and how we would respond ourselves, had we been put in a place like that.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, my recent background is in municipal politics, and I'd like to take a few moments to make a few comments with respect to municipal issues and how we in this Legislature can support and encourage municipal councils in their deliberations. As those of us in this Legislature who have spent time on municipal councils know, municipal politics is the political arena closest to the voters of this territory. Municipal politicians hear from the residents on a weekly basis at council meetings. They are the only level of government that allows people to address the elected representatives at each of their meetings.

In fact, at committee meetings, residents may state their opinion on every single issue facing council at those meetings and, at each meeting, they can come back and reiterate their point again and again and again. Each time the issue appears on a council agenda, they can come back and participate in the debate. No other level of government allows that kind of direct participation in the decision-making process.

Often I found, too, that municipal government leads all others in taking on issues impacting their citizens. For example, yesterday the Leader of the Official Opposition made mention of the *Smoke-Free Places Act* being passed in this Legislature. While that's a very important piece of legislation — and I'm not trying to take away from that accomplishment — but I'd like to point out that several years prior to that, the City of Whitehorse also passed legislation very similar to the *Smoke-free Places Act* in the face of tremendous opposition. I can remember that the gallery was packed week after week after

week as we discussed that particular piece of legislation. I remember one evening one gentleman walked into the council chambers and he packed his ears and his nostrils with unlit — thankfully — cigarettes, to make a point and was cheered wildly by those in attendance. It was a debate that is truly to be remembered. I think in part that debate and the subsequent enactment of that legislation by the City of Whitehorse made the *Smoke-free Places Act* so easy to pass through this Legislature.

Other issues that municipal governments have led the way on are sustainable development, recycling, composting — they're all municipal initiatives that have led other levels of government to do the right thing for their citizens. I make these comments in order to impress upon members the importance of respecting legislative authority. This government has taken the position that municipal governments have a responsibility under the *Municipal Act* to perform certain tasks, and they should be allowed to follow through those responsibilities without interferences from other levels of government, as long as they don't break the law and as long as they remain solvent. My personal experience during this past campaign was that some opposition members were very quick to become involved in municipal affairs that were more appropriately left to the municipality. In the same way, members of this Legislature would not appreciate interference from Ottawa in affairs that were the responsibility of the Yukon government. So should members of this Legislature not interfere in issues that are municipal responsibilities. During the last election campaign, I personally witnessed this attitude, I guess it is — or maybe it's just people didn't understand what they were doing.

When six members of the two parties opposite and myself were invited — I wasn't invited; I just happened to show up at a press conference at McIntyre Creek with respect to Porter Creek D. I heard members — all six members, in fact — of the other two political parties state categorically that they would not allow that development to go ahead if they became the Government of Yukon. I thought that attitude was absolutely incorrect. It's a municipal responsibility; we have an agreement with the City of Whitehorse, whereby they take the lead on planning issues, and that should have been left to them.

I'm not trying to say that members opposite shouldn't represent their constituents in municipal affairs, but it should be done in a respectful way and it shouldn't be done at a press conference, saying that if we become the government, we won't allow this to go ahead, and that's that. To me, that is not a good attitude, and I sincerely hope it doesn't represent the current attitude of members opposite, and I don't think it does.

When I think about who truly represents the voters in the territory, I'm reminded of the fact — and was just recently — that in the past municipal election, the leading candidate — the leading vote-getter — in municipal council, received more votes than all six members of the Official Opposition combined. In fact, that person received more votes than all the members here on the front bench as well. So that leads one, Mr. Speaker, to wonder who truly represents the electorate. I am all for respecting boundaries, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly hope that everyone in this House does.

In closing, it's often said that every person learns from their mistakes. Well, I don't know if I truly agree with that comment, because if that were true in my case, I would be a genius. I know that many folks in the City of Whitehorse don't believe this, but I did make my share of mistakes during my time in elected office, and I'll probably continue to make the odd one here. So I hope the members opposite will bear with me and make every effort to assist me whenever possible to make good decisions, to make sure that I have the best advice possible, to make only good decisions in the coming years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has indeed been a pleasure.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, that is a hard act to follow, but I'll do my best.

I would like to thank my family and my friends. Their confidence and belief in me was inspiring. I would like to thank all the people in my riding with whom I spoke, who shared with me stories, concerns, triumphs and worries. I come into this House with you in mind. I feel the responsibility and the privilege of being your voice.

My journey here started more than 15 years ago. In my late teens and early 20s, I felt that I had no voice — that my opinions and experiences had no place in politics. I felt that government was a self-contained, unapproachable and intimidating machine. At that same time, I was lucky enough to find myself in the folds of the Hardy family, who patiently guided my political awakening. We had many boisterous conversations around the kitchen island drinking tea. I was walking through life with my eyes wide shut. I've always had the heart and the passion to do what was right, but up to that point I had no idea how that could be incorporated into politics.

I stand before you with my eyes wide open, knowing that heart, compassion, humility, integrity, humanity and drive all belong in the Legislature. I believe that these are qualities that all elected representatives should have. We are all aware of the problems around us: the obstacles we face in defining "home" and the pressures to move forward quickly without much forethought. We have reached that critical moment where we as Yukoners need to define our image of home and the expectations that we as politicians are responsible to enact that vision. Home doesn't stop at the front door or at the end of your block or road. Home extends from south of Watson Lake to Herschel Island, from Macmillan Pass to Beaver Creek.

Home is clean water; home is affordable housing; home is job security; home is an inclusive community. My image of home is wild, with strong environmental protection, affordable housing and careful economic planning into the future.

[Member spoke in French. Text unavailable.]

I sought the nomination in Takhini-Kopper King because of my love of McIntyre Creek. As a child, I spent countless days playing in the pools in the mud. As a teenager, I discovered the treasures of old classic cars buried in the hillside. As an adult, I spent hours watching the ravens play in the crosswinds off the bluffs. I used to have a favourite bike trail that left my parents' house in Porter Creek and brought me down the hill toward the woods and the river, always with a stop at

the ravens. I rode that route for the final time last summer and cried the entire way.

There are many sites of conflict around land use in the territory. Look at McIntyre Creek and all the competing claims by recreational users, wildlife enthusiasts, different levels of government and, of course, Yukon College. The college is in my riding.

Just the other day, the college chancellor was on the radio advocating that the college should receive a large portion of the area as their endowment lands as they move toward a potential university. This situation is a mess. The gallery at city council was packed last night with citizens who think that the best plan is not being proposed for this unique wildlife area. Land use planning is the process whereby our views, our values and our dreams for the future are reflected into decisions. The McIntyre Creek situation highlights the need for land use planning — for that to happen and how we need to do it in an expeditious manner.

If we had a discussion two years ago about FASD and addictions, I would have been at a loss for words. After two years of working in corrections, I have seen our failure to support the most vulnerable members of our society. The women I worked with in corrections were amazing. They had overcome incredible odds and were often struggling with addictions. We brought them into a safe environment, told them they were worthy of a second chance, and told them that they could choose the life they want. But when their time was up and it was time for them to leave the Correctional Centre, they would end up back in the same situations that they came from. Sadly, these women don't qualify for existing programs. They get left out in the cold. That needs to change. We need a supportive, safe environment similar to the Yukon Adult Resource Centre to help these women become the successful members of our community I know they can be.

I'm pleased to have heard in the Speech from the Throne the commitments to developing a youth shelter, to implementing second-stage housing for Kaushee's Place and to working with the Salvation Army on expanding the available space at the shelter.

I worry that these commitments are just words, not a call to action. Kaushee's has been waiting for more than two years for concrete development. The youth organizations have said for years that there needs to be an adequate shelter to suit the special needs of youth.

I worry that we're putting the onus of responsibility of housing and caring for the hard-to-house in the lap of the Salvation Army, that we're passing the buck, so to speak. What happened to the proposal put forward by the Northern City Supportive Housing Coalition, an idea document that addressed our current crisis? This group of eight non-governmental organizations wrote and promoted a detailed proposal and business plan. Their objectives were to provide the homeless population in the downtown core of Whitehorse with safe, affordable housing. They incorporated a programming aspect to help alleviate the adverse effects of mental illness and substance abuse. The group had taken on the concept of social inclusion and applied it with compassion and practicality.

This isn't a new idea. Housing First models have been implemented elsewhere and have proven successful in other jurisdictions. The Northern City Supportive Housing Coalition was proposing a concrete solution to the complex problems this government faces with the hard-to-house. It would mean a reduction in emergency room use, ambulance calls and RCMP and court involvement. All of this would have had a very positive effect on our ever-expanding budgets in both Justice and Health and Social Services.

As the NDP Official Opposition critic for the Yukon Housing Corporation, I am very interested in what the government has said about housing in their throne speech. I suppose it's good that housing is the first issue raised in the throne speech; I just wish that tangible solutions were given.

The Yukon Party says prosperous times are here and they describe the housing crisis as a pressing challenge. It's more than just a challenge for those struggling to pay the rent or forced to live in substandard hotel units; it's a grim existence, a hard reality. These Yukoners deserve more from their government. The Yukon Party hand-picks a few housing projects they will support and dismisses others without ever providing the rationale for their choices. They said they're acting on the housing crisis as they released a request for expressions of interest. How does a request for expressions of interest meet that immediate need? Developers are being asked to submit a proposal for land development that would have them acting as landlords to affordable housing units, but not until January of 2013. The onus of responsibility is being passed yet again. This government lacks a vision, a clear housing strategy, aside from identifying the private sector in terms of increasing the supply of affordable housing.

