

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, April 4, 2012 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon School of Visual Arts

Mr. Silver: Today I rise on behalf of the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to the Yukon School of Visual Arts on its fifth anniversary. SOVA is an accredited post-secondary institution specializing in the instruction, promotion and advancement of contemporary visual arts practices from a multiplicity of cultural perspectives.

SOVA offers a foundation year visual arts program which is the first year of study in a bachelor of fine arts degree. The foundation year program is accredited through Yukon College and is transferable to a number of Canada's top art schools and universities. SOVA attracts students from Dawson, across the territory and across the country. Each year, adventure-seeking individuals make the trek to our northern community to experience a profound cultural educational journey. The students will increase their skills and knowledge as artists and become a colourful addition to the community. They will contribute to the arts, culture, social and economic well-being of Dawson City.

SOVA is a unique partnership between the Dawson City Arts Society, Yukon College and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, with each founding organization having equal representation on the governing council, offering their vision and participation in the school's mission. That mission is to deliver a unique, integrated and culturally-inclusive visual arts program.

Art school is a unique education. It may prepare a student for a job, but more often it gives the student creative and analytical skills that equip them to be successful in whatever path they take. It trains people to be resourceful, to problem solve and to bring the beauty and curiosity of art and the appreciation of art into whatever worlds they encounter.

Many of the students who have graduated from SOVA have gone on to enroll in top art schools across Canada. Some have launched directly into their professional careers as artists and some bring their creative skills and resources into other professions. We are also fortunate to have some students stay in Dawson and become part of our community and give their time and talent to Dawson's art community.

It took many years of hard work, dedication and the vision of many people to develop this program and to see it through to fruition. Today, as they celebrate their fifth anniversary, they

can look back to see how far they have come. I offer my congratulations to the school and its students, past and present.

Congratulations to your partners, the Dawson City Arts Society, Yukon College and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in for their contributions and vision. We wish you continued success in your future endeavours.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. Hanson: Inspired by recent commentary in this Legislative Assembly, I have for tabling two documents. One is a brief, illustrated lexicon, dated 1975, depicting sexist application of common English words, and the second is an excerpt from *The Government of Yukon Style Guide*, issued by the Executive Council Office, dated April 2012. I have them both here.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education, in developing the department's rural strategy, to ensure that:

- (1) the strategy is clearly articulated to all stakeholders;
- (2) its objective is to improve outcomes for rural students in graduation rates and academic preparedness;
- (3) the curriculum truly reflects First Nation languages, aboriginal learning styles and experiential methods;
- (4) specific goals are set and evaluated for improving attendance;
- (5) it is developed in partnership at a community level with local staff, students, parents and the whole community; and
- (6) it has clear targets, timelines, evaluation methods and measurable outcomes.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to adhere to the 1998 *National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk*, to which Yukon is a signatory, and introduce complementary legislation to provide for effective protection of species at risk in the Yukon that will:

- (1) address all non-domestic species;
- (2) provide an independent process for assessing the status of species at risk;
- (3) legally designate species as threatened or endangered;
- (4) provide immediate legal protection for threatened or endangered species;
- (5) provide protection for the habitat of threatened or endangered species;

(6) provide for the development of recovery plans within one year for endangered species and two years for threatened species that address the identified threats to the species and its habitat;

(7) ensure multi-jurisdictional cooperation for the protection of species that cross borders through the development and implementation of recovery plans;

(8) consider the needs of species at risk as part of environmental assessment processes;

(9) implement recovery plans in a timely fashion;

(10) monitor, assess and report regularly on the status of all wild species;

(11) emphasize preventive measures to keep species from becoming at risk;

(12) improve awareness of the needs of species at risk;

(13) encourage citizens to participate in conservation and protection actions; and

(14) provide for effective enforcement.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Oil-fired appliance safety

Ms. Hanson: Yesterday, the minister charged with responsibility for oil-burning appliances repeatedly referred to “a made-in-Yukon solution” to address the many problems detailed between 2007-10 in five reports for the Yukon Housing Corporation by Mr. Rod Corea. I would ask the minister if she could elaborate on what is meant by “a made-in-Yukon solution.”

Hon. Ms. Taylor: First off, I would just like to reiterate our government’s commitment toward the enhanced safety when it comes to the installation and maintenance of oil-fired appliances, as well as tanks, which were also associated with those respective reports. That is in fact why the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation and I have tasked our officials to establish a working group comprised of respective government agencies, First Nations, community representatives including the City of Whitehorse and many others, to come up with a made-in-Yukon solution. It certainly applies to all communities and is certainly relevant, building on the information that was outlined in those respective reports and looking at the previous work that was conducted by the Government of Yukon, including new regulations as well as training and public education.

Ms. Hanson: Well, I am curious where national standards fit in the minister’s made-in-Yukon solution. After all, we are part of Canada and we have a National Building Code that is constantly updated to reflect best practices and knowledge of public safety. When it comes to the national code, it is B139 that lays out the standard by which oil-burning furnaces must be installed: B139 is the national code. Mr. Corea’s 2010 inspection report found 529 infractions of the code in 102 homes.

He wrote that 75 percent were considered to be significant concerns that either posed an imminent hazard or could be rea-

sonably expected to develop into a problem in the future. Where on the minister’s path to discover a made-in-Yukon solution is the discussion of compliance and enforcement of the national standard?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Of course that goes without saying when it comes to complying with all of our laws, regulations, policies and standards that we have in place. That is in fact why we have a Building Safety branch housed within the Department of Community Services to adhere to and certainly undertake all those regulatory obligations as outlined in the National Building Code and in others, to be sure.

When it comes to our government’s commitment, as I have said on a number of occasions — and the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation as well — is that when it comes down to the improvement of heating systems in the Yukon, it involves a very complex interaction of many agencies, homeowners and industry.

It will require taking a look at the formal education programs and specialized technical training that we have in place, public awareness, inspection services, regulatory measures — all that we have in place — and also taking a look at all that we have done to enhance public safety over previous years as well. We remain very committed to doing that work, in collaboration with industry and government across the Yukon.

Ms. Hanson: Yesterday the minister also said “that the action plan that comes out of the working group will in fact reflect the realities of rural Yukon as we see them today.” She went on to say, “There are significant differences from community to community” — and we’ve heard this again today — “and we have to respect those differences.” We agree. However, “respecting our differences,” “made-in-the-Yukon solutions” — these begin to sound like buzzwords designed to delay and deflect.

There are no significant differences to how people die from carbon monoxide poisoning. It kills the same way, whether you live in a condo in downtown Toronto or in the bush in a cabin on Laberge. How does the minister intend to deal with this massive problem — this national disgrace — outlined in Mr. Corea’s report, while respecting our significant differences?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I just want to point out again for the members opposite that when it comes to the number of actions that have been taken — and there have been a number of steps taken by the Government of Yukon — since those reports were published and were made available, and that includes training initiatives for our oil burner mechanics; it includes public education on fire and safety prevention, which includes carbon monoxide safety.

It also includes implementation of new regulations that were brought into effect in 2010 under the *Building Standards Act*, which requires permits and inspections for all new installations, as well as modifications, to oil-burning systems.

As the Premier and others have already articulated, issues pertaining to this and others will also be taken into account when it comes to the review of the *Landlord and Tenant Act*. Likewise, we also recognize that there is more work to be done and that’s why, in fact, we have tasked a working group to

come up with a made-in-Yukon solution to enhance — again, when it comes to installation and modification of existing, as well as new oil-burner systems, including the administration of tanks in the territory.

Question re: Education, rural and First Nation

Mr. Tredger: The Minister of Education is faced with several increasingly critical issues in rural education. There have been many reports on the challenges of rural and First Nation education: *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, the Kwiya report, the Sharpe report on rural education, the *Education Act* review, the education reform project, and others. Now we have heard that the minister will be bringing us yet another report with more recommendations. It is called the rural action plan.

Last year's summit was held in Whitehorse where rural issues were again discussed. Now the department is in the process of setting up yet another advisory committee. Will the minister share with us what the objective of this process is — another report or action in rural schools where it matters?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think all members of this House recognize that the gap between student success that's occurring in Whitehorse versus the student success that's occurring outside of Whitehorse is too large. Attendance figures suggest that rural schools have the worst amount of student attendance — the bottom six in the figures that I talked about last week said as much. The objective of the rural action plan and the discussions that took place following the Education summit last year are to improve those numbers. That's what we want to do — we want to ensure that we close that gap or, indeed, eliminate that gap in a reasonable time frame so that students who are getting their education outside of Whitehorse can expect the exact same success as those who are getting their education in Whitehorse.

Mr. Tredger: It's all very fine to have meetings and gather data and continue our ad hoc approach; meanwhile, many rural students aren't even going to school on a regular basis. They are walking out in increasing numbers and they aren't graduating. Recent performance data of Yukon schools indicates that the academic achievement of rural students continues to be unacceptable. The performance gap between First Nation students and non-First Nation students is growing. The adult literacy rate in rural Yukon is unacceptable. What do we tell teachers and parents and children in rural schools today?

What is the minister doing right now to respond to rural education issues while we wait for this latest action plan?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The Department of Education and I as the minister responsible are both committed to ensuring that rural students grow, learn and achieve as much as their urban counterparts, as I mentioned before. We're obviously aware that national and territorial data demonstrates that significant achievement gap between rural and urban students. The Yukon achievement test scores are lower in rural Yukon than they are in Whitehorse and it's something that we need to work on.

As the member opposite mentioned, there was a rural strategy discussion at last year's education summit — five pillars or working groups for the rural action planning process we're identified. One is trades and apprenticeships, something

that we discussed at length on the floor of this House last Wednesday in unanimously supporting the Member for Klondike's motion.

There are HR practices to support rural schools, First Nation language and culture, community partnerships and programming. We need to address this gap, and that is something that I am committed to and I know the department is committed to. We will put those plans in place and we will embark on addressing the challenges and increasing the amount of student success in rural Yukon.

Mr. Tredger: In the five-year strategic plan from the department, goal 1 says "that everyone who enters school in Yukon will have the opportunity to successfully complete their education with dignity and purpose, well prepared to enter the next phase in their lives." Students, parents, local teachers and communities wait anxiously for the delivery of this promise.

The minister is meeting that goal by creating yet another advisory committee meeting in Whitehorse to develop yet another plan and yet another report. We need a measurable outcome. When will we see results that meet the promise that we have made to our children?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Again, I think in order to meet that promise and to build on what we need to do in rural Yukon, we need to address through the working groups these five pillars that were identified at last year's education summit.

I know that, from a departmental point of view, the student/teacher ratio — students to adults — in most rural communities is about 50 percent of what it is in Whitehorse. So, on average, I would say, again, the rural communities are at about 50 percent less than Whitehorse. In Whitehorse there are approximately 10 students to an adult. In rural Yukon, it's about half of that. It varies from community to community, school to school obviously, but that's a real tangible thing that we're addressing through the staffing allocation formula. That is one of the challenges in rural Yukon. It's something that I think we need to deliver on, obviously, and we need to focus on some of the curriculum — the First Nation programming that we're offering in rural Yukon — to ensure that we are meeting that goal that the member opposite outlined, which is to allow students to be successful and to reach their potential once they leave the Yukon public school and, indeed, post-secondary school.

Question re: Dawson City daycare

Mr. Silver: I'd like to bring forward an issue that affects parents in my community of Dawson City, but also affects parents in a similar situation in Watson Lake — an issue parents throughout the territory do their best to avoid, and that is inadequate and uncertain childcare.

The Dawson City daycare is run by a community board of directors. They spend much of their time trying to find funding to keep their doors open. They can apply to fund specific programs, but not core funding. As a result, the daycare works with limited funding and they never know how much they will or will not have for the care of the community's children. How does the minister plan to address the financial constraints and the financial uncertainty that defines operations at the Dawson City daycare?

Hon. Mr. Graham: This government considers child-care facilities — and quality childcare facilities especially — as very important. Over the last four years, we have put approximately \$4 million extra into childcare to address wages, training, subsidies and those types of things. As far back as 2007-08, I believe it was, the unit funding for childcare centres was introduced. This model combined a number of issues, such as hot meals, number of children in a daycare and so on, in order to provide unit funding to each daycare so that it wouldn't be dependent only on the number of spaces.

I have not been advised by the Dawson daycare that they are in financial difficulty; we would be willing to look at solutions to this problem as soon as it is brought forward.

Mr. Silver: I appreciate the minister's comments. As it stands right now, Mr. Speaker, the daycare cannot afford to retain quality staff. The pay grade is too low to compete with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in daycare, which has the resources to pay better resources and benefits. The Dawson daycare directors actually hold fundraisers every year to make up that difference, just to boost the pay grade up a couple of dollars per hour. They have a fundraising Christmas Bazaar scheduled for this September for that exact reason. We would argue that the board's attention and expertise should be applied to caring for and educating our children, not to putting on fundraising events just to keep the doors open.

Does the minister expect the daycare to keep on fundraising to meet these basic needs or does he believe that there could be a better solution?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I am aware that there are a number of issues such as these facing daycares across the territory. It was one of the reasons that the direct operating grant for wages and wage subsidies was introduced some years ago. In fact, there was an overall increase of approximately 70 percent in the years 2007-08 to the wage component.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I have not had any direct communication with the Dawson City daycare, so I can't address that one directly, but the government has made great steps in funding daycares in order to keep these people in the system. Daycare wages now are much higher than they were five years ago and we're willing to look at solutions if the problem is brought to our attention.

Mr. Silver: With the minister's indulgence, I will pass on Stephanie Davidson's contact information so she can talk directly to the minister.

One way the government could help the community of Dawson City access higher quality, reliable daycare or child-care would be by helping the daycare staff upgrade and enhance their skills. Professional development opportunities are limited in Dawson City. Although staff may complete training each year, they can't do it at home. Instead, they must travel at their own expense and on their own time to Whitehorse. The course fees are covered and we appreciate that, but staff must still make significant personal investments of time and money to keep their skills up to date. Will the minister consider facilitating training opportunities within Dawson City, so that travel isn't needed or, if that isn't possible, find some way to fund some of the out-of-pocket expenses for training in Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Once again, \$40,000 was in the past year's budget for training for early childhood development courses. I'll speak with my friend here, the Minister of Education, to see if we can continue to put these courses on-line so that, perhaps, they're a little easier to take. But I should also tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we're speaking with the Yukon Child Care Board about some of the new initiatives being proposed, and those are things like a childcare retention bonus, a benefits package and a mentoring program. All of those things are currently being discussed with the Yukon Child Care Board, and hopefully we'll see some progress in those areas, as well, in the upcoming year.

Question re: Whitehorse Public Library meeting space

Mr. Barr: The meeting rooms at the Yukon Public Library are free to use, and, as such, are a very important space that NGOs rely on to do their good work in our community. The government has acknowledged its support of the great work of staff and volunteers who make up our vital NGO sector. Can the Minister of Community Services let concerned volunteers and community groups know when the meeting rooms at the library will be available for use and, in the meantime, can the minister commit to providing an alternative free space for community groups to use as public meeting space?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I'd like to thank the member opposite for raising this question. An individual also raised this question with me one day ago and I have committed to getting back to that individual. I have raised this matter with the Department of Community Services. I have not received a response as of yet, but I certainly will share that response with the member opposite.

Mr. Barr: The library is a central hub in our community. It is happily used by kids, students and elders. Growing inequality in our society means that not all people have access to the resources the library holds in trust for everybody. Seniors, elders and folks who have trouble with mobility have told us that the distance between the bus stop and the library is too far for them to walk.

Will the Yukon government work with the city to make the library more accessible to people, perhaps by having the bus stop a little closer to the library?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the development of the relocation of the Whitehorse Public Library is indeed a great collaboration between Kwanlin Dun First Nation and the Yukon government. I think it has been a great partnership that has been a model of success that can be used and will be used for other initiatives, including the Champagne and Aishihik cultural centre soon to be housed in a brand new visitor information centre.

As an anchor tenant within the Kwanlin Dun First Nation facility, we will certainly continue to work with the public to ensure that there is continued access to public services such as our libraries and to improve where we need to.

Mr. Barr: Other constituents have told us that they are concerned that the library now closes earlier on Friday nights, as this takes away a very important alcohol- and drug-free gathering place for folks who naturally seek positive and

inexpensive activities on the weekend. Can the government explain why the library now closes earlier on Friday nights?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, this was really an administrative matter that was raised by the department in working in collaboration with the Whitehorse Public Library Advisory Board. It was something I know that the library has been looking at for a number of years. I know that, for example, they extended the hours on Sunday mornings in order to enable families to have better access to the library. Again, both the staff and the Whitehorse Public Library board are very supportive of the updated hours. We know that the new Sunday morning hours are also very popular with families.

Question re: Kinship care

Ms. Stick: Positive ties with family members are a greater force for good than any other element in a child's life. Knowing this, dozens of grandparents and extended family members throughout the Yukon are caring for children who would otherwise be in foster care. It has been four years since this government received a report researching this situation of kinship care in the Yukon called *Na Doonea Chi: Kinship Care in the Yukon*. This report contained 12 recommendations for public policy. Since the report was published, a group of grandparents has held meetings with the Minister of Health and Social Services and department officials about ongoing concerns in conjunction with the report

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us how many of the recommendations have been acted upon?

