

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, November 14, 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 Diabetes Awareness Month

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise today on behalf of all members because November is Diabetes Awareness Month.

I don't think it will be news to anyone here in this Chamber that diabetes — especially type 2 diabetes — is on the rise in Canada. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases in the country.

In 2008-09, about 6.8 percent of Canadians were living with diabetes — close to 2.5 million people, including 200,000 Canadians newly diagnosed with diabetes in that one-year period alone. This doesn't take into account the estimated one million Canadians, according to the Canadian Diabetes Association, who don't know they have diabetes and may be placing themselves at increased risk for heart attacks and strokes. The prevalence of diabetes is lower in Yukon, but not by much: 5.4 percent of Yukoners have been diagnosed with diabetes, either type 1 or type 2. This percentage has been increasing steadily over the past few years.

Type 2 diabetes is a preventable disease. This type of diabetes is a direct result of lifestyle choice, aggravated by family history, obesity and age. The Yukon's chief medical officer of health recommends that Yukoners who have the risk factors for diabetes discuss the possibility with their health care provider. Early diagnosis can go a long way to preventing the worst effects of diabetes. Fortunately, there are many programs in place to provide information and to support Yukoners with diabetes. An excellent website — www.yukondiabetes.ca — provides contact information for the Yukon Diabetes Education Centre, as well as resources and links for more education.

The Department of Health and Social Services also provides information and support through its chronic conditions support program, which assists doctors, nurses and other health professionals to work together with patients with diabetes to achieve the best possible care.

Finally, I would like to remind my colleagues and everyone that public flu clinics are now open. Every Yukoner should get the flu shot, as did the Premier the other day, unless there is a sound medical reason not to do so — especially those Yukoners with chronic conditions, such as diabetes.

It just so happens, Mr. Speaker, I have another tribute.

Speaker: Please proceed, Minister of Health and Social Services.

In recognition of World COPD Day

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise again on behalf of all members in the Legislature to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing November 14 as World COPD Day. COPD, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease — I got it out complete — is a lung disease that makes breathing difficult. Chronic bronchitis and emphysema are two forms of COPD.

COPD is a very common disease. It is estimated that close to 900 Yukoners are living with COPD. Most startling, it's also known that approximately another 800 to 900 individuals in the Yukon have the disease and don't know that they have it.

The disease is most often, but not always, caused by smoking. Symptoms include a long-lasting cough, coughing up mucous and being short of breath. All Yukoners who are over 40 years of age and have any COPD symptoms, especially if they are smokers, are encouraged to speak with their health care provider about a simple breathing test to diagnose COPD.

The theme for World COPD Day this year is "It's not too late." This is a very fitting theme, as it is never too late to talk to your health care provider about COPD, and it's never too late to make lifestyle changes, such as quitting or cutting back on smoking or becoming more physically active. The Department of Health and Social Services runs the chronic conditions support program, which assists doctors and other health care professionals to collaborate and provide the best patient care possible for those living with chronic conditions, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and COPD.

The department also recently held public discussions and asked for input on how Yukoners feel their chronic condition is being managed. In addition, we are asking health professionals to provide comments on their experiences treating patients with chronic conditions. This important first-hand feedback will help us ensure our programming best meets the needs of all Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by reminding Yukoners to talk to their health care provider if they are over 40 and have any of the symptoms of COPD — again I'll remind them: shortness of breath, especially if they're smokers. It's never too late to make meaningful changes that will greatly improve the condition or the quality of life for all Yukoners. Thank you very much.

In recognition of the Canadarm

Mr. Elias: I rise on behalf of all members of the Assembly to pay tribute to the Canadarm. I'm honoured to rise and pay tribute to arguably Canada's most famous robotic and technological achievement that has, in some way, touched all of our lives.

Thirty-one years ago, in 1981, Pierre Trudeau was Prime Minister of Canada; *Bette Davis Eyes* was the number one song, and the New York Islanders won their second Stanley Cup. It was in that year, on November 13 — 31 years ago yesterday — that the Canadarm experienced its maiden voyage into space on board the Space Shuttle *Columbia*. The history of the Canadarm traces back to June of 1969, a month before Neil

Armstrong walked on the moon, when the United States shared design concepts for space shuttle components with Canada. Canada committed to building a shuttle remote manipulator system for the United States space shuttle project in 1974.