We in the Official Opposition want to see a housing strategy. We need to be strategic and focused to address the many housing needs. A housing strategy would address the lack of affordable rental housing and plot a course to correct the situation. A housing strategy would look at the high cost of home ownership and issues Yukoners face around financing their mortgages. A housing strategy would look at the solutions to care for the hard-to-house population. We have a lot of reports on this issue. We asked Dr. Beaton and Chief Allen to study how we treat acutely intoxicated persons at risk.

They presented their report, the Beaton and Allen report. Why are they not following it? Why isn't the Beaton and Allen report a major plank in a comprehensive housing strategy?

A housing strategy would look at our social housing needs, our social housing stock and waiting lists. A housing strategy would look at existing government facilities that sit empty and put them into emergency use. A housing strategy would look at the rather shoddy housing conditions in the territory and look at whether our building code or other regulatory frameworks are up to snuff in terms of our needs for well-built, healthy buildings.

A housing strategy would look at improvement to consumer protection so that new home buyers or those who pay for substantial renovations can have reasonable guarantees of the quality of that construction. A housing strategy would place updating the *Landlord and Tenant Act* high on the list of priori-

ties. We would be crafting a residential tenancy act, which would clearly spell out rights and responsibilities for both landlords and tenants.

There was nothing in the throne speech about implementing the *Landlord and Tenant Act* recommendations, even though it was in the platform. We hope the government will retain this pledge. The work on the *Landlord and Tenant Act* has been done and now we need to act on those recommendations sooner rather than later.

In the absence of a housing strategy, the government repeats a litany of projects from their platform, and I'm not saying they're not welcomed — student housing and the Mayo seniors complex are just a few. There are some head-scratchers: is the announcement we're working with the Salvation Army a response to the Beaton and Allen report? Project announcements aren't a substitute for vision.

As Environment critic for the Official Opposition, I was intrigued by an item in the throne speech dealing with Yukon Energy Corporation's controversial waste-energy concept for electrical generation. The Yukon government has a goal of zero waste by 2040, an admirable and achievable goal. Currently we remove 19 percent of our waste through composting and recycling. We could easily bring that up to 76 percent if we made it easier for businesses, apartments and construction sites to separate their waste before pickup so that it wouldn't be land filled. Yukon Energy is proposing to build the waste-energy facility in Whitehorse. Given our lack of diversion, regulations, programs and infrastructure, waste energy could become the Yukon's primary waste-management option. Other communities only begin talking about waste-energy options once they have maximized recycling and composting and still have large volumes of residuals left over. These communities have larger populations than the entire Yukon.

As a waste-management option, recycling has proven to be more cost effective than waste energy. Yukon Energy is throwing hundreds of thousands of dollars on a waste-energy scheme which, according to all the research, would only produce a fraction of the energy that we need — and at what cost? Dioxins and furans, both poisons, are created in the cooling process following the burning of ordinary paper and plastic. These poisons are dangerous at extremely low levels and modern day technology does a poor job of reducing these emissions into the atmosphere. The proposed locations of Riverdale and downtown are both highly populated and sit in the basin. We have all seen what happens to wood smoke in the winter. How would this be different?

What happens when we don't have enough garbage to burn? We turn to biomass, or, in plain English, wood. A renewable resource is described as any resource that can regenerate itself naturally over time. The growing time in the Yukon for a forest far exceeds the time required for that same forest growth in the south. Should it still be considered renewable if it takes more than a human generation for it to reach maturity? Yukon is in the midst of a major challenge as we debate how we can meet increasing residential and anticipated industrial demand. We need to select our energy path carefully and we need to really scrutinize this waste-for-energy scheme. The

Yukon public can trust the NDP to be questioning and scrutinizing new, controversial energy schemes.

One of my critic areas within the Official Opposition is as youth critic, looking at the Youth Directorate, talking to youth and various youth organizations and raising their issues and concerns. We're lucky in the Yukon to have excellent youth organizations that provide education, recreation, positive environments and various supports for youth. Bringing Youth Toward Equality, Youth of Today Society, Boys and Girls Club of Whitehorse, le Comité Espoir Jeunesse — these organizations deserve stable funding to do their work. I feel it's time to review whether they are adequately resourced.

The NDP caucus believes in improving our democracy in ensuring that affected groups participate in the decision-making. Youth are not just our future. They are part of our here and now and need to be part of our economy, our political life and our plans.

That is why we continue to push for representative youth council to involve youth and their organizations and representatives to identify priorities for government action. I've gone into some negatives of what I heard and didn't hear in the throne speech, but I want to end with a highlight — something I heard that I believe is really positive, and I quote: "My government remains committed to practising open, accountable, fiscally responsible government and to working constructively with all members of the House to improve the operation of its committees and the proceedings of the Legislature." I like that. We are pleased to hear this pledge from the government. We look forward to working with them on improving how our Legislature functions in terms of making it more accountable and accessible to the public, where questions aren't designed to embarrass and answers are forthright and honest. We look forward to working in an environment where mutual respect and a desire to put the interest of the people comes first, before ego and posturing, where we, as elected officials, will lead by example, understanding that although we represent our views, we all represent the people of the Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise here in response to the throne speech. I'd like to begin first and foremost by thanking my constituents for re-electing me for a third term.

I look forward to continuing to work with them over the next five years. It has been an honour and a pleasure to serve them for the past nine.

I would also like to begin by thanking the many people who have helped me to get here and who have helped me throughout the years, including all of my current and past constituents, who voted for me during the past nine years, and of course the people who have taken time from their lives to dedicate their time and effort and make contributions to my re-election. It's very much appreciated, particularly those who took significant amounts of time to help me in this last election campaign.

I'd like to also begin by thanking my family for their support, help and advice over the past nine years and before. I'd like to especially thank my parents and my sister Jeanine.

Without her efforts this past year — well, she put a tremendous amount of time and effort into assisting me this year, which I very much appreciate.

I would also like to thank the many staff who have helped me over the years, and I include with that both the staff of the political offices and the staff of departments.

Although there are too many who have put in tremendous efforts for me to name everyone individually, I'd like to give a special thank you to the four people who have served me as executive assistants during that time and whose advice and help have been vital to me during that time period, those being Warren, Val, Rosie, and a fourth, whose name I'm pleased to not be permitted to speak since he's now the MLA for Copperbelt North and the Minister of Environment and Economic Development. I very much appreciate the assistance of all of them throughout the years.

In talking to the throne speech, I would like to highlight a few other areas that are priorities for my constituents that I committed to working on. Again, I could go on at great length about the issues that are important to my constituents, but these include improving land planning and the processes around land, which are also a priority for this government; supporting agriculture; continuing to invest in infrastructure, including roads and wells; continuing support for the rural well program; continuing to improve and expand our cell service network and, of course, the other priorities important to my constituents in the territory as a whole, including health care, the education system, justice and the list goes on.

I'd like to set the context in reminding people where we came from. In 2002, the Yukon had experienced seven years of economic recession; the population had been in decline for six consecutive years and the unemployment rate was in the double-digit range for years. I would also note that, at that time, the Member for Whitehorse West and I were the two youngest MLAs. We were the young ones in the crew, and it's a bit of an odd situation to find ourselves here as the old, experienced ones in the Legislature. I suppose it's one of those things where, the more you think you know, the more you have left to learn — at least in my case, not in the case of the Member for Whitehorse West.

I'm looking forward to continuing to —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I try to compliment the Member for Whitehorse West and I'm hearing comments from the northern — or, what shall we say? We'll move on. I see the heckling has started already.

I'm looking forward to continuing to work with staff at the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. I certainly enjoyed serving with them as minister in the past and look forward to continuing in the future.

I would also like to — speaking of those who have provided support over the years — give recognition to the staff of the Legislative Assembly and of *Hansard*. I appreciate the effort they put into not only assisting me but also putting up with me over the years. I look forward to working with them over the next five years as well.

When we were first elected in 2002, Yukon's mining industry was in a much different situation than it is today. At that point in time, the expenditures on mining exploration were \$6.9 million in the year that we took office. Of course, we see a very dramatic change today with mining exploration in excess of \$300 million for this year. That certainly provides economic benefit, but we also recognize that the economic growth and prosperous economy create challenges. This includes the need to ensure that we are taking appropriate action to manage the effects of that economic activity on the environment, on wildlife, and on other affected uses and users.

It also includes other pressures related to housing and land availability — including the availability of housing. I remind members opposite who express concern about the shortage of housing and the pressures in that area that if they take a look at the statistics and the very dramatic growth in the population of the Yukon in recent years, it's not something that any one had precisely anticipated at that level. There has been — under the Yukon Party — a significant growth in the availability of housing, including an increase of some 40 percent in the availability of Yukon housing stock through the Yukon Housing Corporation.

What also must be pointed out is that under the NDP and Liberal governments we had a very different type of housing crisis. There was not a shortage of available housing; there was a shortage of buyers for that housing and housing prices were in dramatic decline. So I do want to emphasize to members — not to diminish the issues that we face today — that it is far better to have the problems associated with a strong economy than to have the problems associated with a declining and in fact, at that point, a collapsing economy, where there are no jobs for your friends, your family, your communities and those whom you care about.

That was the situation we were in in 2002. So, again, we do recognize the need to take additional steps. That is why expanding the availability of housing, including addressing the major element needed to improve the availability of housing; that being availability of lots and land is a priority for this government. This was outlined in the throne speech and outlined in our platform under the heading of "Providing Land for all Yukoners".

Now, one thing that I also will point out to new members of the House is that there has been the expression by some that perhaps we should have put something in the throne speech other than what we promised in the election campaign. I would note and remind those who may not be aware that, in fact, the throne speech is supposed to be the high-level vision for government going forward and, in my view, it should be exactly what a party promises to the public in the election campaign. That is exactly what is reflected here. We are committed to implementing our election platform.