Hon. Mr. Graham: It is very simple. No, I can't.

Ms. Stick: Thank you for the answer. The report shows that many kinship caregivers do not want to become formal foster homes because that would require the children to be in the care and custody of the government with social workers making important decisions. Caregivers point out that they are saving the government millions of dollars in foster-home payments. One of the social policy recommendations in the report given to the minister was to establish a special category of alternative care for extended families. It would allow for financial and social training and counselling supports similar to those offered in foster homes. This has been done in other jurisdictions, with positive results.

Will the minister consider investigating a special category of alternative care to give support to kinship caregivers who care for children who would otherwise be the responsibility of the minister's department?

Hon. Mr. Graham: First of all, we should be very clear that the member opposite is speaking about a former minister. These meetings and discussions have not taken place with this minister. All I can say is that I am willing to consider anything. I've been working on a number of issues. This isn't one of them at the present time. It will become one, and in due course, I'll have an answer for her question.

Ms. Stick: I think I can help the minister a bit with this. The new *Child and Family Services Act* allows for agreements with kinship caregivers for financial and other services, but the general public is unaware of the many supports available to them. Furthermore, many kinship caregivers live in ru-

ral Yukon and cannot take part in those supports provided in Whitehorse.

Because there are no clear regulations that are accessible to the public, could the minister commit to a campaign of public education, including advertising and community workshops to ensure that the public is fully conversant with services they may be eligible for under the *Child and Family Services Act*?

Hon. Mr. Graham: There are a number of methods already where the department is getting the message out. We have pamphlets available. We make sure that, in all of our health centres and with our social workers, we get the message out as well as we possibly can. I would definitely, though, take the advice into consideration in any future advertising campaigns that we carry out.

Question re: Aboriginal language protection

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, aboriginal language is so much more than words; it is more than can be captured on a page; it is a lived, oral tradition. Traditional knowledge is embedded in a people's language of origin and in their storytelling. The importance of native language has been broadly recognized in the territory for years. Yukon First Nation language programs are offered in 21 of 28 Yukon schools, yet despite this we have heard in some areas that native language training occurs for as little as 20 minutes a day, three times a week.

Community members are saying that the language training is not working. First Nation children are not learning to speak their language. How do First Nations determine if native language instruction is working? Who does the evaluating and how is that information shared with the relevant First Nations?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Rather than answer those three specific questions that the member opposite raised — and I will commit to get back to him regarding those three specific questions — but I can say that this government is definitely committed to supporting Yukon First Nation language programs in our schools. Certainly we understand the critical state of First Nation languages. Last week, we offered a tribute to Aboriginal Languages Day here on the floor of this House. I can also say that currently there are almost 32 teacher positions, with two positions not filled, but these positions support the teaching of Yukon First Nation language programming in Yukon schools. You can tell, Mr. Speaker, that the government has made a significant investment in First Nation language teaching and it's something that we're very committed to carrying on.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his reply.

Different departments, governments, groups and First Nations are involved with native language training, including the Council of Yukon First Nations, with funding from the Yukon government, working on a project entitled, "Walking Together to Revitalize and Recognize Yukon First Nation Languages". The Yukon Native Language Centre at the college, the Department of Education and aboriginal language services and many individual First Nations — to get the best result for students, the efforts of these groups should be coordinated so that their efforts build on one another and are mutually enhancing. How is the Yukon government taking a leadership role in bringing together these various initiatives that share a common goal?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I should also add to my previous answer that there are seven positions allocated to support the Yukon Native Language Centre and two positions seconded to the department for curriculum development. As well, there are six First Nation language teacher trainee positions, five of which have been staffed this year.

Again, recently in Whitehorse there was a three-day meeting of First Nation language teachers. I think a lot of the ideas and the coordination that the member opposite speaks about are dealt with in conferences such as that. Although I haven't had a report from the department on the outcome of that conference, I look forward to hearing from our department officials that were in attendance about how, moving forward, we can better coordinate the training and address the issue of enhancing First Nation languages throughout the Yukon schools.

Mr. Tredger: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again for the answer. First Nation language content is a cornerstone of the government's strategy to deal with some students' poor attendance records. The Minister of Education referred twice to, and I quote: "More First Nations cultural and language content in the curriculum make school more meaningful for this target group." Language training, more than other subjects, needs to be culturally appropriate. How does the government determine what is meaningful to local First Nations, and how is the minister responsible ensuring that native language training is meeting the needs of our local First Nations?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I mentioned earlier, this government is certainly committed to First Nation language training in Yukon schools, and indeed in a number of other programs that are relevant, and curriculum development that engages First Nation students, such as the new CHAOS program that is being offered here in Whitehorse. There is an experiential learning program that is being offered in Old Crow this past couple of years. Indeed, it was something that the person who was working on that program in Old Crow presented at a national conference. The department has retained her services. She has since left the Yukon, but we've retained her services to help develop a curriculum that can be shared from that Old Crow experience in other Yukon communities.

So there are a number of initiatives that are underway that address First Nation student engagement, First Nation attendance issues, First Nation language issues — that was the substance of this question. So, as you can see, the department wants to engage First Nations and increase their students' success.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 24

Clerk: Motion No. 24, standing in the name of Ms. McLeod.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Watson Lake THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon 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, by taking steps including:

(1) establishing a new caregiver tax credit for families caring for a relative with a disability, including seniors and adults and children with severe disabilities;

(2) providing additional funding for therapies as well as money for specialized equipment, ramps and lifts to assist disabled children through an expanded family supports for children with disabilities program;

(3) helping seniors stay in their own homes longer by assisting with minor home repairs and upgrades; and

(4) enhancing the home care program, including providing more help for respite care of children and dependent relatives.

Ms. McLeod: I am very pleased to have had this opportunity to present Motion No. 24 and now to speak to it. The motion calls on government to increase supports for people looking after family members who are sick or disabled, including seniors and adults requiring extra care and children with severe disabilities. It raises four specific issues: a tax credit; money and equipment for expanded family support to children with disabilities program; repairs to homes of seniors; and enhancements to home care and additional respite for dependent relatives.

We are talking about examining opportunities for improved coordination of existing services within and between government departments. This will include the potential for enhancement and expansion of existing services.

During the election, this government committed to creating a caregiver tax credit for families caring for a family member with a disability. We remain committed to supporting families caring for individuals with disabilities or who are ill.

We see this tax credit working in tandem with the federal government's disability tax credit to support individuals and families caring for children, adults or seniors with severe disabilities. These families face challenges beyond those faced by normal families, and they face additional costs as they strive to support their family members. There may be additional medical expenses that are not covered under one of the existing programs, or there could be transportation costs associated with moving their family member about, or changes to the physical environment at home are required and, of course, many more things. For most people, these costs are just assumed.

The motion calls for additional funding for therapies, as well as money for specialized equipment, ramps and lifts to assist children with disabilities through an expanded family supports to children with disabilities program. Already this program accepts applications for a wide range of services to Yukon families to care for their children with a disability, up to the age of 19 years.

We support early intervention to increase a child's lifelong learning potential and promote coordinated access to supports and interventions. We support research-based therapies, spe-

cialized recreational therapies and camps, homemaker services for families, and in-home childcare respite and inclusion supports.

The motion calls for funds to expand this program, as well as adding funds to existing services. Health and Social Services already supports individuals through our services to persons with disabilities unit; our home care unit; family supports for children with disabilities; our chronic disease program and our pharmacare and extended care programs; and continuing care programs, such as Meals on Wheels, the adult day program and respite care.

We provide funding to the Child Development Centre to support the work it does throughout Yukon with children with disabilities and, indeed, to those without. In addition, it calls for assistance for seniors to remain in their homes longer by assisting with minor home repairs and upgrades. There is much work to be done, and we welcome it, and I encourage all members of the House to rise in support of this motion.

Ms. Stick: I would like to thank my colleague across the way for this motion. The Official Opposition is, in general, in support of this motion. We thank the member for Watson Lake for bringing it forward, and we will be proposing a few and friendly amendments that we feel will correct some of the language to better reflect contemporary thinking on the topic of care for people with disabilities. I will be the only speaker from the Official Opposition. We hope that we can pass this motion — as amended — and get on to the tourism motion, and then back to debate of the budget.

Before I introduce the amendments, I would like to make a few points. This motion speaks to some of the questions I asked earlier about kinship care. It is about family members taking care of their children, their adult children, their grandchildren, or adult parents. An important point, I think, is that under section 48 of our Standing Orders, we have the provisions to allow for witnesses to appear before a committee of the Legislative Assembly. I would like to suggest that over the course of this, the 33rd Legislature, we explore how we broaden our Standing Orders to allow for more opportunities for Yukoners to appear.

I came to this point in thinking about Motion No. 24 before us today because I believe that this debate would be improved by having caregivers of people with disabilities here in the House presenting their views.

This simple democratic measure would assist us as legislators to come up with solutions the public would endorse. On the subject of tax credits, I'd like to hear more about this and what is proposed as a caregiver tax credit. What would be the amount? Will a Yukoner be able to claim the federal tax credit and a Yukon tax credit? There are many questions, and I realize that not all questions can be answered in the motion, but I would look forward to hearing some answers.

Some provinces have introduced caregiver tax credits as well, Manitoba being a good example. I would recommend that people look at their legislation and their programming and see if there are ways that we could do a similar thing. Tax credits are important. The issues are intrinsically linked. Many families forsake income, turn down jobs or work fewer hours be-

cause of their caregiving duties. I would suggest that as the Yukon government does its work researching and drafting a tax credit, it look at other financial issues, such as contribution agreements, operating grants, inequality in contracts between foster homes, group homes and approved homes, and not just focus on a tax credit.

One of the issues talked about was providing physical equipment, ramps and lifts to assist disabled children through an expanded family supports for children with disabilities program. Again, I think there are many questions that need to be answered with regard to which therapies are being contemplated, what are the current statistics and the uptake on available funding. Is there funding available for some of this? Helping seniors stay in their homes longer — what does this mean? Are we talking about minor assistance or major assistance? They are all important questions.

There are programs currently under the Yukon Housing Corporation. Are these redundant? I would also like to hear answers on the home care needs and expansion. More respite care — does that mean more full-time equivalents and are we talking about the communities?

Other ideas I have include day programming that is available under respite for parents — a place for their adult children to go during the day. There would also be day programming for seniors. The Official Opposition is in general support of the motion. I've put some questions on the record and hope to get some information back from the government.

As we move from likely passing the motion into actions by government, the Official Opposition caucus will be watching to ensure that measures reflect best practices when it comes to persons with disabilities and their caregivers. At this point, I would like to propose an amendment to the motion, which we believe is a friendly amendment. The amendment would change some words to better reflect contemporary thinking and language on this topic. It is wording that friends of mine in People First Society would certainly and loudly endorse.

Amendment proposed

Ms. Stick: I move

THAT Motion No. 24 be amended by deleting the phrase “sick or disabled family members” between the words, “after” and “including” and substituting for it the phrase “family members who are sick or disabled”;

THAT Motion No. 24 be further amended by deleting the phrase “disabled children” between the words “assist” and “through” in clause (2), and substituting for it the phrase “children with disabilities”; and

THAT Motion No. 24 be further amended by deleting the phrase “more help for respite care of children and dependent relatives” after the word “providing” in clause (4) and substituting for it the phrase “respite care for children with disabilities and adults who are dependent on family caregivers.”

Speaker: Order please. It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South

THAT Motion No. 24 be amended by deleting the phrase “sick or disabled family members” between the words “after”

and “including” and substituting for it the phrase “family members who are sick or disabled”;

THAT Motion No. 24 be further amended by deleting the phrase “disabled children” between the words “assist” and “through” in clause (2) and substituting for it the phrase “children with disabilities”; and

THAT Motion No. 24 be further amended by deleting the phrase “more help for respite care of children and dependent relatives” after the word “providing” in clause (4) and substituting for it the phrase “respite care for children with disabilities and adults who are dependent on family caregivers.”

Ms. Stick: I just have a brief comment on this. Some individuals or people might ask, “What does it matter?” I think the wording in this matters a lot. There is an organization in town called People First Society of Yukon. This group is made up of individuals — young adults and older adults — who have disabilities and they are insistent that when looking at our language and when we talk about individuals, we must remember that it is people first and then a disability or an illness or a disease — it’s always people first and then the descriptor.

I don’t think there is any more to say on that, except that it’s something we need to remember in our written work and when we speak of these individuals. They are always people first. Thank you.

Ms. McLeod: I will, of course, be supporting the amendment to the motion. I thank the Member for Riverdale South for bringing this amendment forward and improving the wording of this motion, while still retaining its original intent. Thank you.

Mr. Silver: I rise today to speak to Motion No. 24 presented by the Member for Watson Lake. We thank her for bringing this issue forward. It takes a great deal for a family to care for a member with —

Speaker: Order. Are you speaking to the motion or the amendment?

Mr. Silver: To the motion.

Speaker: We’re still on the amendment.

Mr. Silver: We as a caucus are in favour of the amendment.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I think I can speak to this amendment. I also want to thank the member opposite for bringing this friendly amendment forward. As a parent with a child with autism, often I, too — and also having over 10 years’ experience working with people with disabilities and with at-risk youth — forget sometimes how important it is to ensure that the most respectful terminology comes forward. When I was living back in Ontario, I had also worked with two of the originating members of People First Society, so I know how important it was to them back then, and I just want to express my thanks to the member opposite.

Speaker: Do any other members wish to speak to the amendment?

Amendment to Motion No. 24 agreed to

Speaker: Does anyone wish to speak to the motion as amended?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I think that my original speech on this was about three days long, so I have had to abbreviate a little bit for today.

Mr. Speaker, it is issues like this that really helped me decide to get involved in government. Most of you know that this issue is very near to me. I would like to take a few minutes to talk about some very unique families, specifically families of children and adults with disabilities. As I stated in the fall and during the campaign, many Yukoners shared with me the challenges they experienced with respect to issues they or a loved one faced. Those same people also indicated that those same challenges decreased during this last 10 years under a Yukon Party government. As someone who has well over 10 years of experience in the social sector, not to mention having a child with autism, I can verify this.

There were challenges regarding access to tests, treatment and therapies. There were challenges accessing initiatives to make adaptations to their home to accommodate a family member with a physical disability. As many of the members in this House already know, my youngest son Jack has autism. As a parent, I know first-hand the challenges that we face, and I know that helpless feeling that a parent of a child with a disability can have.

I have to say that thanks to this Yukon Party government, our family is very fortunate to have had the supports that we have had over the years. My drive as a father is to always ensure the best for my child. Along with the support of the previous Yukon Party government and this one, our son and our family have put together an incredible team of professionals who have helped in more ways than can really be described.

As I have said previously in this Assembly, a family-centred approach to support for children and adults with disabilities is absolutely essential. I stated before and I am certain that I’ll state again that each child is unique and each family is unique. Families need to have the option of therapists, whether government provided or independent therapists sought out by the family. Before I go any further, I have to extend my thanks to the staff and principal of Christ the King Elementary School for their work, dedication and support. Without them, Jack would be a lot worse off today. I want to overview what is currently available, and I think it is important to set the context for the discussion to establish the foundation that we are going to build upon.

I’m going to mention the healthy families program. This is a voluntary program that provides support to families — prenatal or at birth — and it continues until the child is of school age. It has been offered in Whitehorse since 1999. I’ve personally had moms share with me how helpful they find this program. One mom, in fact, explained that with her first child, she didn’t know what to expect, so she didn’t know if her child’s

development was actually on track or not, and it was comforting to have someone knowledgeable she could talk to about her baby's development.

The healthy families program, which is free of charge, will explore what's important to your family. It will explore what you want for your child. It will support you to build a safe and healthy environment and will provide interesting information and fun activities to strengthen your child's growth and development. I know first-hand how early assessment and early intervention can make a world of difference in a child's life. Once a family finds out that their child has a disability, the support they receive from the government is through the family supports for children with disabilities program. Here is another program that needs to expand its philosophy on a family-centered approach.

Parents can make a referral to the program or they can give their permission for someone working with their child, such as a doctor or a teacher, to do so.

The program provides support to Yukon families who care for their child with a disability. It supports early intervention to increase the child's lifelong learning potential. It provides co-ordination access to supports and interventions. It promotes inclusion of children with disabilities in community life. But it can also do much more. If the family lives in Yukon and the child is less than 18 years of age, then supports may be offered. The child should have either a medical assessment from a doctor, a mental health assessment, Child Development Centre report or the Department of Education report. A child does not need to have a diagnosis and can be in the process of assessment to receive supports.

Some of the supports that may be offered to the family include the following: respite, family counselling, sibling care, family coach and inclusion supports. For those children who have complex needs, some specialized funding for interventions may be available. Specialized interventions, such as research-based therapies, specialized recreation therapies and camps, homemaker services for family and in-home childcare are just some of the supports and interventions that may be available to a family with a child or children with complex medical needs.

My comments thus far have focused on the supports that are available. As a parent of a child with special needs, I can tell you that finding out that your child has complex medical issues can be very challenging for families. I've spoken previously about the impact it had on my family and on me, but I can think of parents I know who are raising children with extraordinary needs, and taking care of them is a full-time job. In fact, it's more than a full-time job because most full-time jobs end after 40 hours a week, and you get two weeks vacation every year.

Many parents work from when they wake up in the morning until they go to bed at night and sometimes they have to get up during the night as well to attend to situations. I can personally remember times when Jack would wake up at 2:00 a.m. and he was up for the day and there was no going back. These parents do this seven days a week, 52 weeks a year, whether

they're feeling sick themselves or not, and in many cases it doesn't end after the child is 18 years old.

Adult children with disabilities staying at home is not uncommon. In fact, adult children of an age more than 40 years old still living at home is not uncommon. I don't look forward to that day.

These incredible parents also need increased supports for their families and their adult children living at home. I will give you an overview of what it might be like to be such a parent. As I mentioned before, on-call and available for work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, no holidays, no pay; hours of planning just to attend a 15-minute appointment or go grocery shopping. What about buying that new outfit that you have been wanting? Not likely — your funds have been over extended to provide for your adult child; and that nice, peaceful glass of wine at the end of the day, while sitting on the front porch while the sun sets, is replaced by sitting outside the bedroom of your adult child while they tantrum for hours because they aren't able to communicate their needs. I am going to move on.

That brings me to the fourth point of the motion: enhancing the home care program, including providing more help for respite care for children and dependent relatives. I support this motion and I support this section of the motion. Sometimes it is simply overwhelming and respite is critical, period.

Now, I know my colleague is going to speak in more detail to the clause about establishing a new caregiver tax credit for families caring for a relative with a disability, including seniors, adults and children with severe disabilities. This is a good and very helpful move and I support it.

I now want to speak to the next part of this motion, providing additional funding for therapies as well as money for specialized equipment, ramps and lifts to assist children with disabilities through an expanded family supports for children with disabilities program. This program is able to offer assistance in areas where there is more that can be done in terms of assisting with specialized equipment.

For example, my son doesn't really speak, and when he does, it's difficult to understand. His communication only has to do with what he wants at that moment in time. Don't get me wrong — we're very fortunate to have that. Before Jack could communicate either verbally or through his iPod Touch he would frequently have five-hour tantrums because he couldn't communicate at all. As an assisted device, we incorporated the iPod Touch that has an application that Jack can use to flip through pictures to identify his wants and needs. Jack does not know or we have not found a way for him to tell us how he feels, so we don't know if he's happy or sad or tired or stressed, although when he gets upset, you know it. In fact, we believe that because he was born three months premature, he also has a very high tolerance to pain.

Another area of concern for me as a father is that my son would literally walk in front of a bus without understanding or being able to comprehend the consequence of such an action. Getting back to his iPod, this has enabled him to teach himself and people working with him to teach him better how to read and understand words and actually spelling, to a certain degree.

He'll sometimes get a little cheeky. Instead of using his thing, he'll spell out the word and then trying to understand the letters is difficult. But he has graduated to an iPad and a computer where he can type in search sites like Google and YouTube. We never thought he would get to that point, so I guess the next goal — and I think I've mentioned this before — is for him one day to bring home a T4 slip.

So when it comes to assisted devices, I can share with you our family's experience and you can just think of how other families are experiencing the same thing. The iPod Touch that Jack uses is \$200 a pop and he goes through them about every two months. In fact, it was just last night that he thought it would be neat to flush his down the toilet. It didn't make it.

I can remember in the early days, sitting around a table with two other families who were in the same boat as us. Their children were older than Jack and I even recall another family refusing to meet with us because they had attempted to obtain services for their children through — and I'm sorry, but previous Liberal and NDP governments — and they were met with closed doors. As a result, their child received very few supports.

I'm glad I'm a bit stubborn — and I can only imagine there are a few people in the department who will attest to that — especially when it comes to my children and working for something I believe in. For the record, it was indeed this Yukon Party government that initiated support services for my son and other children with autism, Aspergers, Rett's syndrome and other developmental disabilities.

This Yukon Party government's decision to provide ABA therapy to people like Jack and others has had a profound impact on his life and their lives. The Health minister of the day and Premier in 2002 truly stepped up to the plate and made a very bold move and should be forever commended for their work. We were also quite fortunate when the Health and Social Services portfolio was handed to our current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on December 12, 2005.

I want to speak about point 3 of this motion: helping seniors stay in their own homes longer by assisting with minor home repairs and upgrades. I just want to say that I think many seniors are much happier continuing to be able to live in their own homes where they are in familiar and comfortable surroundings. It is often much cheaper than migrating to a series of care facilities, and I know many people find it challenging to also do their own home repairs. Not everyone is comfortable getting up on a roof to shovel off the snow; not everyone is able to bend down to re-nail a piece of flooring that popped off when they bumped into it.

I imagine my time is just about up, Mr. Speaker, so this is an exceptional motion. I thank my colleagues on both sides of the Assembly for speaking to it and I urge all members to support Motion No. 24 here today.

Applause

Mr. Silver: Let me reiterate my original comments. I rise today to speak on Motion No. 24 as amended. We thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this issue forward. It takes a great deal for a family to care for a member with extra

medical needs, such as an elderly parent or a disabled child. As a community, and as members of this Legislature, we can help these families access the supports that they need. This motion provides some direction on how we can improve the support government provides. As is our practice, in the interests of time in getting to other pieces of business today in this sitting, we will keep our comments on this motion brief. As well, I will be the only speaker on behalf of the Liberal caucus to speak on this motion.

Care for a sick or disabled family member can greatly affect a family's financial well-being and its ability to meet the needs of other family members. Almost half of affected parents reported that they have changed their employment as a result of their child's disability. For some, this means working more hours to meet their child's greater financial needs. For others, it means cutting down their hours, switching to less-demanding fields or leaving the workplace altogether to provide care. This can result in a significant drop in income. At the same time, families' expenses can increase for treatment services or modifications to the family home. It is harder to find childcare for disabled children, and parents may be forced to pay more for that care when they can find it.

We have discussed in this House before the challenges many Yukon families faced in finding affordable, high-quality childcare. These problems are exacerbated for families with disabled children. The 2006 census found that children with disabilities are more likely to live in low-income households as a result of parents having to change their employment, or, possibly, in part because children living in low-income households are more likely to experience health problems in general. On average, families with disabled children live on about 20-percent less income than do families with children without disabilities.

We can expect that care for sick and disabled adults imposes similar demands and therefore has similar effects on family resources. The demands of caring for a sick or disabled family member, often combined with a drop in family income and increased medical costs, affect the quality of life not just of Yukoners living with disabilities, but of the families and the communities around them.

Government supports can help alleviate these pressures. This is the substance of this motion. The measures outlined in this motion provide direction on how the Yukon government can improve the support it provides families. A caregiver tax credit would reduce the amount of tax eligible caregivers pay, thereby freeing up income to better care for their families. The federal government currently provides such a credit and we support the Government of Yukon doing the same.

The family support for children with disabilities program offered through the Department of Health and Social Services coordinates access to supports and interventions on behalf of families. The program also specifically supports early interventions to maximize children's lifelong learning. Additional funding for therapies, specialized equipment, ramps and lifts would directly assist Yukon families and help their children reach their fullest potential.

Moving elderly family members into institutional care may not be what they want, what is best for them, or what is most cost-effective for our territory to provide. Yukon Housing currently offers funding for renovations, as well as its seniors home and yard maintenance program, to allow our seniors to age in place. There is room to build on these programs, particularly as our population grows older.

Finally, the home care program's respite services are necessary and welcomed by the families who receive them. Care for a sick or disabled family member can be hugely draining, and respite care allows caregivers the chance to attend to themselves and to other family members.

In closing, in short, the government has both the responsibility and the opportunity to help people as they care for sick or disabled family members. Efficient government support benefits not just these families, but the larger community supporting them. We thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this motion forward, and we will be voting in support of this motion.

Ms. Hanson: I just wanted to rise because I do recognize that my colleague for Riverdale South indicated, of course, that the Official Opposition will be supporting this motion as amended. But I just wanted to make a comment because, in listening to some comments from the opposite side — and I do thank the member across the way for his sharing of his own personal experiences — obviously, a very deep emotional resonance for him and for his family. I just wanted to comment that his son is lucky to have two parents and a large network, supporting him and each other, and he is lucky to have such a strong advocate.

As I said, the Official Opposition will support this motion as amended, but we do so with the understanding that the intention is that every family, whether they are here in Whitehorse or in the communities, will have access and share in the same equitable division of supports across the board for everybody — whether it is the single parent in Whitehorse Centre who has been forced to quit her good job with the Yukon government — a job that she enjoys — to provide full-time care for her adult son who lives with and struggles daily with severe, serious disabilities. This parent is unable to find, unlike the member opposite, supports or respite from this very, very difficult situation that she lives with day in and day out; or the young family in rural Yukon who struggles to find the supports that are so necessary to ensure that their child is raised in a manner that they can be part of that community and not feeling that they need to seek that support elsewhere.

So we do support this motion as amended, but what is really important, as we move forward in implementing it — and I think that was the intention of the Member for Riverdale South, when she spoke earlier today — is that we didn't feel there was a need to debate this. Clearly, this is a motion that speaks to a need in this community to begin to build on and enhance the programs that governments over the years — and I would use the plural — “governments” — over the years have established, and I recognized the Minister of Justice when he recognized the healthy families program. That was an impor-

tant initiative of its day. It's all governments, of all stripes, that recognize that children and families — whatever their abilities or disabilities — need to be treated with respect and that we need to ensure that access is equitable for all.

So we do support this motion, and we'd like to move forward with it. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: It's a pleasure to rise today in support of this Motion No. 24, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake, and of course, as amended by the Member for Riverdale South. Of course, while I am speaking to the motion as amended, I do think that in the discussion around the amendment of the motion there were some valuable insights from both sides, and indeed, especially from the Member for Riverdale South about the importance and the often unseen power of words. That is evidenced here in this motion as well. Oftentimes we do not consider the true weight of the words we use and that can result in unintended slights — I suppose is the best word. I would certainly recognize that the power of language, and indeed that the power of our words, is important, and that is evidenced in this motion.

Carrying on, I would say that, first of all, the basis of this motion ultimately comes from our platform that we ran on in last year's election. It was a commitment we put in the platform to do a number of the things that are mentioned in this motion.

As I was saying, this motion is one that finds its roots in our Yukon Party platform from the last election. It was developed quite collaboratively with a number of folks, especially those who, like the Member for Porter Creek South, have had first-hand experience with a number of the programs we've mentioned today.

In the case of the caregiver tax credit, it's something that I think, in giving credit where credit is due, the previous Health and Social Services minister was especially keen on developing this. So I think it would be fair to give some credit to the previous Minister of Health and Social Services in identifying the need for that. There were a few questions raised by a number of folks about some of the details of what these programs are going to look like and how these programs may be developed. I'd like to talk a little bit about, I guess, my impression of how I see that unfolding.

Going numerically through these, the first number of this motion relates to the development of a caregiver tax credit.

The notion of the importance of caregivers and those who have either family members or friends whom they provide care for on a voluntary basis is an important component of the health care system, and indeed our society as a whole.

In the past — I think it would be fair to say the past decade or so — this issue has developed increasingly as we've understood more and more about what the nature of a caregiver is. In 2003, a paper was put forward by the Canadian Association for Community Living, entitled *Economic Security for Caregivers: A Policy Development Process to Better Support Unpaid Caregivers*. This NGO, in partnership with the Canadian Caregiver Coalition, began to raise the awareness of this issue. Indeed, they explicitly made the recommendation to develop a caregiver tax credit of sorts that would provide a refundable tax

credit or benefit for those unpaid caregivers who have insufficient income to take advantage of current credits that would increase the amount currently available and would be paid on a monthly basis. That was the recommendation of that group a number of years ago.

Since then, a number of other jurisdictions have picked up on that and have taken their own action respective to their own jurisdiction. I would note that Nova Scotia, indeed, has a program that is similar in concept, entitled the “caregiver benefit program”, which was formerly known as the “caregiver allowance.”

That recognizes the important role of caregivers in their efforts to assist loved ones and friends. It is targeted at low-income care recipients who have a high level of disability or impairment as determined by a home care assessment. If the caregiver and the care recipient both qualify for the program, the caregiver receives the caregiver benefit, which is a monthly fixed quantum of dollars. What I am suggesting here is that when we move forward and develop the details, of course they will be unique to the Yukon, but we would benefit by looking across the situational environment of Canada and seeing what others are doing, so that we can learn from what they have done and either model or learn what not to do when it comes to these programs.

Another good example of this style of tax credit comes from Manitoba. Manitoba, as mentioned by the Member for Riverdale South, has a primary caregiver tax credit, which came into effect on January 1, 2009. It is for caregivers who have completed a three-month qualifying period who have started providing care by October 1 of the year before a tax year and who continue caregiving throughout the tax year.

They can claim the full credit of that in that year. Caregivers may earn the credit for up to three care recipients at one time. That’s the maximum credit for providing care — to three care recipients throughout a full year — as, of course, defined in that program. Effectively, I think what we can point out from that is that it’s a different sort of a style of program than they have in Nova Scotia, but indeed is one that could be instructive for us in the Yukon. Of course, I would say what is probably most important for us living in Yukon are the actions taken by the federal government in development of a tax support for caregivers.

In their economic action plan a year or two ago, the federal government recognized the sacrifices that many Canadians make to care for their children, spouses, parents and other family members with infirmities, often while caring for other family members and holding down a job.

So recognizing that, in the 2011 budget they proposed a new tax support for caregivers — for family members — by introducing a new family caregiver tax credit. It’s a 15-percent non-refundable tax credit on the amount of \$2,000 and it provides relief for caregivers of all types of infirm dependent relatives, including — for the first time — spouses, common-law partners and minor children. Caregivers will benefit from the family caregiver tax credit by claiming an enhanced amount for the dependent under one of the following existing dependent-related credits: the spousal or common-law partner credit, the

child tax credit, the eligible dependent credit, the caregiver credit or the infirm dependent credit. It is estimated that over 500,000 caregivers will benefit from the family caregiver tax credit nationwide — and of course, the measure is applied for the 2012 and subsequent taxation years, so it is in effect now.

I think it’s important for us to look across the country and look at what other provinces and the federal government are doing in this field. I would suggest that when it comes to the federal tax credit, it’s something that we would consider ensuring: that our two credits are indeed complementary and can work in unison.

Of course, the second bullet in the motion as amended discusses the family supports for children with disabilities program. This is a program that is of particular interest to me as I have a number of constituents who do access this program and I have heard a number of things from them throughout the election and throughout my time as MLA now regarding this program. It’s a program that was initially introduced by the Yukon Party government a few years past and was, in my opinion and from my understanding from talking to constituents, very well received. The way it works is that parents can make a referral or, with the permission of parents, someone working with the child such as a doctor or teacher can also make a referral to the program. In terms of eligibility, if the family lives in Yukon and the child is less than 18 years of age and has a medical assessment from a doctor, a mental health assessment from the Child Development Centre and a Department of Education report, the child does not need to have a diagnosis and can be in a process of assessment to receive supports. So it’s relatively flexible in what it can cover.

To access that program, there is a certain amount of information that the family needs to provide, such as the child’s name, the date of birth, the type of disability and if there is a report, as I mentioned — family members’ names, addresses and telephone numbers so that the family members can be contacted, obviously. No financial information about the family is required to access services, and families will first need to access other appropriate resources prior to accessing the family supports for children with disabilities program.

In terms of the funding supports that may be available to the child and family, respite care is included, family counselling, sibling care, a family coach and inclusion supports. Those are a few of the supports that are available under that program. For children with especially complex needs, there is some specialized funding for intervention that may be available. These include specialized intervention such as research-based therapies, specialized recreational therapies, camps, homemaker services for the family, and in-home childcare. I think that, given the fact of what is available now, section 2 of this motion suggests providing additional funding for therapies, as well as money for specialized equipment, ramps and lifts to assist children with disabilities.

An expanded family supports for children with disabilities program, I think, speaks to the importance of what is offered now, and the need and recognition of the need that we can always improve on programs. There are always ways to enhance

them and make them better. Despite their relative success, the sky is the limit in terms of the opportunity.

In terms of the program as it exists now, what happens after a parent makes a referral? What will happen is that a social worker will contact the family to arrange a convenient time to meet with the parents and the child to discuss the family's needs. Visits can occur either at the family's home, at the family supports for children with disabilities office, or other locations. One- or two-hour meetings can sometimes be required to assess the nature of the issue. Parents are often encouraged to bring the Yukon health care cards, both theirs and the child's. If they are a status Indian under the *Indian Act*, they are encouraged to bring that card and any assessments that they might have about the child.

At that initial meeting, the primary introductions are undertaken and there is discussion about any further information that may be gathered, in terms of the child's school or daycare information that may be provided to the program staff. There's a general explanation of supports and services available to the family and their child and other discussion about supports available from programs outside of the family supports program. There are consent forms and confidentiality forms and, of course, a review of the overall suite of programs for funding.