I know that members of this House from different parties have very passionate viewpoints and, in some areas, viewpoints that differ from our own, but they should also recognize that, while we do want to work with them, we are committed to implementing our election platform and are not going to implement their election platforms.

I would also like to mention one specific concern raised by the member who spoke before me, the Member for McIntyre-Takhini. I believe she expressed the concern of using recyclables for energy projects. I would emphasize that, while the Yukon Energy Corporation has done some work considering that, as the Premier has made clear and I want to make clear today, burning of recyclables for energy is not something this government supports. We believe that recyclables are best put into recycling programs.

We began the election campaign by committing to something that is important to Yukon citizens, that being a commitment to no tax increases. We are committed to continuing the economic trend that has led to surpluses in budgets; we're committed to continuing the availability to invest in key infrastructure and to laying out a multi-year capital plan, which allows the government to design projects carefully while allowing Yukon contractors to plan ahead for major work projects, thereby ensuring continued, steady economic growth.

We are also committed to maintaining key financial agreements with Ottawa, such as the recently re-secured territorial health system sustainability initiative, and to pursuing renegotiations, including the Northern Health Accord funding when that comes up.

I'd also like to mention the success that the Premier had in late summer in fulfilling one of the commitments he made in the leadership campaign, that of working with the federal government to achieve their agreement for an increase in the resource revenue cap. I'm pleased that Prime Minister Harper did announce that the federal government will raise that to roughly \$40 million, compared to the current level it sits at under the devolution transfer agreement. It's a rather dramatic increase to see our cap go up from \$3 million, for example, for revenues for minerals, to a new level of \$40 million.

We are also committed to continuing to work with the federal government and work with provinces and with territories in as cooperative a manner as we can. That has been an emphasis of the Yukon Party since 2002 and will continue to be going forward. We will not always reach agreement with those governments, but are committed to engaging with them as positively as we can, reaching agreement where we can and working together on issues of mutual interest to our citizens.

In providing the housing that I referred to — our commitment to providing more housing or increasing the amount available to Yukoners — one part of it includes a commitment to making more land available. That includes taking on new processes for disposing of land to the private sector and making it available. That entails titling a piece of land, Lot 262, between Range Road and Mountainview Drive, and we have asked for expressions and proposals related to the development of rental accommodations. We will be looking on a case-by-case basis at using this type of model in the future, whereby we raise title on pieces of Crown land, make it available to the private sector, but in some cases set the conditions and end use.

We are also committed to providing more housing units to low-income Yukoners, including building a youth shelter in Whitehorse; constructing a new seniors complex in Mayo; replacing McDonald Lodge in Dawson City with a new facility

that will be attached to the new Dawson City hospital; providing \$4.5 million for second-stage housing for Kaushee's Place in Whitehorse; providing \$2 million for Options for Independence to expand its current complex for adults with FASD from six units to 24 units; providing \$2.57 million for a new seniors Abbeyfield complex in Whitehorse; \$2.2 million for Takhini duplexes; \$5.9 million for double-wide trailer replacements and making land available to Yukon College to construct new student residences.

Another area I'd like to talk about is the importance of continuing to support families who are caring for seniors and children with disabilities. One of the commitments we made in the election and have reaffirmed in the throne speech is our commitment to provide new supports for people looking after sick or disabled family members, including adults and seniors needing extra care and children with severe disabilities.

We recognize that families caring for a parent, grandparent or child with disabilities face many challenges and additional costs to the household budget. We are committed to continuing to help them provide their loved ones with the care they need and to build on the supports that we have previously implemented.

Our new commitments include establishing a new caregiver tax credit for families caring for a relative with disability, including seniors and adults and children with severe disabilities. We are also committed to providing additional funding for therapies, as well as money for specialized equipment ramps and lifts to assist disabled children and expand family supports through the children with disabilities program. I'd like to mention that program, and highlight it, as well, as a program I was pleased, as the then Minister of Health and Social Services, to be able to work with families who were involved, to work with the department, and to develop and implement a program that was aimed at assisting children with disabilities, including autism, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy and Down syndrome. I'd also like to recognize the work that the Member for Porter Creek South put into that as the then president of Autism Yukon and both the passion and dedication that he brought to the table, as well as other parents and families who put their time into this and the specialists and therapists who provided their efforts and their work into developing and ultimately implementing that program.

Another area that is very important within the Yukon Party's election platform, within our throne speech and, of course, important to my constituents and, really, people in each and every riding in the territory, is improving access to health care. In 2006, I had the pleasure and honour of launching as the then Minister of Health and Social Services our health human resource strategy to attract new doctors and nurses to the territory. That strategy was effective. We also committed in the election campaign to increasing the support for that strategy through the development of a new health human resource strategy. That includes doubling the family physician incentive program to \$100,000 over five years for physicians who have recently graduated in exchange for working in the Yukon — that, of course, is for recent graduates of a Canadian medical institution — and creating a new family physician recruitment

incentive to help medical clinics with the cost of recruiting and supporting new doctors. Under that incentive, family practices will receive \$20,000 per new doctor in the first year and an additional \$40,000 if the doctor completes five years of service in the Yukon.

That of course is to create an incentive to get them more involved in the recruitment process and recognize the costs that are placed upon a medical clinic to recruit and support those new doctors, and it also recognizes the importance of the role they play in that process.

We have also committed to increasing our successful medical education bursary by 50 percent to \$15,000 per year for Yukon students attending medical school. Again, the medical education bursary was one of the new programs established under the first health and human resource strategy in 2006. The incentive for students who enter medical residency in a Yukon family practice after graduation will be doubled to \$30,000 a year from its previous level.

We have also committed to increasing the nursing education bursary by 50 percent to \$7,500 per year, and to increasing the health profession education bursary by 50 percent to \$7,500 per year for Yukoners training for other health professions. I believe the total number of Yukon students who have been assisted under this program stood at 59 Yukon students as of the fall.

The Minister of Health and Social Services just recently announced the most recent bursaries, which takes the number to roughly 65 or 69 who have currently been assisted through the program. Again, this is a made-in-Yukon program, developed through the work of the Department of Health and Social Services, which has assisted Yukon students and is an important part of training the health care professionals we need to address the needs of the health care system. Through the incentive program, this is an important part of attracting and retaining doctors, particularly family physicians.

Another area we touched on in the election platform was a commitment to continuing to support the hospital and to supporting the needs emerging as a result of their campus review of facilities, which includes the need for facilities for a new MRI machine and the need to begin moving forward with expanding the emergency room. It is an area, through work that has been done to date in the satellite specialist clinic, that has significantly increased the number of Yukoners who are receiving specialist procedures in the territory.

I don't have the numbers in front of me, but the number has dramatically increased over the period of time since we were first elected. It is an area that we have committed to continue to support. If members are interested in the numbers, they will find the numbers referring to the increase in specialist procedures addressed the last time the Hospital Corporation appeared before the House, which I believe was the spring of this year.

Mr. Speaker, there are many areas of the Yukon economy. One thing that we have emphasized in the campaign and will continue to emphasize going forward is the value we place on all of them. We appreciate their role and we believe that every sector of the economy and everyone's livelihood has value, and

that it is the role of the Yukon government to work with all sectors of the economy and all sectors of society to try to ensure that we are supporting all of those sectors of the economy, allowing them to flourish, and that where there are conflicts between those sectors of the economy, we are coming up with solutions in partnership with the people involved to manage those impacts and conflicts as best as possible.

As we have emphasized throughout the election campaign and will continue to emphasize going forward, we believe that, when political debate becomes unnecessarily polarized and politicized, it detracts from the issues that are really important to Yukon citizens and ignores the fact that we believe that most Yukoners actually share common values. I can tell you that over the past nine years and in going to the doorstep in this election campaign, hearing from and working with constituents throughout that time period, I firmly believe that most Yukoners value wilderness beauty and healthy ecosystems, and also want a strong, diversified economy that provides employment for their friends, families and communities.

We are focused on respecting that direction from Yukon citizens, on continuing to support the diversification of the economy, recognizing the value of the mining sector, recognizing that having a strong mining sector is so vital to the Yukon's economic success, and also recognizing the potential for increased development in other areas, including agriculture, tourism, big-game outfitting, the knowledge economy and the creative economy, to name but a few.

Again, I want to emphasize my belief in the importance of these sectors and our commitment to supporting and working with all those sectors of the economy to try to come up with solutions that really foster an environment for success in those areas and allow the private sector and Yukon citizens to take actions to make use of the opportunities — a better way to put it — to develop those areas for their own good and the good of their families and their communities.

We have also committed to putting more support into addictions recovery, including replacing the aging Sarah Steele Building with a larger, more modern facility that provides space and resources to support an after-care program for people coming out of the 28-day program and putting more resources toward youth alcohol and drug programming. Of course, another important part in that is the linkage between addictions issues and mental health.

During my past time as Minister of Health and Social Services, we significantly increased the resources for mental health. There continues to be pressures in those areas, which we recognize. I know that my colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, and staff in his department are working on it. It is also important to recognize what has been done to date, including the development of the secure medical facility at the Yukon hospital in partnership with Yukon Hospital Corporation. The capital cost of that facility was, I believe, roughly \$300,000, but there was a significant increase in operation and maintenance costs related to additional staffing requirements. That amounted to — I believe the total number was roughly \$900,000 in increased annual funding per year.

We have also increased the resources available for mental health services, including going from one psychiatrist to three and increasing the mental health clinicians, including two rural mental health clinicians and a mental health clinician focused on youth. Early intervention for youth psychosis was another program funded under what was then referred to as the territorial health access fund and has since been retitled the “territorial health system sustainability initiative” under its successor agreement.