In general, what I think this tells us is that a number of programs and opportunities are available for families currently but, as is indicated in this motion and as I had mentioned, there is room to grow and there is room to enhance this program.

The third bullet refers to helping seniors stay in their own homes longer by assisting with minor home repairs and upgrades. Now I think, more and more, this is becoming a common thing for families. I know it's not uncommon at all to see it in my riding where families typically have an elderly parent living with them, and they're required to make home repairs to their house to accommodate their family member or parent.

Often, this means an additional suite or room where the parent can live comfortably and, indeed, any necessary upgrades to the house that may include ramps or wheelchair accessibility to the room, perhaps upgrades to the bathroom to ensure that all the toilets and bathrooms and sinks are all accessible to the parent. But with those renovations or additions to a home does come some cost. I think what is contemplated in this motion is that minor home repairs and upgrades — as I've just discussed — would be eligible for some sort of assistance from government, in recognition of the fact that they do tend to be costly and, despite that costliness, they are very necessary.

The final point in this motion relates to enhancing the home care program, including providing more help for respite care of children and dependent relatives. I think, further to my previous point, renovations are often needed when caregivers are providing care to their family members in-house.

In one case that I'm aware of from a constituent, they have a young child who has a disability and that requires them to put a significant number of renovations in their bathroom to include padding around some of the harder, pointier surfaces like corners of sinks or the edge of a bathtub, so that if the child does fall or has a seizure of some kind, they don't hit their head

and damage themselves even more than they normally would through their seizure.

These are very real problems for families in Yukon. They're challenges that are faced by our neighbours and our friends. I think it's important that government continues to recognize that and continues to work to improve its services. As I've said, a lot of work has been done to date and my understanding is that the staff in the Department of Health and Social Services has been very forthcoming and very willing to work with families, but indeed, as I said, there is always room to grow in these programs and there is always opportunity to enhance and improve.

I think this motion is a good starting point. As I said, it does come from a relatively significant amount of collaboration internally throughout the election and consultation with a number of families who do access the program.

I would say that I'm certainly very supportive of this motion, as amended, primarily because of the significant number of families who are in my riding and friends of mine who access these programs. I look forward to hearing comments from members opposite and members on this side about their views on this motion as amended and indeed their suggestions of how we can further enhance these programs that are available to Yukon families. Once again, it's very important to a number of my constituents and I look forward to hearing from my colleagues on their thoughts.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I also rise in support of this motion as amended. I'm not going to speak on the first bullet at all because I think the tax credit is a no-brainer and I'm only too willing to support that. I'm more concerned about the home care and the support services that we provide and we should be expanding here in the territory.

The Canadian Home Care Association defines home care as, "an array of services for people of all ages provided in the home ... and community settings ... that encompasses health promotion and teaching, curative intervention-end-of-life care, rehabilitation, support and maintenance, social adaptation and integration and support for the family caregiver."

It is quite a mouthful, but it is a laudable goal that this government will make every effort to reach. In this budget, we have increased home care support funding by \$457,000 to provide six additional staff members in the home support program. This will improve Yukoners' access to quality care within their homes, and it should also reduce the pressure on acute and continuing care services. Last year, the home care program experienced a 21-percent increase in caseloads in Whitehorse alone. The growth will continue, we expect, as our population increases and ages and more of our seniors remain in the Yukon. The general population increase also shows that people living with disabilities continues to increase as well.

To give perspective to the issues, this year our government provided an extra \$1.629 million in ongoing funding to open an additional 10 beds at the Thomson Centre.

While these beds are an essential part of our continuing care program, institutionalized care is becoming increasingly expensive. In addition, many of our seniors would probably

prefer to live in their own homes with a mixture of public and private sector care when they can no longer live on their own. And, yes, I did say private sector care, Mr. Speaker — a mixture of private, public and NGOs.

In the coming years, I hope to bring forward proposals, whereby the private sector and NGOs will also become involved in the delivery of home care, not only for our seniors, but also for our children and others living with severe disabilities. This will build on the great work done with children with disabilities throughout the Yukon by organizations, such as the Child Development Centre.

It is also very important, I believe, that we take steps very quickly to develop a more integrated approach to providing health care, home care, social and housing services to our seniors to ensure that they are receiving the right supports, at the right time, to be able to age well at home, with dignity, in a safe and healthy environment. As my colleague said, Mr. Speaker, better coordination of existing services within and between government departments, as well as with NGOs and the private sector, are vital in order to meet the needs of our seniors and persons with disabilities in the future.

One of the first requests I received as the new Minister of Health and Social Services was from a family who has a child with a disability living in their home. They told me that the family supports for children with disabilities was a great program. The department assisted them in every way they can, and they were a great help providing support services. But what was lacking for them, in their particular case, was adequate funding to assist them in making modifications to their home in order to properly care for their child. The department provided a number of NGOs where they applied for funding. There were institutions that also provide funding for modifications to your home. But it still wasn't enough when dealing with a severely disabled child. Since that time, I've had others come forward with exactly the same problem, and they all advocate for the same supports. So we will be moving forward to work out a system of capital funding for support of families who choose to keep their disabled family member in their home. We think it's very important that people continue to do that, and we will support it.

I'd like to speak now, just for a couple of seconds, Mr. Speaker, about caregivers. As seniors' needs and people with disabilities' needs increase, the average hours of care provided by family caregivers also increase significantly. With the significant increases in responsibility and care comes the very real possibility of caregiver burnout, and that doesn't do any of us any good; it doesn't do the people who are being cared for any good and, as often as not, the caregivers themselves will wind up becoming patients in one of our long-term facilities. So we want to help them by improving respite. We want to make sure that there are fewer restrictions to respite care, both in-home respite and respite that will be provided by the government.

I was very happy to see the Member for Riverdale South talk about day respite programming because it's something that is available at the current time on a very small scale. We hope to improve the day programming, and we also hope to improve the number of spaces that are available in our facilities with

fewer restrictions. Currently, there are a number of restrictions, if you wish to bring a family member with disabilities into one of our facilities, so we hope to remove some of those restrictions and make that more accessible to more people.

We also hope to provide more options, again with fewer restrictions, to people receiving funding for ongoing services that their family member or the caregiver requires in order to care for a person with a disability. One of the things that we found — the Minister of Education and I when we talked to Autism Yukon and a number of other groups — was that whereas the funding from the government was adequate for some of these ongoing expenses, it wasn't flexible enough, so that if they wanted to move money from one silo to another, they found there were restrictions on that movement. We will be removing some of those restrictions, as quickly as we possibly can. In addition, what we found when we had discussions with those groups was that one of the things they would like to see established and that I'm now considering is the development and implementation of a parents advisory group for children with disabilities. A great source of wisdom and advice is from those who are already raising children and have already faced the problems that we're dealing with now and probably in many cases resolved those problems. They also know where gaps exist in service.

We hope to tap into that knowledge and that expertise through this parents advisory committee. I personally would be pleased to have the advice of such a group, and I've instructed my department to bring forward some options on the creation of such a group, its mandate and how it would work. We recognize that an effective and comprehensive home care system provides services and supports along all parts of the care continuum. Investing in community and continuing care programs reduces pressures and costs on acute care services and increases individual health and well-being. This is a priority for our government.

In closing, we're already doing a lot to support families and individuals, but this motion speaks to the many more things that we can be doing and should be doing possibly as a government. If we break down the parts, there are a number of roles — additional roles — for other departments, for NGOs and even the private sector to play in providing that support. We all have a role to play in improving the lives of our seniors and those with disabilities. This government remains committed to those ideals. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I'm going to be brief in my remarks this afternoon in support of this motion and the amendment put forward by the Member for Riverdale South. First of all, I want to speak briefly to what the Minister of Health and Social Services spoke about with respect to the family supports for children with disabilities program.

I did have the privilege of meeting with Autism Yukon once down at their office and then a follow-up meeting here in our offices that was attended by me, the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Minister of Community Services, as well as the Minister of Justice. It is something that obviously we put a lot of ministerial responsibility into as well as the passion,

and the personal passion, I guess, that members such as the Member for Porter Creek South bring to this issue.

With respect to the parents advisory committee that the Health and Social Services minister spoke to, and the flexibility within the program that is offered through his department, I think that will be welcome news for the parents of Autism Yukon and other parents of children with disabilities. It is something that they asked us for at our meeting, and I am pleased the Health and Social Services minister has moved on it so quickly.

That meeting was held probably within the last four to six weeks, and for him to be able to move as quickly as he has on it certainly is something that I know will please the parents with whom we met. Of course, I wanted to ensure that representatives from the Department of Education are involved in those discussions as well, through special programs and our paraprofessional resources that we have in the classroom. It is something, again, that was brought forward and I look forward to having my department officials work with the Health minister's officials and the parents to ensure that we can address the concerns of those families caring for children with disabilities.

I will speak briefly to the subclause (3) in the motion by the Member for Watson Lake, which is helping seniors stay in their own homes longer by assisting with minor home repairs and upgrades. As minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation, the corporation does provide loans to eligible Yukoners for the purpose of acquiring and constructing or improving housing through the home repair loans.

The capital vote in the current budget is about \$2.5 million, so what that allows seniors and Yukoners to do is address specific health and safety issues, as well as deficiencies with foundations, plumbing, heating, electrical and mechanical systems, overcrowding due to family size and specialty features for occupants to promote independent living. Of course, a second part of that is to assist homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their home.

This is important to me, obviously, as the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, but also as the Member for Riverdale North. Riverdale is one of the more established subdivisions in our community. I believe it has been around since the late 1950s. My family moved there in 1973. Certainly a lot of the older homes were built with challenges, I guess, in the design for seniors and for families living with family members who have disabilities. So this is certainly something that is a welcome program that the Housing Corporation offers.

Again, in Riverdale North there are a lot of single-family homes and many seniors who are still in their homes there. There are two former Commissioners of the Yukon, a former Senator of the Yukon and many, many long-time Yukoners who are still remaining in their homes over there and I'm very happy that we're able to provide assistance to ensure that they're able to stay in their homes as long as possible.

My personal story on this, I guess, is that my parents, too, were able to live independently until my father passed away a few years ago, and my mom has since moved back to the Yukon and is living independently in the Member for Takhini-

Kopper King's riding in the subdivision in Takhini. I'm very happy to have my elderly mother and many seniors throughout the Yukon able to stay in their own homes.

One other program that I'd like to highlight that's offered through the Yukon Housing Corporation is the seniors home and yard maintenance program. It's aimed at seniors who are living independently but have difficulty paying commercial rates for basic home and yard upkeep. It's funded by the Yukon Housing Corporation, but delivered in Whitehorse by the Yukon Council on Aging. What it does is match seniors with those needs with community residents registered to provide these services. People interested in providing the services must pass a security clearance check before they're placed on the official registry as approved service providers.

Generally, the rates are worked out between the senior and the contractor, but it's generally in the \$20-per-hour range, so it's very affordable in this economy where it's often difficult to find those who are able to deliver those types of services.

With that, colleagues on both sides of the House have spoken to the other aspects that are identified in the Member for Watson Lake's motion, so I won't go on about them. Again, I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward this motion and the Member for Riverdale South for amending this motion. My commitment as the Minister of Education and the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation is to see this motion delivered upon, but I also thank the MLA for Riverdale North and to all members who will be supporting this motion here today.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak to the motion today, I'd like to begin first of all by thanking the Member for Watson Lake for tabling this motion and bringing it before the House. I also want to thank members of the opposition for their indication of support for this.

I think it should be noted that, in bringing this motion before the House, this really flows from a commitment that we made in the 2011 election campaign and, with the minor wording amendments presented by the Member for Riverdale South, it certainly is very much reflects what we committed to do. I am very appreciative of the fact that all this flowed from a commitment by the Yukon Party, and other members of this Assembly are in agreement with our belief that this represents a good policy approach and a good initiative for Yukon citizens.

I would also like to note a few areas here. The caregiver tax credit that is outlined in the motion, as some of my colleagues have outlined, is a commitment to look at models that have been put in place in other jurisdictions and come up with a model that meets the Yukon's needs. That is an additional way of providing some additional help to families who care for relatives with a disability, including seniors, adults and children with disabilities.

As a number of members of this House noted, there are challenges really faced by families who have to care for a child who has a disability, or an adult who has a disability and is dependent on family members for care, or a senior who has reached the stage where they're no longer able to function independently. The additional strain that is placed on family

members providing that care would be very hard to overstate. It's certainly something, as my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek South and Minister of Justice and Tourism noted, is a 24-hour-a-day job for parents and other family members who are dealing with that responsibility. This motion here today and the commitments we made in the election really are aimed at helping them in addressing the needs of their family member, helping them meet the needs of their family member, and providing the assistance that government can to help them with those responsibilities and needs.

The second part of the motion here before us today speaks to the family supports for children with disabilities program. That's a program that I was pleased to bring in as Minister of Health and Social Services at the time, four years ago. I think it was four years ago this month, if memory serves. It built on a program that had been put in place at first for parents of children with autism. It expanded that to parents of children with other disabilities. It's an area that, as I noted, is something I'm pleased to have played a part in, but I also want to recognize the fact that really, the bulk of the credit for the program goes to families who came forward and staff within Health and Social Services who looked to other models within Canada and tried to come up with a structure that meets the needs of Yukon parents — so a lot of work by many people went into this.

I'd like to recognize the Member for Porter Creek South, the Minister of Justice and Tourism — for his work as a parent at the time and as president at one time of Autism Yukon — for the many hours he put into this and the work that he and other parents who were facing a challenge and facing the frustration did — and as emotionally charged as the issues can be — work with government to try and come up with constructive solutions and constructive methods of helping people, and that is not an easy task. It involved a lot of work by a lot of people, and I want to give everyone who participated in the development of this credit for that.

I would also like to note that the original program, the family supports for children with disabilities program, is one that we established four years ago. It is one that we have also heard feedback from parents about where this program can be improved. I want to very strongly express my support for expanding this program to provide additional funding for therapies and money for specialized equipment, including ramps and lifts to assist disabled children and to help their parents in caring for them.

I appreciate the comments from the Minister of Health and Social Services and the work that he has done on this since taking office, as well as his recognition of some of the specific issues that have come forward regarding this program. As the minister knows, this is something that I have heard from parents of children with disabilities in my riding and from other ridings around the territory, as have a number of my colleagues here in this House. Really, the importance of expanding this program to cover some capital items within, obviously, appropriate defined policy guidelines is something that I want to emphasize to this Assembly.

The situations that parents face if they're having challenges that they're not able to meet with a disabled child is

really something that is a very — well, when I've heard from those parents, I certainly feel for them very much and appreciate the situation that they are in and look forward to government being able to take additional steps to help them face those challenges, including to expand this program to cover specialized equipment, including ramps for wheelchairs and lifts to assist children or adults in the home environment.

Another area of this motion I'd like to touch on is the part that refers to helping seniors stay in their homes longer. That, as some of my colleagues mentioned, is something that really is an area that, as we face an aging population here in the Yukon, as more and more Yukoners reach the age where they are classified as senior citizens or are past that point; they have been in their golden years for some time — that leads to an increased number of challenges related to mobility and other issues that in some cases they may not be able to address themselves. There is some programming available through Yukon Housing Corporation. Not everyone is eligible for that, and in some cases — one of the concepts that was looked at in developing the election commitment this flowed from is the fact that, in some cases, someone may just need an idea of whom to talk to or where to turn to for advice in how to handle getting somebody to perform repairs in their home. They might need some assistance with either paying for the cost of that or simply understanding how to do it, and how to get good service at a fair price when they are making those minor repairs and upgrades.

Ultimately, we certainly have heard from many seniors, and the message from most of them is that most do prefer to remain in their homes for as long as possible. Simply from a purely financial aspect, as well, it is certainly better for the financial resources of the government to give someone some minor assistance to remain in their own home rather than having them reach the stage quicker where they are no longer able to live in their own home and may need to depend on our continuing care services.

The fourth area of the motion — the commitment to enhance the home care program — is also an area that relates to that same need and to the fact that for senior citizens particularly — although also, in some cases, other who have need for the home care program — expanding that program to provide a wider range of services is something that is important to help people stay in their homes safely and to have the services they need in that area. Again, it's something that I believe is both the right thing to do to help people live in their home environment longer, as most wish to do, and it also makes good sense from a purely financial perspective for the government to provide assistance to people to stay happily and safely in their own home rather than having them need, at an earlier stage, to move into a continuing care facility.

In the interest of time and for others who wish to speak to the motion this afternoon and to other matters before this Assembly, I won't spend a great deal of time speaking to this motion. It's one that I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward. I know that a number of my colleagues on this side of the House have contributed to the development of the commitment in this area and have heard from parents who are very eager to see parts of this program, including and espe-

cially the enhancements to the family support for children with disabilities program, put into place.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I commend this motion to the House.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I would also thank my colleague from Watson Lake for bringing forward this very important motion. In fact, it is a very important issue to many of my constituents over the past nine years and counting.

I also want to just recognize a lot of the comments that have been put forward on the floor and on the public record, especially from the Member for Porter Creek South. I think it is opportunities such as this on Wednesdays that give us, as elected representatives, the opportunity to speak to issues of importance such as this. I think as the Leader of the Official Opposition said, why is it that we need to debate issues like this? I just want to say that I think it's very important that we all have an opportunity to discuss issues that are of clear and utmost importance to our constituents.

I can't speak for the members opposite, but I know that in my own riding of Whitehorse West it continues to be a great matter of importance; that is, enabling our families to live with a quality of life that many of us as Yukoners — lifelong Yukoners as I am — have grown to enjoy currently and continue to enjoy. That's not the case for everyone and that's duly recognized. That is in fact why there are a number of programs and services and supports that have been made available and will continue to be made available, some of which haven't even taken effect as yet.

The motion is comprehensive. It speaks to a number of different elements in support of families, particularly those with children with disabilities. I know a number of families throughout the Yukon whose children have various disabilities from birth, many of whom have subscribed to programs — respite offered at Copper Ridge Place, for example — and also programs available through the Department of Health and Social Services, and programs that are readily available, at Yukoners' disposal, enabling us, as citizens, to reside in our own homes for a longer period of time. Ultimately, that is what it is all about: being able to maintain that quality of life that we have come to enjoy over the years in our own homes, with our own families.

I commend the work of the previous Yukon Party governments and previous ministers who have contributed to the development and the growth of programs. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources just reminded me that originally, and as per a meeting we recently had with members of Autism Yukon, there wasn't an organization called Autism Yukon, but thanks to a number of parents, including the Member for Porter Creek South, who feel very passionately about their children and the well-being of their children and having that ability to network with other parents who are experiencing the same frustrations or expectations that we have for our own children — that was really the impetus for putting together Autism Yukon.

From there it has since grown. It is now a well-established organization that provides networking opportunities. It is kind of that one-stop shop for parents to come together and to meet

on a regular basis, and it also provides that formal, unified voice on behalf of parents. It has also grown from those parents of children with autism to other disabilities as well.

I have to pay a great deal of credit to those original parents and the many parents today who have autistic children. I don't think there is one month that goes by that we don't hear about another national report about autism and the diagnoses for autism. There is a lot of good work going on when it comes to this particular disability. There is much more to be known about this disease, but there is a significant amount of work. As a result, programs such as those my colleagues have already spoken about came into fruition — the family supports for children with disabilities program for those families caring for children with disabilities. As a result, there has been a lot more public awareness, more public education, more heightened attention to this disease and others. As a result, those programs have grown substantially. There has been a significant increase in the uptake among families accessing those programs. I can't speak for what other jurisdictions provide or do not provide, but what I can say has attributed to the great success of this particular program is the family-centred approach — that is, it's family-driven.

That was to be responsive to the needs of families. Ultimately it comes down to the families; they know what's best for their children. I can say that when this program first came into being, it was originally for parents with children with autism and now it has grown to other disabilities — severe disabilities. Because parents have had that flexibility built in, they have an allotment of dollars. They have the ability to contract caregivers and those contractors with the expertise. I know my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek South, spoke eloquently to respite, counselling, inclusion supports or specialized interventions. These are all programs, these are all supports that are subscribed to by many families, including those who live in my own area. They are much appreciated, because they provide parents or guardians with the ability to say that this contractor has worked well, therefore, because of the success, I'm able to direct within the program. I think that's a really important key role of that program.

I continue to remind our government of the importance to keep it family centered and focused and self-directed. I recognize that there's a growth in the uptake and hence that is why during the last election and previous elections we continued to expand supports available to families such as these. It has been received well. We recognize there are pressures for more access to programs and services. For me, that means that program is working well. It's doing its job, it is being effective, it is responding to the needs of those individual families. I think we have to thank the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education for the work that they have done in collaborating with parents and organizations such as Autism Yukon over the years.

There is a significant amount of support other than the program that we've been speaking to — Child Development Centre. As I mentioned, providing therapeutic supports for families at home, transitions from birth to preschool to school to after school.

To be sure, there is going to be a demand for doing more. We support that role and we support that continuum of services that is so very important to families because children with disabilities do grow up into adults with disabilities. I have to speak to a family I know in my area. This individual has a son, a very gifted son I would say, who is excelling so well in school, and their family has been able to access supports through the Government of Yukon over the years.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming a former member of this Assembly to the gallery, the former Member for Klondike, Mr. Dave Millar.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As I was saying, this family has been able to access a great amount of support from various agencies and departments within the Government of Yukon. As a result, it has helped their son excel throughout school. I'm always reminded that, when we even think about removing those services because that individual is doing so well, that's not the case; that disability has not gone away. It's always going to be there; it's just managed. So, it's very important for us to keep that top of mind, that we need to keep that top and centre and to continue to make those supports available, whether in school or beyond.

There has been a lot of discussion about other supports that are made available throughout the departments. What I can say is that our government over the past nine years has enabled families through the development of supports being made available. When it comes to our seniors and elders, enabling them to remain in their homes longer, as well, is of utmost importance. We have seen the demographic changes in our population, not just here in the Yukon, but worldwide.

We're becoming increasingly cognizant of the need for more services and more attention to the focus of how we can enable individuals to stay in their homes longer. For those individuals who cannot, there are also demands for continuing care, respite and so forth. But, again, with the pioneer utility grant, our government was very pleased to be able to increase that by about 35 percent, and we indexed it against inflation. Likewise, we've been able to double the Yukon seniors income supplement and tie that to inflation as well — index it against inflation.

The homeowners grant, of course, continues to be made available. It's a very important program. It's also delivered by the Government of Yukon and benefits many, many households — all residents. That continues to increase every year too, with the number of individuals and families moving to the Yukon and, of course, the amount that we continue to provide in our budgets also increases on an average, I think, of about two percent every year.

We offer a seniors property tax deferral program as well, to assist seniors with property taxes.

As I mentioned, there are also other programs made available through municipalities, like the City of Whitehorse's senior utility rebate; the programs available through Yukon Housing Corporation — home repair program and so forth. These are all examples of great programs that are in place and continue to be in place: chronic disease program; pharmacare; extended care; adult day program respite and care, as the member for Watson Lake also referenced.

This motion speaks to expanding those very supports, when it comes to meeting the enhanced demand for supports for children with disabilities, to also enabling seniors and elders to remain in their homes longer through the home care program. Home care is a very popular program and will continue to become increasingly more popular as we age, and we are an aging population. Again, I just commend the individuals — the many, many individuals who contribute to home care on a yearly basis. That is why I always say that it is so important to support programs, such as the licensed practical nurse program through the Department of Education at Yukon College.

I know that many of those — all of those graduates, in fact — have enabled us to continue to expand the number of beds being made available for higher levels of care associated through — whether it is Copper Ridge Place or the Thomson Centre, Macaulay Lodge or home care itself. Thankfully, by investing in our own Yukoners, we're able to continue to keep Yukoners in their homes longer. It's important to build upon programs such as this as well.

Likewise, the tax credit for caregivers was an initiative we promised during the last election, and there have been proposals of tying it with the federal government tax relief as well. It makes a lot of sense. It has been tried in other jurisdictions. I just continue to say that we just need to be creative and continue to look for ways to assist our own individuals to stay in our homes and continue to make resources available for those who are not able to stay in their homes as well.

The motion also speaks to repairs to homes of seniors and also making specialized equipment available for families, to enable the children to stay within their homes and also adults to stay within their homes. I think we all know of individuals — I, too, have a mother who has been here in the territory since probably 1962 or 1960, and has contributed — her and my father. She, too, would like to stay in the Yukon for the rest of her life. But there may come a day when she is no longer able to stay in her own home in the Town of Watson Lake, so these are things that we all have to keep in mind. It's always helpful, because there are expenses and costs associated with continuing to make those supports available for families.

So I commend this motion and I want to thank the member opposite — or I want to thank my colleague from Watson Lake — for raising awareness of this issue of importance and just reminding us of how important this is to hundreds and hundreds of families here in the territory and throughout this country, as well. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I rise as well today to support Motion No. 24, as amended, and for really talking about helping people stay at home longer and assisting those people who

are helping with family members who are disabled. This has been something, as mentioned previously, that was an important component of our election platform in 2011. It speaks to how I feel personally — I think, professionally, as well, as a pharmacist. I have certainly had the privilege to know a number of people who either are caregivers or are seniors who are living at home and looking for opportunities to be able to stay at home longer. Quite honestly, most seniors, if at all possible, would feel most at ease and most comfortable being able to stay in their homes as long as possible. We are creating the opportunity to do home repairs or upgrades to allow people to continue to live at home.

Not only is this better for those individuals and for their families, but also for the government as well, because someone who is living at home is certainly not costing us, taxing the resources and the capacity that we have in terms of institutional number of beds. Certainly, I think we're very proud as a government to recognize those family members who do look after and are the caregivers for their family members who are disabled. We are very proud of the opportunity to continue to expand our assistance to them doing their good work.

I wanted to just mention specifically one component of the motion, and that was the tax credit. I think it has been mentioned briefly by members of this House already but, effective this year — January 1 of 2012 — Yukon is providing a \$2,000 tax credit for caregivers caring for a relative with a disability, including seniors and adults with severe disabilities. This tax credit will provide tax relief for caregivers of all types of infirm, dependent relatives, including, for the first time, spouses, common-law partners and minor children.

Yukoners will be able to claim the credit on their tax returns for 2012. Caregivers will benefit from the new credit by claiming an enhanced amount for an infirm dependent under one of the following credits: the spouse or common-law partner credit, the child tax credit, the eligible dependent credit, the caregiver credit or the infirm dependent credit.

As well, Yukoners completing their 2011 tax return are no longer subject to a \$10,000 limit on eligible expenses related to the financial dependent relatives when claiming the Yukon medical expense tax credit. As a result of this, caregivers who incur extraordinary medical and disability related expenses will receive full tax recognition for these expenses. Prior to 2011, caregivers who incurred medical and disability related expenses for an aging parent, sibling or other financially dependent relative were not able to claim expenses above \$10,000.

Many Yukoners make large personal sacrifices for a loved one — be it their child, their mother, husband, wife or other family member struggling with a severe disability — often while trying to hold down a job.

Yukon government, in recognition of the value that these Yukoners provide has lightened their load with these two measures. I would like to acknowledge and thank the Member for Riverdale South for her amendment to the motion. I would like to thank our Member for Watson Lake for putting forward this motion and also for the good work that is being done by our Minister of Health and Social Services and Yukon Housing Corporation as well, in terms of their support in moving for-

ward with this initiative. I would also like to thank our Member for Porter Creek South for his passion and the experience he brings to our caucus. Certainly, again, it speaks to that strength and the diversity of the great team of people that we have in the government at this time. With that, I would like to commend this motion to the House.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I would like to talk a little bit about this motion too. I would like to talk a little bit about the campaign trail. What we discussed in the House — we discussed a lot different things, but during our last campaign I believe that this was one of the big issues, door to door, that all members of this House — whether they be rural or not rural — talked about.

A lot of other discussions we have in this House, we probably haven't heard much of on the doorstep. So when we bring motions forward on Wednesdays like this, I believe it's important to hear everyone — “no need to debate” is what came across the floor from the Leader of the Official Opposition. But honestly, I'd like to hear everybody's opinion, because this is the stuff that we hear on the doorsteps. So I believe it's good to hear everybody's point on it. I would like to commend the Member for Riverdale South, also, for the amendments to it.

In my response to the Premier's budget speech, I said that near and dear to my heart is the Yukon Party's commitment to enhance home care for seniors to allow them to stay in their homes and home communities as long as possible. Being from a rural riding, it's a little bit different. What we have locally here in Whitehorse for caregivers and for children with disabilities and stuff like that — there's a lot more here than there is in the communities. So it's near and dear to the rural communities.

As indicated by the Premier's Budget Address, we're hiring six new employees for home care purposes. We're planning a replacement for a lodge in Dawson, conducting a feasibility study for a new facility here in Whitehorse and maintaining our position at the Thomson Centre for 10 more years, all for about \$3.4 million. In my community, we have a seniors care facility. The next wish-list thing down the line is extended care — rather than having to leave the communities, for seniors to be able to be closer to the places where they grew up and lived.

Seniors in rural communities want to stay in their communities. Being uprooted or moved from their families can be a difficult task in a difficult time. Helping seniors stay in their homes and home communities longer, by any means, is a worthwhile goal. That was the Yukon Party's campaign platform: “A better quality of life.”

The companionship by having someone who comes out with home care — I know in my community, having a home care nurse come to seniors and allowing them to stay in their home — it alleviates stress on long-term facilities and stuff like that by keeping them in their homes longer, which saves the taxpayers' dollars. But these elderly people look forward to the comradeship and the companionship from the home care person who would come by and see them once a week or twice a

week, whether it's helping them with their laundry or doing the dishes. Loneliness is something that you see with seniors.

We're already providing assistance by way of the pioneer utility grant, but we have the home repair program through Yukon Housing — \$35,000 you can use to upgrade your house, whether it's a better heating system, better quality of air, hand-rails, decks and stuff like that for older people.

Assisting with these home repairs and upgrades is another way that we can help. Also, the caregiver tax credit and providing funding for specialized equipment are great ways to support families in these circumstances. Our federal taxes have a line item already available for the caregiver tax credit. As tax can be complicated, it is nice to have one line in there. I think we could use a federal model and apply it to the Yukon tax as well, ensuring that the Yukon credit claw back or reduce the federal one. So doubling up on that is good.

In closing, I believe the family is the most important thing to each of us. Further, I feel that a good society is based on strong families. Supporting families is supporting society. This motion, Mr. Speaker, supports families and, therefore, society. It is only right that we, as elected representatives of the society, unanimously support and follow through with this motion.

I commend all those who got up and spoke to this today, and I look forward to motions in the House that reflect the concerns for all Yukoners, which we debate and get to listen to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are there any other members who wish to speak to the motion as amended? Before the member speaks, I will ask one more time: Are there any other members who wish to speak to the motion as amended?

Ms. McLeod: I just want to express my appreciation for the support of all the government ministers and caucus and from the opposite side of the House. On behalf of all Yukoners, thank you.

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

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: D'accord.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: D'accord.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

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

Motion No. 24 agreed to as amended

Motion No. 115

Clerk: Motion No. 115, standing in the name of Ms. McLeod.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Watson Lake THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue working with industry, communities and First Nations to promote the Yukon tourism brand that markets Yukon as an attractive year-round destination.

Ms. McLeod: Each year, the Department of Tourism and Culture publishes their annual tourism plan that details where they are marketing, who they are marketing to and how they will market and then the goals and objectives they are trying to achieve. At the end of the year, they also produce an associated report card that lets Yukoners know how they've done. Few jurisdictions in the country have this degree of transparency and accountability.

In the plan you will find a listing of the department's key marketing programs and initiatives, including the following: the vacation planner and vacation guide, which promotes all Yukon regions and tourism businesses across the territory; the Travel Yukon website that gives potential visitors information and contacts to help them plan their trip; a cutting edge digital strategy that outlines the department's electronic, on-line and social media marketing plans; a global media relations strategy to enhance the impact and reach of the department's media and public relations initiatives and help leverage the resources and support of key partners around the world; adoption of the Canadian Tourism Commission Explorer Quotient segmentation program to help Tourism Yukon more effectively target potential travellers from around the world and enhance the department's presence in the commission's marketing programs; the domestic Destination: Yukon campaign; the Yukon scenic drives program; our work with the Yukon Convention Bureau to promote the Yukon as a meeting, convention and incentive travel destination, which results in millions of dollars of direct spending in the territory each year; our work with Sport Yukon to promote the Yukon as a sport tourism destination, to take advantage of the incredible infrastructure we have in the territory, and yesterday the Minister of Community Services told us about the upcoming women's fastball championships coming to the Yukon — so some proof that it's working; our work with the Wilderness Tourism Association of Yukon to promote Yukon as a world-class wilderness tourism destination; the Tourism North marketing consortium between Yukon, Alaska, Alberta and B.C. targeting the long-haul, rubber-tire market; a

joint Yukon-Alaska marketing program; the Canada's North marketing partnership with Nunavut and Northwest Territories and the maintenance of general sales agents in Germany and Japan.

Tourism Yukon also continues to attract visitors and maximize revenues for tourism operators by pursuing opportunities in the winter and what were traditionally the spring and fall shoulder seasons to truly establish the territory as a year-round destination. Thank you.

Mr. Barr: I will start by saying I will be the sole speaker on behalf of the Official Opposition, and hopefully we can get back to the budget.

I would like to start by saying that as a musician and small business owner, I support the efforts to attract visitors within Canada and from around the world. The Department of Tourism has noted that there is a \$27:1 return on investment, and I have a hard time seeing any other sector that generates such a return for Yukoners.

However, I have a significant concern about our branding efforts. While we have a magnificent brand to offer, a brand must be based on a reality, otherwise it is false and misleading advertising. My concern is that behind the brand we see this government picking one winner over others. Tourism is taking a back seat to mineral and oil and gas development. Extractive industries seem to have this government's ear and its heart and mind. I would like to quote a letter from Neil Hartling, Chair of the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon: "In our September *Tourism Times* I wrote, 'The looming election is a great unknown and the interests of tourism businesses hang in the balance.' Well, the results of the election are in, but early signs indicate that the interests of tourism businesses continue to hang in the balance.