Those services — mental health services, other counselling services and in some cases, diagnostic services — are also provided through the telehealth network, which is something that the Yukon Party, during my time as Minister of Health — we became the second jurisdiction in Canada, second after Nunavut, to make a telehealth network available in each and every community and within all of our community nursing stations and hospital facilities. That has served as an important tool that allows, in some cases, easier access to services and allows reduced costs, because in some cases, the counseling and dialogue can occur without requiring somebody to travel on the highways from rural Yukon, whether it is the doctor, nurse or other specialist travelling or the patient. There are, of course, costs involved in that, and making more efficient use of those resources is an important benefit of the telehealth network, plus it provides more timely access to care.

The 811 Yukon HealthLine is another area that was established back during my time as Health minister and I’m pleased to see it continue forward. It has provided, again, increased access for Yukoners to health care services and advice in their homes, which I firmly believe is a very good thing — to provide people more access and more information to take control of their health care needs.

Other areas that we have committed to in the throne speech and within the election platform include enhancing our home care program to help seniors stay in their homes longer. We believe that’s what most seniors and elders want. That’s certainly what we tend to hear from people who are facing the potential need for those services. We believe that that is the appropriate thing to do — help people care for themselves, provide increased home care services and provide additional supports, in some cases, for minor home renovations. We’re also committed to continuing to support childcare and early learning, including strengthening the licensed childcare system by helping to address training and retention needs and creating a new parenting and early development resource centre. I would like to credit a member of the childcare community who happens to be a constituent of mine for coming up with that idea and developing it into something she made us aware of. We are pleased to be able to commit to this and look forward to implementing it.

Another area I would like to touch on is implementing of the *Yukon Solid Waste Action Plan*. This is focused on ensuring the creation of a state-of-the-art solid-waste management system to adapt to the changing needs of future generations of Yukon communities. We have also come a long way in making improvements to that disposal of garbage, moving away from open burning of garbage, which is something that was a great

concern for constituents of mine near the Deep Creek dump back when we first got elected. It has also been an issue in communities. Taking that step to reduce those emissions and to reduce effects on communities is something that is very important and I am pleased that additional steps will be taken in that area.

The throne speech commits to — as we committed to in the election — promoting the territory’s economic mainstays, such as mining — both hard rock and placer — supporting tourism, to supporting oil and gas and to providing additional support and economic diversifications in other sectors, including agriculture, arts and culture, film and sound, forestry, wilderness tourism, outfitting and trapping, research and development, knowledge-based industries and value-added manufacturing.

We’re also committed to maintaining the Yukon’s extremely favourable tax environment that promotes investment in the territory and providing access to land, regulatory certainty and the provision of necessary transportation, communications and energy infrastructure. One important part of this is completing the Mayo B hydro project, as well as developing the next stages in our energy strategy, including development of an independent power producer and a net metering policy to provide Yukoners power in the short term.

We have also committed to the development of a natural gas industry. We are committed to supporting the development of the Yukon’s own natural resources and oil and gas, but also recognizing that if the potential that is believed to be there and hoped to be there in areas, including the north Yukon, does not meet the Yukon electrical demand, in the medium term, even the baseload is going to require additional steps.

Natural gas, while not as green of an option as hydro, is certainly preferable to burning diesel. It’s both a cheaper alternative and one that emits less carbon.

An important part of all of this is also putting in place that network that does encourage people, both on a small and larger scale, to invest in alternatives like solar power, wind and hydro, and that is exactly what the net metering policy and independent power producer policy are aimed at doing — encouraging that small-scale investment by adding additional green energy to our electrical system.

Another element committed to within the throne speech and mentioned earlier today, both by my colleague the Minister of Environment, and by my colleague the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, is the Yukon government’s commitment to developing a new water strategy. That strategy is focused on the goals of improving access to safe drinking water for all Yukoners and increasing data collection and information sharing about water resources with the intent of using that to improve data collection to better manage our water resources and planning for current and future water uses.

This is also going to build on the important infrastructure component in the investments that have occurred in the past, such as public water projects, development of wells and, of course, the continued support, which we finished during the election campaign, for a program that is near and dear to me and to my constituents, that being the rural domestic water well

program, which was something that was proposed to me and brought forward as an issue by constituents during the first term I was elected. I'm pleased that it has come into being and has been a very successful program. It has provided a long list of Yukon families with the ability to access assistance in developing that infrastructure, modelled on and similar to the rural electrification program. It is 100 percent cost-recoverable, but it does allow them to invest in that infrastructure at a rate much cheaper than they would ever be able to acquire through the bank, while ensuring that the government money spent on that is secured and 100 percent recoverable.

The water strategy commitments, as I alluded to, to increase our information and data, are an important part of understanding — especially our groundwater resources — understanding the effects on aquifers. We also recognize the need for managing our surface water and ensuring that we have an integrated approach from all involved Yukon government departments, municipalities, First Nations and others involved in the provision of water and whose actions and activities have an effect on water and water supply.

I'd also like to mention the importance of supporting agriculture. In a motion I tabled in this House yesterday, which now sits on the Order Paper, I confirmed the government's commitment to continuing to support the development of the Yukon's agriculture industry and take additional steps aimed at increasing production of Yukon-grown food. A significant percentage — most — of the Yukon agriculture industry is in my riding, but it is also something for which there is a great potential for development within the Yukon as a whole.

There are other sectors of the territory — notably in the Haines Junction area and around McQuesten and in the Dawson area — that have a lot of agricultural potential, but really, it's certainly something that — throughout the Yukon — the ability to grow food, whether on a small scale through a personal garden, or on a larger scale, is an important part of improving access to local food and an important component of improving food security — increasing the supply of locally grown food.

In our election platform, in the throne speech, and in the motion I tabled yesterday, we have recommitted to working with farmers and industry associations, including the Yukon Agricultural Association and Growers of Organic Food Yukon to implement the agriculture multi-year development plan; committed to developing a Yukon-grown food policy aimed at significantly increasing the production and use of locally grown vegetables, meat and food products; supporting the development of agriculture infrastructure that improves food security, facilitates access to market and encourages local production of food; and supporting the development of local markets for Yukon agricultural products through measures, including increasing the annual funding for the Fireweed Community Market and, of course, continuing to work with Yukon farmers to conduct agricultural research.

We believe that's important for food security. We believe it's also good for the economy and diversifying that sector. And with the increasing public desire to have access to locally grown, healthy foods, continuing to develop this sector of the

economy will be an increasingly important part of the Yukon's overall economic picture in going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I believe you are signalling that my time is getting close to an end, so I will have to wrap up my remarks. I look forward to the next five years of continuing to work with my colleagues. Before wrapping up, I would be remiss if I did not thank the Premier for the honour of being appointed as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; minister responsible for Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation and as Government House Leader. I look forward to serving in those capacities and continuing to work with all my colleagues in delivering good government for Yukoners and working with other members of the House on initiatives where we can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. McLeod: I would like all members to help me welcome to the gallery a constituent of mine, Leanna Hougen.

Applause

Mr. Barr: I am honoured to rise today as MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. I am very proud to be a part of this Legislature. I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment. I think that as just a human being, and thinking over my life where I have come from, what I have learned, how it came to be that I am even in the Yukon. It is something that I have learned to trust to be a part of a process of a journey in life. It is something that I didn't always know, something that I took for granted — life, in general. I do remember a time when I thought I was invincible and so did many of my friends I hung around with. I actually remember one of my colleagues across the room high-marking on snow machines many years ago. Now we both ride old work machines.

We were talking about that last week and, you know, another member — you know, as a human being, I sold CDs at his store that he sold — and I might say that they haven't replaced the ones and it's sold out. Maybe you could talk with them.

You know, there's also the Member for Klondike — you know, as a human being, I knew him long before. We played music together. You know, we've seen each other on the highway and helped each other out and we've stopped and talked. Although I've been invited for dinner, I never made it, but I hope to do that, you know. I've got a neighbour — our leader is my neighbour down the lake whom I didn't really know prior to her coming and asking me to be a part of this team. Since then, we've had many conversations and I consider her to be a growing friend of mine as a human being. I've known this lady here, again, through her husband first — a long time ago.

Actually, I first came here to the Yukon to visit his sister — two sisters, actually — and to further my music career as a musician. I remember Ed was working at the place that was the receiving house there — it was the youth assessment centre. We've come a long way in this territory I would like to say. As far as that goes, the youth assessment centre was behind the old liquor store that is now Many Rivers, I think it is now. Back

then, I remember people would be hired out of local liquor establishments to get jobs and we could drink and drive back then. I loved that. I thought that was great when I got here. I do see the forethought of why we do not have that now though, right?

When I speak to the rest of the folks whom I'm honoured to be a part of — and I see our other colleague who has just sat down — I remember when you were Justice minister and acknowledging me that I had done something as far as when I used to volunteer for the justice committee way back many years ago around Carcross.

I extend my thanks to everyone and to those I haven't mentioned, I look forward to getting to know you as a human being, really, so that we can proceed as human beings outside of this — I would like to have coffee and do that kind of thing. I believe that is what has helped me: when I needed it most, people extended themselves as human beings and I was able to work with them and with others to achieve a common goal and that was, I believe, for the good of all the people I came into contact with. As we all have stated here, that's what we want to do. That's why we're here to do that.

People loved me until I could love myself. What can I say? That might sound kind of corny and I never would have thought 10 years ago I would be an elected person, let alone saying something like that publicly. When I was first thinking about doing this, I had been involved with a lot of grassroots work in the territory from the Southern Lakes Justice Committee, back before we had our first circle sentencing.