"The uncertainty began when WestJet announced their plans to fly to Whitehorse. We, as an industry, were challenged to marry our commitment to free enterprise with knowing that one of our own was under siege.

In talking with our members, it was clear we have all benefited greatly from the competition that Air North, Yukon's Airline, brought in 2002. We now enjoy tickets that are priced the lowest in 30 years — perhaps the lowest ever when corrected for inflation. We benefit from local jobs, local purchasing and significant infrastructure that would not be here if Air North was based in the south.

"In addition, by partnering with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, encouraging local shareholders and donating to local events and causes, Air North has set a high bar for community benefits. Based on the tremendous public outcry that began minutes after the announcement, it was clear these benefits have been widely enjoyed.

"On February 13, the government issued a press release committing support Air North. In it, they recognized the economic contributions of a local carrier and the role they have played promoting Yukon as a tourism destination. The government seemed to be listening to its constituents.

"Unfortunately, the very next day, the government unilaterally announced eight new principles into the Peel River Wa-

tershed Planning process. Disregarding First Nation governments, 7 years of work by the Planning Commission and feedback from thousands of Yukoners, it is no surprise that the reaction has been swift and, save for a few unsurprising voices, angry. Overnight, coffee shop chatter and dinner table discussions shifted from Rendezvous, the Quest and impending holidays to land planning processes, free enterprise and the kind of Yukon we want to live in — and the kind of Yukon we want our grand- and our great-grandchildren to live in.

"Within weeks, Yukoners were then asked to participate in consultations about oil and gas disposition in Southern Yukon. It appeared the decision was predetermined, prompting another outcry by residents — and, as it turns out, a number of concerned European tourists and potential tourists as well.

"To be clear, this is not a mining/no-mining debate. It is a discussion about where, how, when and at what cost. Yukon has room for harvesting, resource extraction, agriculture, tourism and outfitting, as well as two- and four-legged Yukoners seeking recreation or seclusion. This diversity can co-exist within the territory.

"I am a long-time Yukoner and local business owner. I'm also chair of an industry association that represents hundreds of Yukoners running successful local businesses. Each of us wants a prosperous, dynamic, diverse economy. Each of us depends on natural resources to heat our homes, run our electronics and drive our cars. But we also deserve a real chance to operate our businesses — just as every Yukoner deserves a real chance to have their voices heard.

"Beginning, primarily, as a mining charter, today's Air North has grown to service locals, tourists, mining companies and every industry in between. This didn't occur over night. They took methodical steps to grow when the business plan made sense — and never at the risk of losing their core market. They never, in my opinion, underestimated the importance of community benefit and listening to their clients ... Ideas to live by, if you ask me."

What Mr. Hartling said is that we must have a balanced approach. There is room for all, but only if that is managed in a respectful, consultative manner.

I would also suggest that we not kill the goose that laid the golden egg in our rush to feed China's economy. That is where the problem lies. With regard to the Peel — it represents the untamed, undeveloped beauty that Yukoners market to tourists. The Peel is not only a representation, however. It is an economic generator for a number of small businesses for the Mayo region and for the host of people who are employed in this sector and its spin-offs. By picking mineral extraction over other values, we undercut the brand we seek to market and thrive from.

Whitehorse Trough oil and gas: the southern Yukon is our gateway to the hundreds of thousands of tourists who help make our economy diverse and not dependent on mineral prices. Recent reports have indicated that the Southern Lakes area is best suited for an amazing tourism industry, yet we have this sector of oil and gas development pending in the Whitehorse Trough. Do tourists want to see oil rigs, fragmented landscapes and wilderness developed, or to drink our pristine wa-

ter? Is the sight of flaring gas wells the first sight we wish to provide as visitors fly into Whitehorse? I think not. Yes, Dawson City generates tourism with the gold mining industry, but that is because that history is 100 years old. This is the plan for the territory? If so, we need to update our ads and brandings.

Keno: residents gave Keno a new lease on life by developing a vibrant local tourism industry. These are the people who stayed after the mining left, and they built a new town around tourism. This is now threatened by mining and mining roads on all sides of Keno, not just near but literally right on top of the town. This is an example of the government choosing one winner over another industry. Where is the balance? Then there is free-entry staking, where opening up wilderness to mining may be difficult to market Yukon as an attractive destination. Without any land use plans, how is tourism logically included in the economy? These are just a few of the examples that ran through my head when I sat down to develop my response and, I must say, it saddened me. As the wild remains wild, so does the dream of people to walk, visit and live in the Yukon. This is true not only for visitors, but Yukoners too.

I would like to read from the website of the company that developed the Larger than Life logo: In 2006, Tourism Yukon undertook a major consumer research project that examined what visitors think of in association with Yukon, and why they visit the Yukon Territory in Canada. The Yukon brand project also defined the brand elements that capture the unique spirit of the Yukon. The Yukon branding study resulted in a set of distinctive brand elements that reflect the warmth and beauty of Yukon's people, landscapes, culture and history.

This branding appears to be at odds with reality on the ground and unfortunately it may be misleading. This motion doesn't do the Department of Tourism and Culture justice. They have a much better strategy than simply promoting the brand. Supporting First Nation tourism ventures through transfer payments to NGOs, cultural and archeological promotions and centres, maintenance of history sites, museum supports for artists and collections, as well as marketing around the world. Although I support this motion, I wonder why we cannot go further.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I'd like to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this motion forward and I'd also like to thank the members opposite for their support for this motion in the spirit of cooperation. I guess before I go on with what I have to say here, I'm incredibly honoured to work with such a fantastic team at Tourism and Culture.

For those of us who are fortunate enough to call the territory our home, or have experienced Yukon through the awe-struck impressions of a visiting family member or a friend, we can understand how Yukon's staggering beauty, culture and historical richness make an impact that stays with us throughout our lifetime. How often do we pause just to consider how our Yukon stories are told around the world and how the breathtaking landscapes that frame our daily drives to work and provide the backdrops of our weekend playgrounds capture the imaginations of people around the country and around the globe?

How does the spell of Robert W. Service's moving words leave the page to become an actual experience? I have great confidence in this Yukon Party government to support the Department of Tourism and Culture in its partnerships with industry that impassions the hundreds of thousands of visitors who come each year in their pursuit of outdoor adventures, dancing aurora borealis and events and festivals that grace our galleries and stages throughout the year.

It's due to the efforts of this dedicated team that history comes alive for visitors as they retrace the footsteps of ancient Beringian creatures, First Nation traders and determined gold seekers.

It is due to the efforts of this Yukon Party government, the department and industry that I stand before you today to recognize and applaud the marketing challenges and larger-than-life successes of which I'm honoured to serve as minister. From arts, archives, historic sites, heritage resources, museums, paleontology, archeology, marketing or product development, Tourism Yukon works diligently to give both Yukon residents and visitors to the territory a rich and diverse experience all 12 months of the year through its Destination: Yukon initiatives.

Through strategic and collaborative partnerships with the private sector and other governments, the department enriches our lives by generating long-term economic growth and revenues through the development and marketing of Yukon's tourism industry and by maximizing socio-cultural benefits for both residents and visitors through the preservation, development and interpretation of historic resources, visual, literary and performing arts and cultural industries.

Through its efforts to attract Yukon's key target audiences from around the world, the department has been successfully positioning the territory as a destination where travellers can discover and create experiences that are truly larger than life. Tourism is one of the world's largest industries and is one of its fastest growing economic sectors. In Yukon, the dynamic tourism sector contributes positively to the territory and to the lives of Yukoners in numerous ways that we may not always attribute due credit. Each year, tourism contributes almost \$200 million to the economy, and one in four Yukon businesses generates a part of their revenues from tourism. Of these businesses, more than half of their revenues are directly attributed to tourism.

I would now like to provide some brief context as to some of the challenges that the tourism industry faces across the territory, across the county and around the world and outline some of the strategies the department employs to meet these challenges head on.

Early in 2010, a rising Canadian dollar, uncertainty around a U.S. economic recovery, and a reduction in cruise ship passengers to Alaska were all factors that were anticipated to negatively affect visitation to the territory that year.

Despite these overwhelming global trends, Yukon demonstrated its unsurpassed resilience and posted an increase in visitation numbers that exceeded visitation prior to the dramatic global economic downturn that rocked the world in 2008. While the majority of jurisdictions in Canada were still struggling to achieve their pre-2008 levels of visitation, Yukon

boasted a 10-percent increase in visitation in 2010. In fact, according to the international travel data supplied by Statistics Canada, Yukon led the country in growth of one-or-more-night travel by non-residents, outperforming every other jurisdiction in the country.

In 2011, more than 309,000 visitors entered Yukon, which recorded strong growth in visitation from other Canadian jurisdictions and overseas markets. This reflects the department's strategy to focus on the markets versus the U.S. as the weakened American economy has had an impact on the visitation from that market.

As the 2012 summer tourism season fast approaches, global economic conditions, fuel prices, currency fluctuations and border issues remain as some of the conditions the department faces each day as it works to market Yukon as the destination of choice among a host of competing jurisdictions.

The good news is that tourism has proven a strategic, stable and resilient economic generator for Yukon, and our products and brand name remain in demand for world travellers. Tourism is working more closely with its partners than ever before to discover and seize opportunities to maximize visitation and revenues. Some of the strategic marketing and product development, visitor services and research initiatives include effective, market-driven promotion of the territory through the integration of the Larger than Life brand and experiences in all target markets, as well as enhanced overseas marketing initiatives with the support of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, or CanNor, as it's more commonly known, and also enhanced domestic marketing initiatives through the pan-north program to entice Canadians south of 60 to discover the north, with the support of CanNor and in partnership with Nunavut and the Northwest Territories and also enhanced partnerships with Alaska to leverage its marketing efforts to attract visitors to Yukon and also the continued development of heritage attractions in all regions of Yukon in support of cultural tourism that is sustainable and respectful of heritage and environmental values.

Finally, the provision of sage stewardship of our territory's artistic, cultural and historic resources, heritage resource management and sustainability.

I'd be remiss today if I did not touch upon some of the highlights of the operational units that make up the department. The marketing unit team delivers a fully integrated marketing program to consumers, the travel trade and the international travel media. The programs have resulted in increasing consumer awareness through vehicles that have generated over 210 million impressions via on-line marketing initiatives, over 230,000 qualified inquiries from potential visitors and over 240,000 unique visitors to the department's website. Also, it exposed over 23.6 million consumers to the department's brand.

We're also soliciting and hosting international travel media to promote Yukon product and create destination awareness, including the hosting of 80 journalists and broadcasters from around the world.

The resulting coverage generated over \$31 million in equivalent advertising value. We received numerous media

awards such as two first-place Canadian Tourism Commission Northern Lights Awards just in 2012 — one for an article featuring skiing in the Tombstones and the other for photography for a *Baltimore Sun* article featuring Yukon.

We're also encouraging the travel trade to promote Yukon product by creating advocates for our brand and our experiences that have resulted in the hosting of over 73 travel trade and media planners right here in the territory and the department's participation in an additional 13 travel trade consumer and media marketplaces outside of the Yukon.

The department has a long and illustrious history when it comes to the involvement in and partnerships forged around major events for use in the promotion of the Yukon. Most recently, Tourism Yukon utilized the national marketing campaign centered on the 2007 Canada Winter Games and the 2010 Winter Olympic Games to maximize promotion of this territory.

On our doorstep and a major coup for both the department and the territory is Yukon being awarded the host destination for Canadian Tourism Commission's 2012 GoMedia Canada Marketplace to be held in Whitehorse May 27 to 31. GoMedia Marketplace, the premier networking event for Canada tourism industry professionals and international travel media, will bring over 120 print and on-line journalists and broadcasters from around the world to the territory to glean the latest and most coveted Yukon travel stories. The resulting unpaid media coverage is expected to generate hundreds of thousands of dollars of equivalent advertising value, and I think that is a low estimate.

Yukon venues and businesses such as suppliers, properties and tour operators will reap promotional and financial benefits. This is the first time the GoMedia Marketplace has been hosted north of 60 and marks the Canadian Tourism Commission's long-standing and continued respect of Tourism Yukon's ability and excellence in the delivery of major initiatives.

Along with Tourism Yukon's delivery of strategic marketing programs targeting Canada and our neighbours in the United States, they also initiate strategic promotions in eight overseas markets that include Germany, Switzerland, Australia, the U.K., Japan, France, the Netherlands and South Korea. Two markets I would like to point to members that have performed well and are worth mentioning are Australia and Japan. Over the past five years, visitation from Australia has grown 35 percent. In Japan, due to the development and promotion of new Whitehorse aurora viewing packages, visitation from that market has dramatically increased this past winter, and we expect it to continue to climb.

Critical to overseas growth is the need for air access. The department continues to actively work and explore new opportunities with international air carriers. Condor's direct flights from Frankfurt to Whitehorse each summer season are an example of the department's success in attracting air carriers to the territory. In addition, the department helped to facilitate a strategic partnership and interline arrangement between Condor and Air North, the Yukon's airline. Did you know that we are the smallest jurisdiction in North America to receive direct access from Frankfurt?

Yukon's visitor information centres or our VICs in Whitehorse, Dawson, Haines Junction, Beaver Creek, Carcross and Watson Lake help the department showcase each region of the territory and provide visitors with current and detailed information on the things they want to do and see in the Yukon. The six VICs boast 42 seasonal workers, most of whom have been with the unit for over 15 years and provide a vital link with other communities and cultural and interpretive centres throughout Yukon and in neighbouring jurisdictions. Opening this May is the new Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Dä Kų cultural centre in Haines Junction from which the VIC will operate.

The overarching theme of this stunning modern facility is Yukon culture and art, and the centre will offer visitors with a gallery feel, set, of course, against the beautiful backdrop of the St. Elias mountain range. The centre features 25 works of art by Yukon artisans and designers and is yet another stellar example of the department's focus on partnerships.

Last, however certainly not least, is the department's product development and research team, which works closely with industry to support and provide business counsel, to help advance product development and knowledge of the industry, track the performance of the department's promotional efforts and collect accurate and current market intelligence to strategically inform the department in its ongoing efforts toward a sustainable tourism industry.

The department, of course, cannot exist in isolation and thrives on the partnerships that it has forged. The department looks to the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon, or TIA, as it's more commonly called, to ensure that the industry remains strong and vibrant and sustainable in all regions of the territory. TIA Yukon is the industry association for well over 500 members and represents all facets of the industry. The organization facilitates tourism awareness campaigns in the territory and is the conduit of key information between industry, governments and industry associations. TIA Yukon advocates the vital role tourism plays in all of our lives and the crucial contributions the industry makes to our economy and our quality of life. The Senior Marketing Committee, or SMC, is a sub-committee of TIA that's made up of industry representatives that bring a wealth of on-the-ground marketing and industry experience to the tourism table.

Appointed by TIA Yukon, the members of SMC work on behalf of the industry to provide marketing advice and recommendations to the department. While the efforts of the SMC help to shape the strategic direction of our marketing programs, the department continues to work with communities, regions, other stakeholder groups and NGOs to increase tourism revenues. Through community tours, meetings and our new industry-specific website, which can be found at www.travel yukon.com/industry, we are able to keep stakeholders and industry operators informed with up-to-date information on our activities, including a marketing calendar, buy-in opportunities to our programs, research, resource material, and toolkits to help operators make better business decisions.

On behalf of this government and the Department of Tourism and Culture, I would like to recognize the efforts of our

tourism industry, including those that belong to TIA, the Yukon Convention Bureau and the Yukon First Nations Tourism Association, to name a few, for the invaluable contributions they make to our territory.

Also key to the department's success is the collaborative relationship it maintains with the Canadian Tourism Commission as they work together to create a compelling invitation to visit Yukon. These organizations also help the department tell our Yukon story in ways that connect visitors to memorable experiences in the territory.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the challenges the tourism industry faces in marketing the territory to the world and recognize the strategies the department embraces on our behalf to overcome them. The department's team is highly regarded by its peers both in and beyond the territory and is often called upon to participate in national and international committees to provide expertise to key national initiatives — initiatives that develop Yukon's tourism industry and provide us all with an increased quality of life, reminding us of who we are and where we come from.

I look forward to voting in favour of this motion to support this Yukon Party government's efforts to continue working with industry, communities and First Nations to promote the Tourism Yukon brand and market the territory as an attractive year-round destination. I look forward to the support of the other two parties to support this motion unanimously and find common ground in the celebration of our vibrant culture and rich northern traditions.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will turn the floor over to members opposite for their comments.

Mr. Silver: I rise today to comment on Motion No. 115, put forward by the Member for Watson Lake, which encourages government, industry, community and First Nation collaboration to promote the Yukon for year-round tourism. During this legislative sitting we will address many issues important to Yukoners. My colleague, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, and I are committed to giving them the time and attention they deserve. To play our part in accomplishing that, my comments today will be brief and I will be the only speaker on behalf of the Liberal caucus.