I was a group home parent for many years — a single male with eight co-ed teens in Riverdale. That was an experience I'll never forget. I might add that back then, there was a parent model. It was a parent model. That's why I was a single parent. Since then, we've evolved to staffed group homes. I've brought up over the years that, as we move forward, sometimes we forget the stuff that works. So, I'd like to call upon the government to maybe reintroduce parent model group homes. What that did was allow me to take some of the guys fishing, some of the folks to watch a movie at the house, invite some friends over, some to sleep over, some to cook their meals, some to go grocery shopping — or I could go to the classroom, and on and on. Today, we don't have those opportunities. What I say is that if we're asking our youth of today to grow, then we have to provide the opportunities for them to grow and be responsible.

As it stands today, we threw out the baby with the bath water is what I'm saying. You might get a year's extension to be in a staffed, supervised group home, but not the opportunity to actually evolve as a responsible young adult in our community who can stay at home by themselves when they're not feeling well. As a parent, I can trust and devolve trust in those relationships, so that we're not just plunked out there as someone who hasn't had a chance to process what it is like to be on your own.

So there are many things that I have seen that are progress. I can't say enough about the staff that work in these fields. Even when I think of corrections today — before I get too far ahead of myself, I haven't thanked the people that put me here. I would be so remiss if I didn't acknowledge my family who

stood by me through thick and thin, who disagreed with me, but loved me enough to tell me the stuff I didn't want to hear. Yet, somehow it sunk through this thick skull and I became teachable. I became willing to listen and learn and then, within my own process, to start to practice some of the things I did not want to do. We may be asked to do that here, because we certainly do have differences of opinions at times. That's why I really pursue this human being thing, because if we can't do that, then we're going to be at loggerheads a lot. They did do that.

I remember the first time I ran as a MLA in 2006 for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. I was not a member of any party. Mr. Hardy, who has since passed, was totally unaware that I might want to become an MLA, let alone for the NDP. I thought of running as an independent. I was just fed up with how things were running in the government, being a grassroots worker and seeing programs such as CAIRS start — which I might add was an aboriginal healing foundation — the \$365 million that put forward would solve all the historic intergenerational land effects of residential school survivors. In five years, that would be done.

I couldn't even get the money off the ground to organize it within the communities in those five years. It had to be extended for two more years and then three more years. CAIRS was funded because it was one of the most innovative social programs in this country, here in the Yukon. It was started by people of the Yukon — 12 people, 12 men — the first one from Atlin. The rest came on board when they started listening in coffee shops and saying, "Hey, this happened to me too." They were the first successful 12 men — and still are today in this country — who ever took part of their compensation dollars and formed CAIRS, to have a storefront for their brothers and sisters to start to raise awareness. Today it is a household word: residential schools. Back then, you couldn't get someone to listen to you about that. These men — I guess I'll be doing a tribute about that later on as I stand here and think about that. I would like to compliment this government on giving them another year's grace.

That foundation I spoke of — as we think of foundations — should be lifelong. However, the government's best thinking of the day, even though they called it — this is the federal government, not territorial; no points there — is it had to be spent. We wanted to just live and work off the interest. First Nations have lots of great ideas. It's another way; if we can listen, we can learn. Now, of course, they received a year's grace. When you walk 20 miles into the bush, you have to walk 20 miles out, if we're thinking about residential schools starting in this territory and in Canada in the late 1800s. The last one closed down in the Yukon in 1975-76. The semblances of them were closed in 2002 in the territories. After not even 10 years, we had better rethink, if we're asking to be respectful and honourable in our decision-making and thinking and working in cooperation.

We may have touched on the survival part of it, but we certainly haven't touched on the intergenerational effects of these schools and supporting First Nations with their agree-

ments and implementing self-government agreements to fulfill their own destiny.

I can be passionate and I can forget where I come from — you know, there I go — forgetting that I had all these volunteers helping me be here. I had Boyd Pyper just cheering me on the whole time. I had people driving out from Whitehorse. I had our own leader taking time out. I had the Member for Copperbelt South taking time on election day, going to Mount Lorne to help me. I think that's amazing — the selflessness of those folks who believed in me.

My sister — I was thinking back on that first time — it was her and I and Eleanor Millard, pretty much — and Drew. He helped out some there.

I was on my crutches with my one-legged dog — he had only three legs. I told Todd I was running for this party, so that happened — and I won't go into that. There I was trying to get up the hill with my sign to stick it in the ground, and Eleanor pulls up and says, "Can I help you?" Then she continued that first time around. It was out of frustration that we weren't listening to each other really. I know that we are all in here for the hearts. So when she stopped and did that, I lost by 38 votes to the honourable member who preceded me from Southern Lakes, which led to me being invited to run in the federal election, where I was last. It wasn't about winning; it was about doing it, just taking part, not sitting on the couch with that famous tee-shirt I used to see, that everyone is an expert from the armchair — that kind of thing. I'm just going to continue to try to do my best.

I want my constituents to know that, in the spirit of Steve Cardiff, who passed away earlier, who I'm sure would have won this riding — I have no doubt. I had no intention of seeking the nomination this time around, but with his tragic passing, I reconsidered that. Yet I have no doubt that, because of his tireless work and endless accountability efforts — I mean, at one point, he was the only guy sitting over there as the Third Party, with all the areas — and I think I have lots to do.

When I was at the door, the constituents of Mount Lorne told me they were going to miss someone of his stature, who would carry on. I can only hope I will be able to fulfill that legacy — the volunteers who helped put me here — to work hard, to be the best I can be. I want to be open-minded and stand my ground on the things I believe in.

I would like to say that Mount Lorne is now also Southern Lakes, so there are four communities there that have their own greatness and their own and their own shortcomings. And I guess my goal would be, as part of being the Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes representative, to unite us as a community. You know that we can work together because of the untapped resources that are in what we call Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, that whole Southern Lakes loop that you might see when you're on the highway. Drive the southern loops, the Southern Lake loop there, and see what we have to offer in that part of the country.

As the member opposite was saying, there has been infrastructure put in place in Carcross. I'd like to say thanks for that. I would like to say that it has been a long time coming and there's a lot more to do. When I think of the per capita of peo-

ple who drive through, that port of entry has the largest number of people who enter the Yukon — the largest number of people enter the Yukon on the road through there in a summer. And then, combine that with the Marsh Lake entry.

When I remember standing and speaking to the government of the day as we are going across for the justice thing, I said, "Look at that house over there — the condition of that house, which is a First Nation house." The first thing you see as you come into Carcross is stapled cardboard to insulate it from the winter — stapled cardboard. I said, "We want to promote tourism in this territory? We should do something about that, don't you think?" Let alone the conditions of, at that time, unemployment in that area, which was about 95 percent. It is still high. In rural communities in the Yukon, it is high. Unemployment is high. Tiny businesses and opportunities, which I realize this throne speech did not address — we need to do more so that these conditions are addressed and not prolonged. When I am listening to the federal Attawapiskat stuff that is going on, you know, there are conditions in our territory that are similar if we look around.

I think of situations with the First Nations that have not finalized their agreements. When I was going door to door, they said that they feel like because they haven't signed, they are being penalized for not having signed. What is with that? Because I want to follow my path, how is it that when you hold the stick, you don't have to listen. I think that's unfair in our relationships. It makes us not want to have faith in each other. There is a lack of trust with each other. I would encourage this, because I am not just a representative of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, I am also asked to represent all Yukoners. I can't forget that. It is easy when we all do what we want to do together, but when we have opposing views, especially with these First Nations — and they have been in this position for a long time — we need to listen and not try to force people to do what we want. We must listen and have compromises.

There are also ports of entry from Alaska and up the Alaska Highway. They have those ports of entry.

I think that it's important, if we're going to move forward, that we recognize that, and how we can work forward and move forward with those final agreements.

As I was saying, in Carcross there's a carving studio now. It's great. We've got the First Nations development corporation, the store and the new First Nations building. We don't have a community centre. We've got one, but it's very old. When I think of the wellness and the lack of — we do have a community centre, sorry, but it's very small and it doesn't accommodate the youth and the community for activities. I mean, the mountain's great to slide on, but we need more than that, because we don't really even have a coffee shop. So when we want a community to be together, one of the good things was that when we did have a coffee shop, you could at least be warm and people could have a coffee. A community needs a heart. I speak this for all the communities — and Whitehorse. We have to have a heart of a community.

When I was in Africa, they had nothing, but they had a tree in the centre of the community and that was the heart of the community. Every community needs a heart. With this infra-

structure, it is ongoing. The waterfront development is ongoing. However, in the planning of it, we have to remember, as with any land use planning, that we have to listen to the people who actually live in that area. They know best. It is kind of residential school all over again and I'm not saying everybody in Carcross went to residential school, but when I go in there as government and say I know what is good for you, I forget to listen when the people say, "No, hold it, I live here all the time". Let's not just build downtown Carcross for the tourists who come there for a couple of months of the year. As one fellow Carcrossian said: "Let's not have a town that's built around legislation." I don't know if you have been there. I understand that our Premier had come there for a meeting and got a little turned around, because we have the only one-way street in the Yukon. With the multitude of stop signs — don't go down here — and all these high curbs — especially with the tourist population who go there, they are going to fall off.

The local planning advisory committee said, "Hey, we don't want this. We don't want it like that. We do want some of this." But at the end of the day, it wasn't what was agreed upon. So now we're starting that refinancing — and thanks for taking down a lot of those signs. I did send a letter to the minister and thanked him for correcting some of these difficulties. We have lots more to do in the springtime because we do live there. The heart of our community, basically — because we can't meet at the stores — we go to the post office. Elders drive up there. We've always done that. If we put a one-way street in a town that is used to passing across, we're never going to see each other to wave hi and say, "How are you doing?" — because we park in the middle of the street. I mean, Carcross is Carcross, right? We stop and talk. I mean, people do that on the highways. Can you imagine now? We can't do that in Carcross. We cannot stop. We have to — "Oh, I wonder who that was?" You know, our heart was where we stood out there in front. I was there with an elder and we parked at the stop sign where we usually stop there, prior to taking down some of the signs, and he's right at the stop sign. I said, "What are you doing? We're at a stop sign." He got out of the car. He said, "Get out." So I got out. We walked into the post office. I said, "You can't park there. There is a stop sign right there." He said, "I'm protesting." I said, "I like this." You know, I might have been charged, right? Good thing I wasn't elected yet. I don't know, but I might be breaking the law in Carcross and, if I get caught, please understand — I'm not trying to be a real troublemaker, but sometimes we have to do some long-term thinking and take care of the folks we're serving.

I don't know if I'm making much sense, but I better move on. One of the things I do know in the whole territory, and that's volunteers, not only in the Southern Lakes, but in all areas of the Yukon, and they're invaluable. If we had to replace the work that volunteers do, we could not cover those costs as a society. We need to honour our volunteers; we need to support them.

There were over 200 people at Kurt Gantner's memorial. He was our fire chief in Tagish and he passed away not that long ago, leaving a fire scene. Some of the comments I heard after that was, when they were there trying to put out the fire,

the Tagish and Carcross trucks were trying to empty their water into a pool because there's no standardization, for example, of the fire departments in the Yukon. We need to standardize and at least give them the proper tools to work with, if we're asking them to do this volunteer work. Volunteer fire departments in the territory are recognized as essential services — they are not. They don't get the \$3 to be on call, as ambulances do, as emergency services.

We need to recognize this. The reason I understand they're not recognized as essential services is because they don't save lives, as an ambulance does. They're saving property. But I want you to know that, if I'm burning in my house — which there isn't enough training at this point in time or numbers of volunteers who can actually legally go in to save me — we need to support them in their training. That's what I'm saying.

Even if they had the proper training — I would think — and they come in and they get me out — or your daughter or your wife — or some of the children we've been talking about with disabilities here — and they couldn't get out, I would want that volunteer — I would think he was pretty essential at that moment. Not pretty. I would think that, my god, if I had something to do about it, and you weren't essential, I'd be doing everything I could to make sure you're an essential service in my life and not taken for granted for the lack of training. That's all around the territory.

I was honoured to be at the emergency services banquet earlier and present an honorary award to Bruce Harder, who is a neighbour, who volunteered, not only on the fire department — emergency rescue, the ambulance — but on everything you could imagine, and if you needed a cord of wood and you didn't have the money, he'd bring you that too. He didn't build a road into where the caribou were living back there in Tagish — not for money. Because he knew that if that road went in there all the caribou that we had been working to save for the last many years — all that work would be gone. That herd is up to nearly 2,000 now. It was down to 350.

We have to think, I believe, as government — and I would like to mention that — oh, there is so much more that I would like to say. I haven't even got to Marsh Lake, Mount Lorne enough, or the work of John Edzerza and Todd Hardy. I am hoping that over the time that we are here together, we can address a lot of the stuff that I wasn't able to bring up here. I apologize to those whom I haven't mentioned — wholeheartedly — that I got going on. I wish I had a couple more hours, because everybody is worth mentioning here. I feel bad that I haven't, and I don't like that. I don't like feeling like that; I really don't. I apologize to those who might read this or be listening, if I haven't mentioned you. It is not because I didn't wish I could have.

I would like to extend, in closing, my appreciation to the Creator for me standing here today. I call him The Great Mystery. Some people I know call him "Her" or "Him" — whichever. I believe it's all the same for all of us. Part of my spiritual learning, with my First Nation ancestry — the reason that I say human beings is that my mother was First Nation, Ojibway and Irish; my father was Scottish and German on my grandmother's side. So growing up, I wasn't liked by — well, I got the brunt

of it everywhere that I went. In grade 6, when I transferred I was circled by all the non-native kids [*member makes whooping sound*]. There must have been 50 or 60 of them. It was an awful experience. I've been within First Nations and it wasn't good sometimes there either. I'm a human being first and we all are. That's why I wanted to say, please, let's all come together as human beings; go for coffee. We were hugging at the Arts Centre, some members across the floor, and I hope to continue to do that. I just am grateful to be standing here today as a human being.

I would like to thank you all.

[*Member spoke in native language. Text unavailable*].

I would like to say mahsi' cho, gūnilschish — and in my Ojibwa ancestry — miigwetch.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you. You're a veteran, and I'm a veteran. I'm sure order and decorum will be the utmost pristine — what the military would like to see.

First of all, I would like to thank my constituents — everybody who voted for me and the people who didn't vote for me — they're all my constituents now. My family — my wife and my two children are very important to me. It's going to be a real honour to serve everyone here.

I would like to congratulate all of the new MLAs and some of the older MLAs coming back for another seat — I think it's really good. Also, our former Yukon Party MLA, Mr. Brewster — I don't know if anybody noticed — put an article in the paper congratulating the Yukon Party on their third consecutive term win. I would like to thank them and also congratulate them, and I would like to thank the Premier and the team for the opportunity to be the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

As most of you probably know, my grandmother was Hilda Watson. She was the first lady to lead a political party in Canada. Growing up, politics was always there. At any family gathering, the family just beat her up like crazy. You have to remember — and I have to bring it across to all members on both sides — that we are going to be inundated lots by family and friends: "Why aren't you doing this? Why aren't you doing that? We sort of signed up for it, but don't take it to heart. They just want all the changes to happen overnight — like we can do it all by ourselves in about two or three minutes — not going to happen.

The Kluane riding — let's talk about that. It's a pretty big riding. For the last 5,000 years, Southern Tutchone people have lived in the shadow of the big mountains out there. They adapted to an ever-changing landscape and hunted, fished, trapped and gathered food in the area. Access to the coast was controlled at the Chilkat Pass by the Tlingit-speaking Chilkats of Alaska, but there was active trading between the two groups, intermarriage, and often clashes.

Europeans first explored over the Chilkoot and into the interior. In the late 1800s, Jack Dalton, an American, who most of you know as an explorer, was in the area from 1894 to 1896 and established a series of trading posts in the interior, and then a pack trail over the Chilkat Pass to where everybody met up

with the Chilkoot Trail to the gold fields. One of his trading posts, Dalton Post, was on the Tatshenshini River, south of present-day Haines Junction.

Dalton's Trail was abandoned with the coming of the White Pass Railway from Skagway to Whitehorse and the riverboats on the Yukon River. In 1903, gold was discovered east of Kluane Lake. More than 2,000 gold-seekers poured into the area. With high hopes, they gathered at Sheep, Bullion, Burwash and Ruby creeks and many mining settlements. Silver City sprang to life, but little gold was found and most moved on — a short-lived gold rush, precipitated by the building of a wagon trail from Whitehorse through to Silver City, and then they would ferry freight across the big lake of Kluane to Burwash. It was the longest wagon road that the Alaska Highway would eventually be built on.

All the stuff I spoke to, basically now I'll speak to as part of my riding. Now, modern day — the Takhini River bridge is where it all starts. My riding starts at the Takhini subdivision, the old horse wrangling spot where Elijah Smith spent many a day. Then there's the Mendenhall subdivision. The local kids there ride more than three hours a day on the school bus. Champagne is the old First Nation community, and it was a trading post along the Dalton Trail. Haines Junction is, of course, the base of the most picturesque St. Elias mountain range and home to Kluane National Park and the world's largest non-polar ice field. Canada's largest mountain, Mount Logan, is 18,551 feet tall and it's still growing a little bit every year. Maybe we'll catch up to the ones over in Asia.

This is also the traditional territory of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. Before we head north, we travel south on the Haines Road, where residents are spread out all the way to the British Columbia border and on down to Haines, Alaska. Travelling north up the Alaska Highway, you arrive at the Yukon's largest lake, Kluane, and the communities of Destruction Bay and Burwash Landing. This is the traditional territory of the Kluane First Nation. It's also the location of the world's largest gold pan. Gotcha over there, Member for Klondike.

Further northwest, you arrive at Beaver Creek, Canada's most westerly community and traditional territory of the White River First Nation, also home to Canada Customs and the only U.S. road link to Alaska.

That's a pretty big riding, and I put a lot of miles on, as did my cohorts in crime, Eric Stinson, Tim Cant and Gerald Dixon. We fought a hard fight out there and we travelled a lot on that highway. We know what the highway is like.

My history a little bit, in my community — as one of the older members in the House here brought up, I am a Conservative and I have also been known a little bit as a redneck. That came across at the door a few times and I brought up to them that I am, because my father is from the farmlands of Manitoba. We all had rednecks because we bent over and we worked hard and had red necks. That was from hard work.

Mr. Speaker, my early life — I started off, worked at an early age; my family built the store. I can remember working in the store. My parents tried to get permission for me to leave school on Fridays. Every Friday was freight day. We got a lot of fight from the school. They were going to — "We're going

to fail you,” and all the rest of this. But I kept good marks in school and I got Fridays off. We found a bit of a balance there, I guess. Working in the store from a tender age, I would drive elders of First Nations and non-First Nations to Kloo Lake. We had a big store van and all the freight had to be shipped everywhere. I can remember going to get my driver’s licence. When I walked in there, the local RCMP officer looked at me and said, “What are you doing here?” I said, “I’m here to get my driver’s licence.” He said, “You don’t have your licence?” I said, “No, sir, I don’t.” He said, “I see you driving that big van. Have you been in an accident?” I said, “No”. He said, “Well, here, I will give your driver’s licence.” That was my test; it was gone. That’s a small town.