I have the great honour of representing the Klondike, an area with a long and dramatic history and a great deal of appeal to tourists today. The Klondike Visitors Association encourages travellers to come for the history and stay for the adventure. The area has been home to the vibrant Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation for many generations. The gold rush delivered more than just a chance at great wealth for prospectors, and the era's characters and stories live on today. We enjoy an unparalleled natural environment, perfect for outdoor exploration and exploring. We share our history, our heritage and our home community with many thousands of tourists every year.

To be sure, we would like to share our community with more tourists. Their patronage feeds a key part of our local economy. This motion calls for marketing Yukon as a year-round destination and Dawson City would certainly benefit from a longer tourism season.

Currently, the tourism season dies down significantly after Discovery Days or, as the locals call it, "Disco Days." The show still goes on at Diamond Tooth Gertie's three times a night, seven days a week, but after the Westmark tours filter out after the first show, the rest of the night is quite quiet.

There is an opportunity to expand the tourism season by marketing Dawson City as an ideal location for corporate retreat weekends. I pitched this idea of a corporate golf tournament, followed by entertainment at Gertie's, to the public relations department at Predator Group. The idea was met with great enthusiasm. Imagine the influx to the local economy if one week Ford Canada CEOs and executives took over the town; the next week, Apple or Rogers Telecommunications. Successfully marketing Dawson City this way to eight companies will extend the tourism industry a month on either side of the short season. "Larger than Life" should also apply to Tourism's marketing strategies, Mr. Speaker.

Whatever direction the department goes in, I implore them to allow the Klondike Visitors Association to be at the table. In the last decade, we have seen their responsibilities decrease from being a player in the tourism marketing engine, to just keeping the doors of the casino open. They have made major cuts to staffing and entertainment costs just to stay afloat, yet their contribution formula to Yukon Lotteries remains the same. I applaud the excellent work of the local KVA staff. They are an amazing, extremely intelligent, and committed community-orientated group.

As the House considers this motion for the Yukon government to work with stakeholders to promote year-round tourism, I urge the Minister of Tourism to invite the Klondike Visitors Association to their conversation and to take advantage of their expertise and their enthusiasm for a vibrant tourism industry in the Klondike.

To move from Klondike tourism to the territory generally, we encourage the government to work with the industry associations, including the KVA, but also Yukon Historical and Museums Association as well as the umbrella group — Tourism Industry Association of Yukon. We also encourage government to work with industry to enhance meetings, conventions, and incentive travel, particularly during slow periods for accommodations in April and over the December and January period.

Opportunities also exist to partner with businesses already in the Yukon to help promote the tourism industry through their company media departments. For example, look at the Westmark Hotels website. It shows pictures and information on their hotels and that's it. Hundreds of thousands of people visit these and similar websites. This could be a great canvas for more comprehensive Yukon tourism information and an excellent opportunity to develop new partnerships within the industry.

Opportunities also exist in our rich First Nation culture and heritage in the Yukon. Our First Nation art, culture and heritage allow the Yukon to differentiate itself. Lots of places in the world are beautiful and remote, but the wellspring of traditional arts is very strong here and very unique. A particular focus on developing and building First Nation performing arts and traditional artifacts would build on the momentum that Council of

Yukon First Nations' cultural contingent at the Olympics started. We believe this has appeal for a wide range of demographics that might be interested in visiting the Yukon.

This motion urges the Yukon government to work with First Nations in developing year-round tourism. Does this include Yukon government support for developing ethnic and cultural attractions? Currently, it seems that the most work needed to sustain festivals and other tourist-centered organizations is done by volunteers and societies.

Government tourism product development is currently focused primarily on delivering awareness workshops to increase industry knowledge. The focus is also on supporting industry stakeholders through their productive development incentives and initiatives, including projects identified, best practices, code of conduct and industry education presentations with broad benefits to the Yukon tourism industry.

We would suggest that the department should redirect some resources as it pursues its mandate to work with Yukon's tourism industry to meet emerging and existing market demand. The department would better serve our community's existing institutions and festivals if, rather than reviewing and delivering workshops, they contribute financially and allow local control over decisions that affect local communities. This is where their product development expertise would be most usefully applied.

In closing, as promised, that I would keep our comments brief today — in short, we believe that the Yukon has the people, the culture and the environment to bring tourism from around the globe. We encourage the government to spend on attracting domestic tourists in the gateway markets of western Canada. We encourage the government to develop appropriate measures to determine the real return on investments from research devoted to tourism marketing and also to enhance our industry, we must work with all stakeholders, including those community organizations, like the Klondike Visitors Association, who are already experts in their areas.

A year-round tourism season can build on the strengths we already have. We will be supporting this motion today, and we thank everybody for their words.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I am very thrilled to rise to speak to this motion. As some members may have grown to become familiar, I am very passionate about tourism and culture. As the previous Minister of Tourism and Culture for some nine years, I've learned a few things about the industry. That is why I'm very pleased to see this motion coming forward. Again, I'd like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Member for Watson Lake for bringing attention to the importance of tourism in our territory.

As has already been pointed out, there could be no question that there are a number of challenges facing tourism, and not just in the territory, but worldwide. It is because of those challenges — and I refer to 9/11 and flooding and forest fires, and there was the SARS outbreak at one time. There were outbreaks of rivalries worldwide — a litany of various issues that have all impacted our tourism industry globally.

As a result, over the years, it has really encouraged us as a government to work very closely and collaboratively with the tourism industry. What it has done as well is encourage us to be strategic in how we market the Yukon as a destination of choice through the good work of the Department of Tourism and Culture, working in collaboration with entities such as the Senior Marketing Committee, which is comprised of individuals with marketing expertise — not necessarily based on any geographic region of the territory, but those individuals who actually are familiar with tourism marketing and are very passionate about how we go about attracting visitors to the Yukon.

So, as a result, Senior Marketing Committee has been in force and in effect and it is a mechanism that reports directly through to the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon. I think that partnership has worked very, very well. When we talk about tourism, it's really important to talk about resiliency — because of all of these differences and challenges that have been brought about over the years, tourism has had to become very resilient to change all the time. As a result, we have had to become more responsive to those changes and how we can more effectively market the Yukon as a destination of choice. I would like to just thank our Senior Marketing Committee and thank the many organizations — TIA Yukon; there has been mention of the Yukon Convention Bureau, Yukon Quest — there are many, many organizations throughout the territory — Klondike Visitors Association as well — that the Department of Tourism and Culture continues to work very closely with on all of the delivery of its marketing programs.

When we talk about marketing, we also talk about visitor services and product development and we talk about research as well. When we talk about tourism, the mandate, of course, is that when it comes to delivering tourism marketing programs, the Department of Tourism and Culture has taken very seriously that it be industry-led, research-based, and market-driven. Those three lines that form part of the mandate of the Department of Tourism and Culture are really housed within our annual tourism implementation plan, which the MLA for Watson Lake did speak to — very eloquently, I might add — in that in effect, it's a blueprint for every year. It sets the direction as to where we are to dedicate our resources in all fields, whether product development, visitor services, marketing, research, and so forth. Then at the end of the year, there is a report card that is also delivered and it reports upon whether or not we have met our targeted outcomes — and by and large we have.

I think it is a testament to the very spirit and the very strength of the partnerships that tourism has been able to generate over the years with industry. Partnerships are really at the heart of being effective when it comes to marketing the territory, because it doesn't just rest on the shoulders of one particular government or one particular agency or one particular community, it's a shared responsibility. Just talk to each and every individual in this territory — it's really what makes us proud to call Yukon our home. It's because of the brand of the territory; the brand of the tourism market. It not only helps attract visitors from all over the globe to come here and visit, but it also encourages individuals to come here and to set up shop, to invest and to raise families and to add to that quality of life

as we know it today. So it is very important that we have a very healthy tourism sector and, likewise, all the sectors that also help advance our tourism brand.

That, of course, has to do with heritage; it has to do with our historic resources; it that has to do with our film and sound recording; and it has to do with our other cultural industries, arts and culture to be sure. I think that because we are small enough as a territory, we have been able to effectively work together on all of those elements that make the tourism brand so strong and powerful in the Yukon, and as a result has enabled the Yukon to be resilient and to be able to hold its own when it comes to continuing to attract visitors on a yearly basis.

The Minister of Tourism and Culture made reference to many partnerships, whether it is working with the other two territories, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, on the Pan North Consortium marketing approach — that has worked really well since the first initiation of the Look Up North marketing campaign that was launched during the Canada Winter Games. Now, thanks to the Government of Canada, for the first time in many years, I might add, we are now promoting the north through the subsequent Pan North Consortium marketing program that takes advantage of all the investments in the B-roll, and the high definition video, and photography — all the assets that go toward making our tourism brand so very strong.

Likewise, our partnerships with the State of Alaska — we talked about Tourism North, which is a very strong collaboration with the Alaska Travel Industry Association and is how we market Alaska and Yukon as a brand. It has worked very well. By leveraging those resources through the government of the State of Alaska and through other partnerships, it has really served Yukon well.

Other partnerships — again, thanks to the Government of Canada, we have been able to leverage additional dollars through CanNor for overseas funding marketing partnerships — again, another form of cooperative marketing. Building on the good work that has been done in the past, reaching out to some of our target markets and key international overseas markets, working with the wholesalers and the general sales agents overseas — this, too, is yet another strength and has helped Yukon to weather the storm in terms of the recession that has very much hit the United States hard, which has been, by and large, the major market of importance for respective regions such as the Yukon over the years. As a result, we've been able to diversify our interest in the tourism markets and we've been able to reach out to international markets overseas. Again, that has a lot to be said.

Likewise, we've been able to partner with local air carriers — Air North, to be sure — on promoting Yukon in some of our key gateway cities. I refer to Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver and to some extent, Ottawa and the Greater Toronto Area. “Destination: Yukon” folding into the Pan North Consortium marketing approach has worked very well too. It served very well and, as a result, we've seen flourishing numbers when it comes to the Canadian market, as we have seen in the international markets, as well, to help compensate with some of that loss in the United States market.

Again, really, it has all very much contributed to by industry working in collaboration with many different entities throughout the Government of Yukon and also working in partnership with many organizations throughout the territory.

Of course, when it comes to advocating and growing the tourism market or tourism brand, so to speak, it's not just about markets; it's about investments in key infrastructure in support of the growth of the tourism industry. When we talk about international markets, that is why it is so very important that we continue to invest in air access, which has continued to see tremendous growth over the recent years. That's why we continue to invest in airports and infrastructure. In this year's budget we are talking about extending sewer and water access beyond the airport within the perimeter of the airport to be able to facilitate that added growth. A second jetway passenger bridge is also integral in helping our added growth in air travel. That is a very key market. Likewise, continued investments in Dawson City, Old Crow and others as a result of being driven by the local economic markets, for which tourism has a great significant role to play.

When it comes to other infrastructure, I touch upon our heritage assets and heritage institutions — our museums and our Yukon cultural centres. We've seen tremendous growth in capacity among our heritage sector over the years. Again, it's working in collaboration with entities such as the Yukon Historical and Museums Association, Yukon Heritage Resources Board and all the various museum associations, the boards of directors, cultural centres, First Nation governments and by making funding available. We have seen a real flourishing of the importance of the heritage sector in the Yukon.

Of course, there was reference made earlier today about the cultural centres — one being Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre housed on the Whitehorse waterfront. What a tremendous addition to the Whitehorse waterfront and what a tremendous asset to the territory as a very important icon and anchor that is housed along the waterfront. We are going to benefit so much by having that particular facility in place.

I recall being at the Adäka Cultural Festival last year on the Whitehorse waterfront, although it was situated around the Old Fire Hall — another great cultural venue that this government has helped bring to life with the Yukon Arts Centre and the Chamber of Commerce.

The cultural festival was a phenomenal success and I know that this year it will be even bigger and better because it will be situated surrounding the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre. The collaboration between the library — another very important venue in terms of having additional public space available — it's a tremendous example of a partnership that's adding to our tourism brand.

The new Champagne and Aishihik Cultural Centre is yet another accomplishment to give tremendous credit to Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. That has been a project, an initiative, in the making for many, many years and they have done their research. They have done their homework and they've reached out and, as a result, we have a great partnership with Tourism Yukon — a new visitor information centre coming to fruition this summer and the addition of Parks Can-

ada as well. That also helps add to the strength of the tourism brand.

Initiatives such as the Tombstone Interpretive Centre, housed within the heart of the territorial park that our government designated, in collaboration with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, some years ago. That, too, is helping to add to the strength of our vision for the territory as an attractive place to visit.

Waterfront improvements — I just touched upon the new Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre, but that doesn't even take into account over \$21-million worth of investments in other added features along the waterfront, whether it's interpretive trails or lighting or investments in the expansion of the MacBride Museum and the Old Fire Hall, the refurbishment of the trolley and the extension of the trolley along the waterfront, and also the roundhouse, which houses that as well — all the significant investments by the City of Whitehorse and many other partners. Again, this is adding to making us a very attractive destination by having those added features, added attractions, to ensure that visitors do stay longer in the territory.

There have been significant increases and improvements to infrastructure and signage at highway pullouts by the Department of Tourism and Culture, working with Environment and Highways and Public Works. Significant investments continue to be made in our highway infrastructure, and I am sure that the Minister of Highways and Public Works will talk about some of those investments that also make us a very attractive and accessible place for many.

I spoke briefly about investments in festivals, such as the Adäka Cultural Festival. There was also a discussion about Dawson City Music Festival. Investments have been made in funding mechanisms, whether it is the tourism cooperative marketing fund or product development assistance program or investments made in our website to enable partners to be able to showcase their products and all that they have to offer as a visitor destination.

I want to congratulate all of the tourism sector in the territory for doing a great job and working in close collaboration with many entities, many different funding partners, in ensuring that the communities are reflected in that ongoing vision.

Rest assured that it is not an easy feat, to be sure, but it is one that has made us very resilient and very responsive to the changes in the global network, but I think it has made us very strong as a territory. Again, I would just commend the good work and thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward this very important motion.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I also want to commend the Member for Watson Lake for this Motion No. 115. This is near and dear to my heart — the tourism industry — as that is what I did before I became the MLA for the Kluane riding.

I will keep most of my comments to my riding when it comes to tourism, and I would like to talk a little bit about the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, and I want to explain some balance — I hear the word "balance" quite a bit. I hear it on that side of the floor and I hear it on this side of the floor.

When I was a very young boy, members of the government came to us and told my grandfather that they were going to build a park, Kluane National Park. They told us about Banff and Jasper and the great tourism opportunities and everything that goes with it.

I became a member of the Kluane Park Management Board many years later and there were big concerns about the lack of people using the national parks. The Prime Minister spoke up about wanting all Canadians to be able to see their national parks. Kluane National Park, for those who don't know, is the world's largest non-polar ice field. It also holds the largest mountain in Canada.

Demographic user groups are changing. Baby-boomers — some of us are baby-boomers; some of us are baby-boomers' kids. The five-day overnight trips in a canoe or a kayak — those days are, through studies across the world, whether you're a whitewater enthusiast, Mr. Speaker, in Costa Rica going on a trip or hiking the Himalayas or whatever — nowadays, everybody wants to do it, but they want to tweet, they want to Facebook, they want to do it all. Things change and when it comes to balance, protecting an area is a wonderful thing, but you have to have balance. Our national park — through the tourism industry out, is five percent to six percent of our travellers' — destination people — tourism destination is to Haines Junction and up the Alaska Highway. Most of them are travelling back and forth to Alaska to destination Denali. There are a lot more activities and access to the park in Denali, so 95 percent of the retired tourists are people with money who are travelling up the Alaska Highway and who aren't young and agile and who aren't hikers or bikers.

Looking at the demographics and stuff, I believe balance is a key thing. It is, and I'll give you an example of a day of guiding in Kluane National Park with two old people in a boat on Kathleen Lake. We'd go and walk up between Louise Lake and Kathleen Lake and I'd have a boat with a four-stroke motor — quite environmentally friendly, by the way — and it would sit onshore there and I'd take two old guys and hold them and they'd have walking canes. We'd get up there for some of the best grayling fishing you could dream of and, at the same time, one of the residents who runs the business at Kathleen Lake came by — we stopped fishing — in his canoe. He had some young people in there who could access more. They canoed across the lake some young people who are the five to 10 percent who do that sort of stuff. The balance has to be there when it comes to tourism. You have to have opportunities.

Letter to the paper — somebody invited all MLAs to go canoe the Peel. How do we get there? I don't have a bunch of money to fly all my gear and supplies in. A little bit of access here and there, a little give-and-take works for all people to develop the tourism industry.

I was very proud to see our local First Nation partner become a co-manager — Kluane First Nation and Champagne and Aishihik First Nation — with the national park. It has opened up business opportunities. One of my friends who runs a boat tour on Kathleen Lake is a prime example of that. That gets some of the older Holland America people — which is totally free advertising through Holland America, because everybody looks at Holland America's website and sees the

rybody looks at Holland America's website and sees the Yukon logo. They might not book through them, but they see it. That's something to remember with Holland America.