I spent many years working in the community with a lot of different stuff. I’m adopted into a First Nation family. I helped the family out when I was young and, when we had the store, I drove a lot of First Nation members around. We worked and co-existed together. I’m very active in the Canadian Rangers and always will be, as with the Legion. I spent many years in the military when I was young, travelled Europe and all over, so I’ve seen a lot. I encourage the youth to get out there and see stuff, but I also look forward to them coming back. I like some of the commitments that our party has here and the government side has for the youth.

My son is working in Grande Prairie. He had an apartment and everything in Haines Junction, but he said, “I’m outta here.” He might come back, but he’s off working.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the boards and committees in the national park in our neck of the woods. I was on the Alsek Renewable Resources Council and I saw a lot when it comes to some of the things I heard from the speaker before me. When we talk about the land and our environment, when we talk about our species of animals and stuff like that, I’ve seen us not be able to — I’ve gone to renewable resources council meetings, where I looked at a 50-minute beautiful statistics presentation on everything about the Porcupine caribou herd. The second statement in there says, “We will not be talking about wolves.” The politics of the day — just because somebody doesn’t like it, and it makes it to the newspaper, we can’t do complete management of our animals.

But we need to look at that. I’m a firm believer in that. We’ve heard from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin about the moose populations and we hear it in my area. We’ve been on a permit hunt there since 1983 and we really need to look at how we do our management. We need to set politics aside and let the locals — the elders and the local councils — come forward with proposals. Just because they screwed everything up in Europe, doesn’t mean we’re going to screw it up. When you talk to your locals and your elders, they will pass on the information that we need.

I also would caution this, because I remember my grandfather telling me — he was on the local improvement district and was the chair — and when Parks Canada came, they said, “Look at Banff and Jasper. You’re just going to be inundated with more people and money and business opportunities.” My grandfather, until the day he passed away, was kicking his butt for not making the Kluane National Park’s border the peak of

the mountain ranges. Thirty-plus years of the park being there, and it was all about that three percent, making sure nobody did anything in there or had any activities. So we have to use caution on what we protect. We have to make sure it works for everybody, and that special interest groups don’t just dictate how we’re going to go about doing something so that everybody is consulted. You go to the communities and the trappers and the people who enjoy the environment, whether they enjoy it through skiing, snowmobiling, four-wheelers, hiking, biking — there is lots of stuff out there.

We are finding it very difficult. I sat on the Kluane Park Management Board, and they brought forward that the demographics of people are down. No longer is it the five nights’ stay in the national park and enjoy the wilderness. It’s not like that, whether you are talking about Cuba or somewhere else, everything has changed. Everybody wants to check their Facebook and tweet while they are up doing this. The world is changing and we have to adapt for it. On the Management Board, we looked at how to go about adapting to this stuff. It was pretty tough with the rules and regulations that we put into place in 1971, when the park came, to go ahead and change some of these. We should be really careful for the future, for our children, that there is going to be opportunity to go in there. Preservation is of number one importance, but for all.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the issues I heard on the campaign trail. We don’t have to talk about the Alaska Highway and permafrost, but I am sure we will in the House in a debate more than once or twice. I heard about brushing. We have an elk herd just between here and Haines Junction. In the wintertime, if you don’t have driving lights, you are not driving the speed limit or you take a chance — so brush and weed control. I heard lots about tourism.

Infrastructure upgrades — I campaigned big on it. We have diesel generators everywhere in Beaver Creek, Burwash and Destruction Bay.

At the lodge I was working at, we put over \$100,000 a year in diesel fuel into it. There’s no recent infrastructure upgrades with power, and we talked about getting more green energy. I heard lots about addictions and mental health. Mental health is a big cure to our health system, if we can catch it early.

After-school programs, extended care for seniors — we’ve built a facility in Haines Junction, which people are happy about, but we are looking at it for the long term with doctors. RCMP — we had a bad incident a few months ago, toward the end of summer. We almost lost an RCMP officer. I happened to be part of that whole ordeal, and it’s not fun. Ambulance — we talk with the community a lot about volunteerism. I spent a lot of time in my community, working with the Tatshenshini-Alsek Park people when they first came. They wanted to eliminate snowmobiling in there completely. I was the president of the snowmobile club. We met with them; we mitigated; we took a little portion of it, which is three percent, that is active. It brings millions of dollars to the economy of the Yukon, tourism dollars from people coming from the south and also from locals, who like a place to go on Easter weekend. I’m sure you’ve all heard about it.

Not high-marking any more, sitting at the bottom watching the young fellows, but safety and the rest of that stuff goes a long way.

So I see a great opportunity in having me here. I've been around the community; I know a lot of people up and down the highway. Working with them all — working with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Kluane First Nation, White River First Nation, and the national park — co-managing. We have got a new cultural centre opening up. I'm looking forward to getting out there and working with the team to see what we can do. Our store is gone, but I hear rumblings that somebody's going to build one and manage it right and it will run. I've been to the Carmacks store, and that's a village the same size as ours and they have a wonderful store. That's the best store in the Yukon, I would basically say. It has a little bit of everything in there.

So a lot of the platform issue stuff came up on the campaign trail — a lot of the stuff that the Yukon Party put forward I was happy to see, because it ties into some of the issues within my riding and within everybody else's riding.

I want to just go on a little bit about — I'm doing well here. I've only got 11 pages left and I'm on page one. Just kidding.

Ministerial stuff — I once again want to thank the Premier. I have a lot of experience within highways, and not so much the public works. I know a lot of people in there. But within highways — I worked for Highways for 10 years, so I was very impressed to see that the school bus company sent us a nice letter thanking us, because the school busses were all safe and the roads were plowed for them. So I was pretty impressed with that.

A lot of people here probably don't know that a day does not go by where every single Yukoner is touched by one portion of my department. There are over 900 employees. Every Yukoner — whether it's a highway, a road, a bridge, Supply Services, Corporate Services, Property Management division, cellphones, Internet, communications. Some of the priorities and some of the vision — I met a lot of different people, I have a great team working with me and I'm going to get to working together here in a little bit about it. Some of the priorities for us are the greening of our government operations in support of the *Climate Change Action Plan*. That's something that we've looked into. The Yukon energy strategy — by reducing greenhouse gases and emissions. It's all near and dear to our heart. We all want to be part of it. We live in the north and it's a little challenging sometimes. But we all want to be part of it and work. Reducing the energy consumption — I talked a little bit about that before. The environmental impacts of our government infrastructure and equipment and vehicles — utilizing some things like cost-ownership models. We have heavy equipment purchases. We have contracts for light vehicles, fleet vehicles. We award them on a point system where lower fuel consumption, better gas mileage garners higher points. We are looking at things like this. Every little bit helps in the big scheme of things.

Through our Property Management division, a database to track energy consumption has been developed to provide to

business case information for the decision makers. Using LEED — leaders in energy and environmental design certification — with the new projects. Green energy-saving projects such as biomass, geothermal or biofuel, district heating systems — this will help with energy consumption and reduction, Mr. Speaker.

Using risk assessment — which was a big one I was tied into and I never thought much of it, because we have so many departments within the government. Some of us here and across the House have worked in those departments, but used risk management on our entire infrastructure. Our department is looking at all the buildings. This will help prioritize and acknowledge facilities that most need upgrades. Every department wants to be number one on upgrades but we have to look at the big picture. We're going to be improving and modernizing our contracts and procurement services to ensure we meet adequate environmental standards, also promoting contract regulations, procedures and policies that are consistent for the local business community.

We're going to use something that is really interesting and I'm proud to say we'll use our scale on contractors to encourage Yukon contractors to bid and use local labour and supplies. My office furniture was built in the Pelly-Nisutlin region. Working closer with the other departments is crucial to us and it will ensure new projects that are proposed will be completed on time and on budget.

I say a good example is F.H. Collins Secondary School. It is for the betterment of the Yukon people that we start becoming more fiscally responsible. I operate that way in my household and I'm sure most other people do also. We like to see things done on time and we want everyone to be accountable. Through our department, whether it is the consultants, the contractors, the engineers — that they are accountable; that they can't just say we need a couple more million dollars. Nobody wants that. We don't want to argue that in the House. Why were there cost overruns? We want to be frugal, for want of a better word. We just want to be on time and on budget.

One thing that I don't know — we were contracted by the federal government through the Canadian Border Services Agency, and I'm proud to say that our Property Management division managed the building of those infrastructures down the Haines Road at Forty-eight Mile, and Canada Customs at Beaver Creek. They utilized us and paid us to manage their facilities and we are doing quite well on that. The department knows that there are issues that we have to deal with and we are looking at them, but we are encouraged and looking at working with that. The risk assessment, the multi-year plans for development of all our infrastructure, upgrades to highways and bridges — we've heard it already. Somebody is looking for something here; somebody is looking there. There are only so many dollars, but we need to have a plan on this, and a well-laid-out plan that we work together on for infrastructure and all upgrades.

There are great ways of finding money, whether it's for a rural road program, resource access roads program, Build Canada — there's a great way to partnership. On this, it's vital we work in partnership with Nunavut and Northwest Territories,

the rest of Canada and the Canadian government, on some of these related issues. We're going to look at this together and we're going to say, if it works here and it's available, let's put this together as something we need for Yukoners.

We put together a strategic plan and there are three strategic goals for our department, and three strategic goals for the Yukon government. These six goals are: the optimizing the performance, safety and service life of Yukon government infrastructure — which means basically making sure that our facilities are safe and they're performing at capacity. We talked about how we're going to look at this stuff steadily improving and modernizing operational services provided by government departments and the public; playing a lead role in the greening of our government and our infrastructure; attracting and developing and engaging talented people to continue to provide a high quality of service to the public; practising open, accountable and fiscally responsible government, advancing strategic corporate initiatives through interdepartmental cooperation.