The access with the national parks and the co-managing with the First Nations — they're looking at some of that. Back when Bill Brewster was MLA, he was pushing to get a road in there to see what's on our quarter. Libby Dulac — the great famous artist from Haines Junction — painted a picture of the Kaskawulsh Glacier, and it made it onto the quarter. That was the Yukon quarter. But who gets to see that? Who has seen it here? Unless you've taken a glacier flight, you haven't seen it. If we want the tourism industry to thrive, we have to look at different ideas. We have to make sure it's a balanced approach.

Off-season, the shoulder season, the balance, when I talk about tourism — I was talking with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King about activities I'll be doing this weekend. There are millions of dollars going into the economy of the Yukon right now with a few people coming from the south and locals who are going out to the summit on Easter weekend.

I helped develop that park, the Tatshenshini-Atkasine Park. They were going to shut down snowmobiling. They would have created a bit of a storm from locals. You know, maybe the gallery would have been filled with different people. Okay? But, Mr. Speaker, I sat with them and looked on a map and I said, "Let us do a balanced approach. We do not have to shut it all down, but this is where 99 percent of them ride. Put a little line on here to keep people out of this area and lots in there."

B.C. Parks did that. They came up three years in a row and I took them. I guided them down there. The economy still thrives; the environment is still taken care of.

The shoulder seasons: I talked with the Member for Klondike about the shoulder seasons and creating activities. He had some great ideas. And I want to talk a little bit about Tourism Yukon as a whole. Tourism Yukon — we have the Tourism department and the majority of it is in Whitehorse. I heard on the campaign trail, as I am sure the Member for Mayo-Tatchun did, when you talk about opportunities, people should see this. We have to let Tourism Yukon know that we have to diversify, be a little bit out there in the rural communities — whether it is in Dawson or in Watson Lake, Mayo, Carmacks, or Beaver Creek. An idea that is floating around right now is an interactive website, using technology. Everybody wants to Tweet stuff.

Just imagine sliding your mouse on a map of the Yukon into an area around Watson Lake and everything that is offered there — whether it is a campground, a business; whether it is a liquor store; whether it is a DMV; whether it is the weigh scales — stuff like that. We have to look to the technology that we have when it comes to year-round destinations.

I have spent a lot of years across the north. I have seen a lot of Asians come to look at the northern lights. That is just an untapped market. The Asian economy is good and we should be looking to Asia — we are already. I have some European friends and it is their 27th time coming to the Yukon. They landed last night and they are here for Easter weekend. So, if we want to look at tourism, we have to look at diversifying. We

have to watch the markets and see where the money is and we have to pull that together.

On a side note, I would really like to give a big thank you to all the different government department staff who wear a badge, whether it is a conservation officer or just a public highways worker who wear the Yukon logo. Those people are our ambassadors and they are great.

I was a community reporter and spoke on CBC many a time. When Sandi Coleman would ask me something, I would explain to her that if you see anyone with a badge in a government truck, ask them. They will tell you all about the Yukon and what you have to see.

That's where it starts; it starts at home. It starts with our employees — our great government employees — and it goes further. I'm not going to speak a whole bunch more on that. I was quite interested and I said again, when we have this Wednesday to debate and discuss stuff, it's nice to hear different ideas. The ministers get ideas from across the floor and through other members when we're sitting down to discuss some of these things. I think it's good, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I'd like to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this motion forward.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward another important motion.

Growing up in Teslin along the Alaska Highway, I certainly understand the importance of tourism in the Yukon. In 2011, the Yukon hosted nearly 310,000 visitors from around the world, many of whom drove up the Alaska Highway, while others flew in, then rented RVs and motorhomes, et cetera, to travel throughout the Yukon.

Teslin is very fortunate in the fact that it is the home to three museums, including the Teslin Tlingit Heritage Centre. I'm happy to say that all three are truly world-class centres. I would encourage everyone here today who has not already done so to take a day or two, jump in their car, and go to Teslin to have a look. I'm confident that they'll be impressed.

I'd also like to inform everyone here today that in my riding of Pelly-Nisutlin you can also find the best-kept secret of the Yukon — this of course is Faro. With Mother's Day fast approaching, I encourage all of you to head up to Faro for the Sheep and Crane Viewing Festival, which is held throughout the weekend and includes a community dinner on Saturday evening, May 12. No, they won't eat sheep.

Any of you who have not been up the South Canol Road through Ross River and up the North Canol Road, I'd also encourage you to take this trip. The scenery is second-to-none in the world. This is only a small part of what's available in my riding of Pelly-Nisutlin. Although it may be hard to believe, there are other members here today who may believe that their own ridings are comparable to mine.

I'd find it difficult to believe if there are any members here today who wouldn't support this motion.

This government understands the importance of tourism to the economy of the Yukon. The Department of Economic Development alone provides funding assistance to businesses and organizations in the tourism and cultural industries through

organizations in the tourism and cultural industries through programs delivered by the Yukon Film and Sound Commission, Regional Economic Development branch, and Business and Industry Development branch. There is 4.6 percent of Yukon's GDP attributed directly to tourism, while tourism businesses in the Yukon generated close to \$200 million. Over one-quarter of all Yukon businesses generate at least some of their revenue from tourism.

The Department of Tourism and Culture works in conjunction with marketing partnerships that support tourist visitation. With the support of CanNor, the Yukon government has invested an additional \$584 million in overseas markets. As well, we continue to work with Nunavut and Northwest Territories to deliver a multi-year, multi-million-dollar, Pan North Consortium marketing campaign targeting southern Canadians. In partnership with Alaska, British Columbia and Alberta, the Yukon continues to deliver a highly successful north-to-Alaska marketing campaign.

In the partnership with the Alaska Travel Industry Association, Yukon continues to implement the U.S. and Canada focused marketing campaign, just to name a few. With a budget estimate of \$22.582 million, I think it is quite obvious that tourism is an important issue for this government. While tourism is more important to some ridings in the Yukon than others, I certainly hope that everyone in this Assembly today votes in favour of this motion brought forward by the Member for Watson Lake.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I, too, rise in support of Motion No. 115. Really, to add a little bit more to the great news that is being talked about today and debated by members of this side of the House, Yukon is arguably one of the greatest destinations, not just in Canada, but in the world, for people to come to and enjoy. We have Mount Logan, Canada's tallest mountain and the second tallest in North America, right in the backyard of our Member for Kluane. We have the fourth longest river in North America.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I would like to recognize John Wright, principal from Elijah Smith Elementary School, who has joined the gallery. I invite everybody to welcome him.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: The Yukon River has played a pivotal role throughout Yukon's history — certainly, the role of First Nations' culture — I'm thinking back not very long ago to the tribute to Mr. Van Bibber and to the Van Bibber family, who would get on a raft in the Mayo area to go to Dawson for school — and certainly, the role the river played through the great Klondike Gold Rush and today, for the thousands of visitors who flock here and enjoy this river. I have enjoyed trips down this and other rivers, like the Pelly River and the Teslin River, either for pleasure or on hunting trips as well.

So we're home to four territorial and three national parks. The only highway public access to the Arctic Circle is through

the Dempster Highway. The Yukon government, the City of Whitehorse, all Yukon communities and First Nations and, of course, our professional tourism operators, have all worked very hard to capitalize on the abundance of natural beauty we as Yukoners are also fortunate to experience every day of our lives.

According to the Yukon 2010 Business Survey, 4.6 percent of Yukon's GDP is attributable to tourism. The same survey indicates that Yukon businesses generated \$197 million in revenue attributable to tourism. As well, over one-quarter of all Yukon businesses have generated some of their revenue as a result of the tourism industry and, as we've heard mentioned, over 300,000 people came to Yukon in 2011, not just from the United States, but really from around the world. People come for the abundant wildlife and the midnight sun. More and more people are certainly coming to watch the northern lights as they dance across the clear skies of the winter. Really, we're truly becoming a world-class, year-round tourist destination.

While there is certainly no shortage of excellent summer tourist activities to choose from — from the hiking and the biking and camping and fishing — things we all enjoy doing ourselves — there are more and more winter activities. We just recently, in this community, had the Sourdough Rendezvous Festival — I'm still aching from some of that refereeing — as well as the Frostbite Music Festival, both taking place in February.

These are festivals that really showcase Yukon talent, and is really some of the best entertainment you will find and is just another reason why we see people coming here to the Yukon.

We were very fortunate to recently host the Arctic Winter Games last month — and we certainly paid tribute to the volunteers and all of the athletes — again showing the capacity we have here in this territory and in this city to be able to deliver on world-class types of events and really speaking to what we could call sports tourism as well.

I would like to just mention that we are fortunate to have seven First Nation cultural and heritage centres, operated by Selkirk First Nation, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Little Salmon Carmacks, Teslin Tlingit, Vuntut Gwitchin, and opening this year on National Aboriginal Day will be the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre here in Whitehorse, and I believe early in the fall the Daku Centre run and operated by the Champagne and Aishihik First Nation in Haines Junction.

All of these really give our visitors an opportunity to get a glimpse of the rich history of Yukon First Nations and their significant contributions to northern culture.

Year-round tourism opportunities will continue to grow, I believe, as word gets out and we continue to strategically invest through Tourism and Culture to get our brand out there. I am very confident that we will continue to grow and strengthen that brand and see more and more people over time looking at this as a year-round destination. I would like to just recognize of course all of those people who work in the industry to deliver — it's a people-first industry; it's a service industry; it's about pleasing people and so that certainly has its unique challenges and you need to be a people person to be in that busi-

ness. Having been in the retail sector myself, I can appreciate that.

The Department of Tourism and Culture is conducting visitor surveys this summer. This will provide us with more detailed information on people who choose Yukon as their destination and give us a sense of how we should be marketing and where we should be marketing. Of course, there are also plans to modernizing the Whitehorse Visitor Reception Centre.

The Member for Kluane talked about using technologies — we certainly have a lot of web-based information that's out there. Being able to learn and extract information from people who are visiting or people who would like to visit here helps us ensure that we can redefine our product and make it more inviting for more people to come.

As I mentioned, I'd like to thank the people within the industry. I'd like to thank the people who work in the Department of Tourism and Culture and I would also like to recognize our good Minister of Tourism and Culture for the hard work that he's doing. I'd like to thank the Member for Watson Lake for putting forward this motion and I would commend this motion to the House. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I will be relatively brief in my comments this afternoon, because I know that members of this House would like to bring this to a vote, and from the comments I have heard so far, I understand that this motion should be passed unanimously. I think it's a great thing that that's the case because, of course, this is a great motion, and I appreciate the Member for Watson Lake bringing it forward. This is another motion that comes just about verbatim out of our platform, which, of course, we developed in recognition of some of the challenges we would be facing coming to government.

This is one of the bullets under "marketing Destination: Yukon" chapter of our platform. It's the first bullet, really, because I think it speaks to the need, not only to diversify our economy and to develop the tourism industry, but I think within the tourism sector itself, there is room for diversity. Typically, when we talk about diversifying our economy, we talk about the resource sector and the need to invest in other sectors to develop them. But I think that within specific sectors like tourism, there is room for diversifying within. What I mean by that is that, when we think of tourism, we think traditionally of visitors coming to the Yukon to stay for a brief period of time and then moving on. But I think there are a number of other ways we can diversify that industry. Some of them have been touched on today by a number of my colleagues and members opposite as well. Those are done, I think, through some of the things contemplated in this motion — working with industry, working with communities and working with First Nations.

If I could, I'd like to highlight a few of the ways that we have at least been successful in working with these various groups. I'll start with industries. Typically, of course, we engage with industry associations, commonly, but sometimes we'll engage with specific businesses that have proposals to Economic Development to bring forward ideas that they think would benefit the Yukon as a whole.

One of the things that is integral to our tourism industry is the affordable domestic and international air access. That has been mentioned today and it has been mentioned significantly throughout the discussions in this House of late, as well as in the general public discussions. This House has been, I think, quite excellent in offering up support of our local air carrier, Air North, and indeed passing unanimously a motion to support Air North in general and more specifically to encourage other airlines to consider working with Air North to develop a strategic partnership in the form of either an interline agreement or a code share agreement. I think that's a very positive step forward, not only for Air North as a company, but for the Yukon as a whole as we see a Yukon company advance to be able to link into international carriers. That is a big step, I think.

The service provided by Air North over the years has had an impact on our tourism industry, as Air North was successful in their entrance to the market in reducing the average flight costs for visitors to come to the Yukon.

I know that when WestJet announced that they were coming up, I heard from a lot of people that they were excited that they could go down to shop for the weekend in Vancouver, and I thought to myself, well, that's just the wrong way to think about it. I think the way we should be thinking about it is that now people from Outside can come to the Yukon more easily, whether coming to Whitehorse or any of the other communities as a result of them coming here.

I think that one of the ways within the tourism industry that we can continue to support that sort of diversity that I'm talking about is in the film and sound industry. I've spoken about this previously in this House. The reason I've done that is because I really believe that the Yukon has a tremendous opportunity to continue to become a leader in film and sound, especially in the north for big budget, even Hollywood productions, that are looking for a mountainous range, a barren stretch of highway, an icefield like the one in the Member for Kluane's riding — the Yukon has a diversity of opportunities to present to the film and sound industry and provide them with a backdrop for some of the most spectacular scenery in the world.

Of course, that speaks to the development of the industry, both locally as well as marketing Yukon to Outside jurisdictions. One of the things that has been mentioned is the development of — and the importance of — sports tourism. That is something that has been discussed a bit so far today. Of course, when we develop local infrastructure like recreation infrastructure, we do that sort of narrowly for the use of our Yukon citizens. But of course, when we do that, when we make those investments in recreational infrastructure, we are actually providing a benefit to our ability to market Yukon as a sports tourism destination, whether through the big-ticket items like those mentioned by the Minister of Community Services for recreational centres or work done on our waterfronts in Whitehorse and Carcross. Or they could be smaller investments like those made through my department, the Department of Economic Development, through the community development fund, for instance, which provides smaller but no less important upgrades to existing infrastructure sites, such as a broomball rink

in Whitehorse, a hockey rink in one of the communities, a trail structure in Carcross — whatever it may be.

I think all of those investments we make in recreational infrastructure benefit local citizens, but they also benefit the territory as a whole, because when people come to the territory and see that infrastructure and realize the tremendous opportunities that are available here, they're encouraged and excited to come and participate in larger events like the Arctic Winter Games or the Native Hockey Tournament. Any of those events become more popular by having good, effective infrastructure.

One of the other ways that I think we can develop our tourism opportunities and continue to market Yukon as a year-round destination is by working with the specific communities. I think that's highlighted in the motion that we should work with communities. We do that in a number of ways through the Department of Economic Development. We will work bilaterally with communities to develop business cases.

We'll conduct studies to identify areas of potential opportunity by, for instance, working with communities like Dawson and through a number of organizations like the Klondike Development Organization or the Chamber of Commerce there to identify certain areas where we can make investments and make efforts to enhance opportunities for tourism.

Another important aspect of our tourism industry I think is cultural events. We host cultural events, both First Nation, which reflect the history of Yukon and the people of the Yukon, and other cultural events like the Highland Games in the Dawson area. I know through the community development fund the Department of Economic Development provided some funding for an organization to host the Highland Games in Dawson to celebrate Yukon's link to Scottish culture. Events like the caber toss and highland dancing are, I suppose, less traditional in the sense of Yukon's history, but are indeed an important cultural aspect. What they do is they bring people to the territory. They bring people here to partake in the activities, but also to spend their money in the local economy and stay at the local hotels.

The final piece I wanted to touch on was our work with First Nations, as well. It stems from my earlier comments about the cultural events. I think that highlighting our unique First Nation cultures — there are 14 First Nations, and each one of them has its own unique culture — highlighting those cultures makes Yukon an attractive cultural destination for people to visit. As I said with the Department of Economic Development, we do work with a number of different First Nations in marketing their own regions for visitors, but also marketing their products Outside. Those cultural products, whether it be carving or beadwork and clothing or the local tourist opportunities — we often work with First Nations to do those sort of initiatives, as well.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention, at the behest of the Minister of Education, that the Department of Education does, of course, provide a number of funding opportunities related to tourism and marketing the Yukon as a year-round destination. There is, of course, the tourism training fund, which provides training in the tourism industry — that's a significant investment.

There's the heritage training fund, which provides limited-term training for independent heritage workers, groups and sectors to enhance skill development for employment, and of course, we work with the Yukon Tourism Education Council to deliver English as a second language and integration services for immigrants and nominees. I think that helps new Yukoners engage in the tourism industry. Of course, the time is winding down, Mr. Speaker, so I will allow this motion to come to a vote and I look forward to seeing the support from all members of the House for this very excellent motion put forward by the Member for Watson Lake.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Before I will allow the Member for Watson Lake to speak and close debate, does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. McLeod: I am reminded of the Yukon brewery commercial in which a person snowboards, snowshoes and uses a snowmobile to achieve the goal of satisfying his customers. That is service and that is indicative of the Yukon spirit. We will just do whatever we have to do to get the job done.

I want to thank everybody for supporting this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: D'accord.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Mr. Barr: D'accord.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 115 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: This House stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:24 p.m.