My department alone has over 900 employees. When it comes to constituency services — some of the stuff that we hear from our constituents — I've already seen some stuff. I signed something off for the Member for Copperbelt South a little while ago — working together. I'm hoping that an issue from a constituent about a berm on a road doesn't get brought up in the House, that I get a call from the office, so we can work together on this and get some of these issues done. Nine hundred employees: it's not hard to say that maybe somebody might have a bad day at work or do the wrong thing at work and we have to be accountable for it in this Legislature as government. But working together, I'm sure we can deal with a lot of these issues and work together.

So, again, I'm looking forward to working with my counterparts. I'm pretty humbled by the fact that I don't know how a guy who likes snowmobiling and trapping and hunting and fishing got to be here, but I'm going to work as hard as I can. I'm really happy with the team. We spend a lot of time together and we're getting to know everybody quite well. I'm happy with my department. I'm happy with my constituents. I have apologized to a lot of them because I said I will never live in Whitehorse. I lived with a horse in Crestview for six months after I was born. There are no horses there any more, but then I moved to Haines Junction.

I just want to state a couple of things. Let's not forget, when it comes to our youth, I've done a lot with youth. Anybody can talk to me about youth. They're our future and they should be of the utmost importance, not forgetting the needs of our seniors and elders, because those are who made us and made the Yukon what it is today.

I just want to thank everybody, and that's all I have. I could keep on for 10 more minutes, but sorry.

Mr. Silver: Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. Speaker, on your new appointment. I believe you will prove to be an excellent representative for our Assembly. As a servant to all MLAs, I trust you to bring a fair and honest approach to the Orders of the House, while protecting our rights to be heard.

I wish to also congratulate the other 18 elected MLAs. Over the past few weeks, we've all managed to meet each other and, from these encounters, I am encouraged. With fair and objective attitudes, we enter into this Chamber. How we conduct ourselves from this day forward will be our legacy and I am hopeful and confident in our potential.

I am honoured to be standing here, privileged with the responsibility of representing the people of the Klondike. I would like to say mahsi'cho to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and I would also like to thank my riding association, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for their hard work and dedication.

What we have accomplished was no small feat. We worked hard; we stayed positive and prevailed on our own merit. Our focus was on what we could accomplish together if we worked together and I am here today as proof positive of such an ideal. This pedagogue I will bring forward to this caucus and to the House at large.

From elders to students, to all people in between, my team represented the most diverse group of Klondikers. I received support from placer miners to environmentalists; from explorers to expeditors; to musicians and artists. There was not one sector of our community that I did not draw upon. The one thing that binds us all is our love for our northern home and our vision for a stable future.

The Klondike is the heart of the Yukon. Look around this Chamber, ladies and gentlemen. Those banners you see up there with the green, the white and the yellow — they represent the Klondike and the gold. It's pretty big. The people are the pulse, and the warm spirit of the community courses through our veins.

It connects us and it makes us who we are and, when dire straits inevitably occur, we are selfless and we unite and draw strength from one another. This is the strong core needed for life in rural Yukon. It is a model for all communities. As the mineral industry ramps up, with the right direction, we can ride through the boom wave and continue to thrive when it inevitably busts. But we can't do it without the cooperation of our government and without its faith and dollars in our communities. If we are successful, however, the Dawson model will be adapted as an industry standard.

Whether you were born and raised there or if you came from away, it takes a special type of resilient character to want to stay and live in Dawson City. A common quote is: "I came up for the summer and I never left." Many of the "come-from-aways," including myself, can attest that it only takes a couple weeks before you realize that this is the home that you were searching for. It is a community where all you need is the right attitude and a willingness to contribute and you are accepted. I came from Antigonish as a lobster fisherman and within a couple of weeks — sorry, a couple of years of teaching, I got the opportunity to go into the placer mining industry as well. I went into Slate River and I got a chance to run equipment and placer mine — me. You might call yourself, Member for Kluane, "a redneck" — well, back home, we're called "cretns". So, to be able to have that ability is huge.

I love the fact that anybody can do anything in Dawson if you have a good work ethic. This attitude of acceptance is es-

pecially true with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. I have never felt more welcomed by a community than I do in the traditional lands of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people. I owe them for my success as a teacher. I was welcomed with open arms and trusted, not only as an educator, but I was given the respect and acceptance needed to be a mentor. The kids opened up their lives to me and I felt needed. I will never be able to thank them enough. Mahsi' cho.

I pledge today that I will be up front and honest with all of you. My work ethic will be my strength and my focus will be on accountability in government. I will work with the governing party and with the Official Opposition to ensure progress. The people of the Yukon have spoken and the Yukon Party has a majority government. We can, and mostly likely will, discuss electoral reform. We could analyze the numbers and percentages but, ultimately, it is my opinion that Yukoners deserve for us to move forward with this mandate and maximize the potential of this majority government.

As a critic, I plan on doing so, not by picking apart individuals' characters and not by looking for a chance to watch ministers fall.

I plan, instead, on holding the government accountable for their promises. I will work diligently, researching and analyzing their policies for inefficiencies. I will focus on helping to instill common sense in government regulations and policies. I will hold ministers accountable if they engage in inane practices or incompetence, which ultimately impedes the very progress that your government set out to accomplish.

Dawson, as I change direction, is a functional community with extremely gifted and talented people in every sector. We have generations of experienced people working in the gold fields. The heritage department at Tr'ondek Gwitschin is world-class. Our health care providers, our firefighters and educators all have a vested interest in the future of this vibrant community. Our arts, culture and tourism sectors have much to share and showcase. We are not without our unique issues. I hear the concerns of our health care providers and our daycare workers. I see the red tape that placer miners must adhere to and the double standards that they must endure. I see a landfill that is literally filled to capacity, and local solutions to disposing of waste oil falling on deaf ears. I see a lack of cooperation between levels of government that complicate simple solutions for mining inside the municipality.

I see fire crews with 20-plus years of volunteer service left wondering why their programming, funding and services are being changed with no warning after over 100 years of extremely functional service. There is a proposed recreation centre that is only discussed when there is an election looming. A hospital planned, built and programmed by outside interests while local health care providers are issued gag orders instead of being consulted on the real needs of the community. Nurses have been forced to consider selling their homes and pulling their children out of school because they are too qualified for the acute health care model that the Yukon Hospital Corporation has ensured for community hospitals. And the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

Before I go deeper into the list of concerns of my constituency, I would like to address some specifics from the Speech from the Throne. I was not necessarily impressed by the boisterous introduction which clearly indicated that the Yukon Party feels 100-percent responsible for prosperity. I do not believe that the world economy is so much affected by Yukon politics. I believe that it's maybe the other way around. I propose our prosperity is mostly due to world mineral prices and the boom in the Asia-Pacific markets. If we hit a recession, I would not suggest that the Premier would take the blame for our economic collapse if gold went down to \$300 an ounce.

The C.D. Howe Institute recently gave the Yukon a failing grade on fiscal accountability. Now, as a teacher who had to adhere to the Fraser Institute, I'm not going to give a lot of credit to the C.D. Howe Institute. However, if it is to fix the government's ability to forecast expenditures accurately, then the government will be able to earn some more accolades.

Here's a quick math lesson, me being a math teacher: when looking at the gross domestic product, boom-and-bust economies create a periodical function. The Speech from the Throne touched on this concept when it mentioned the closure of the Faro mine in 1998. No government could have stopped this from happening. It was a part of the natural cycle of a boom-and-bust industry. What Yukoners want is stability between these ebbs and flows. Inject life into the private sector by correctly planning for these phenomena and your government will receive accolades.

My only other specific criticism relates to the housing strategies Whitehorse-centred approach. It's time to switch from a reactive to a proactive government. The only strategy bullet listed for Dawson was the replacement of McDonald Lodge, a promise that was also in the 2006 Speech from the Throne. While the need is definitely there — and I do actually have a lot of confidence in this current government and in the fact that they will complete this project, hopefully within the next few years — this is not necessarily the solution to our particular housing crisis.

It is, however, an excellent segue for my list of Dawson issues, and housing is definitely among them.

Before I do, I would just like to commend the government on its main commitments. Moving forward together is a promise I hope to help this government keep. As I switch the focus of this reply to Dawson's issues, I would like to state, in the minute that's left, firstly that almost every concern I know of in the Klondike can be remedied through accountability. Secondly, devolution is designed to create strong and functional communities. It is bringing decision-making authority closer to the people most affected.

Rural Yukon's ability to communicate with the capital is crippled and we have not witnessed an increase in government offices and/or presence in the community but, rather, the opposite has happened. Opening up a Yukon Mine Training Association office was a great start, but we are now hearing that, come this March, the money might not be there and the association may be defunct.

I should probably end there for the day, or do you want me to keep on going?

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

Debate on motion re Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following Filed Documents were tabled on December 6, 2011

33-1-1

Peel Planning, letter re: (dated November 21, 2011) from Eddie Taylor, Chief, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in; Simon Mervyn, Chief, Na-Cho Nyak Dun; Norma Kassi, Chief, Vuntut Gwitchin; and Richard Nerysoo, President, Gwich'in Tribal Council; to Hon. Brad Cathers, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and Hon. Currie Dixon, Minister of Environment (Cathers)

33-1-2

Peel Planning, letter re: (dated December 2, 2011) from Hon. Brad Cathers, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, to Eddie Taylor, Chief, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in; Simon Mervyn, Chief, Na-Cho Nyak Dun; Norma Kassi, Chief, Vuntut Gwitchin; and Richard Nerysoo, President, Gwich'in Tribal Council (Cathers)