SPAR Aerospace, a Canadian company, built the first Canadarm, with the National Research Council of Canada overseeing the project. The Government of Canada invested \$108 million in the first Canadarm, which was given to NASA. That initial investment resulted in over \$700 million in export sales for our country. In the weightlessness of space, the original Canadarm could manage payloads of up to 332.4 kilograms. Later ones could manage up to 3,293 kilograms. But on earth, the Canadarm couldn't even lift itself up. It was engineered specifically to work in space.

Through its history, the Canadarm has performed a wide variety of tasks. It has set satellites into orbit for telecommunications, earth observation and other research. It has helped repair satellites, including the Hubble Space Telescope. It helped many times with the assembly of the International Space Station and was instrumental in docking the space shuttle to the Russian Mir Space Station. It has supported astronauts during their space walks. It once held on to some IMAX cameras to help audiences around the world experience the thrill of space exploration. You could even say it unclogged the space shuttle's toilets when it was used to knock off some of the waste-water ice that was blocking the waste-water dumping vent.

The Canadarm is one of our country's proudest achievements and establishes Canada's international reputation for robotics innovation. It has established a proud legacy for Canada that continues with the Canadarm2 on the International Space Station and a future generation of space robotics currently under development.

Every space shuttle mission has carried a Canadarm. Since its first launch, there have been five different Canadarms, one of which was lost in the tragic 1986 Challenger accident. Last year, the Canadarm flew its final mission — its 90th mission. It was also the final flight of the American space shuttle program. The original Canadarm will be on display at the John H. Chapman Space Centre in Quebec. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Are there any reports or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Elias: I have for tabling today a letter from Mr. Jim Shepherd, and it is to the Hon. Hugh J. Flemming, the Minister of Health for the New Brunswick government. It is regarding Bill 29, *Energy Drink Sales Act*.

I also have for tabling today the actual Bill 29 of the Second Session of the 57th Legislature of New Brunswick. It is titled *Energy Drink Sales Act*.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions for presentation?

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 Government of Yukon to begin the process of ensuring that all Yukon government buildings are fully accessible for government employees, the public and users through a territory-wide accessibility audit that:

(1) involves government employees, the public and users — including user groups;

(2) determines the status of the current government buildings and housing stock;

(3) establishes priorities for the upgrade of government-owned buildings and housing stock;

(4) establishes contracting rules for ensuring these properties meet accessibility standards; and

(5) lays out an annual reporting process to the public on progress made.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to address the health risks related to the consumption of stimulant drug-containing drinks, commonly known as “energy drinks”, that have been acknowledged by the Canadian Medical Association by:

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

(2) developing legislation to ensure only persons over the age of 18 can purchase “energy drinks” in Yukon.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Peel watershed land use plan

Mr. Tredger: The Peel Watershed Planning Commission was guided by principles that the Yukon Party government accepted. These principles were the precautionary principle, sustainable development, conservation, First Nation traditional uses, adaptive management and independence and impartiality. The *Final Recommended Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* reflected these principles and was moving toward land use and economic certainty until the government turned the process on its head, possibly leading Yukon down the path to draw-out court cases.

Why should Yukoners, First Nation governments and investors trust a government that pursues conflict and rewrites rules when it doesn't like the results?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: In responding to the member, first of all, I would phrase the question, the real question: Why should Yukoners trust an Official Opposition that consistently stands in this House and does not reflect the facts; an Official Opposition NDP that deliberately encourages people to engage in a confrontational manner, rather than coming together and trying to come up with solutions people can live with? People

who have strong views on any public issue have two fundamental choices: they can choose to try and understand the viewpoints of people whose views differ from theirs and choose to try and work together on coming up with a solution they can both accept; or, alternatively, they can choose to attack anyone whose views differ from their own and try to paint them as somehow being horrible people. We know which approach the NDP prefers; they prefer the approach of confrontation and not reflecting the facts.

Mr. Tredger: Unfortunately, we are finally learning what position the Yukon Party government is taking. This government says it speaks for Yukoners on the Peel. However, flip-flopping on agreements, changing the rules seven years in and putting industrial development ahead of all other values like stewardship and protection of the environment is not what Yukoners want. This is a government intent on pushing through a contradictory and narrow agenda that will hurt the economic opportunities for all Yukoners. This is a march of folly. Will the government stop creating uncertainty on the land base, stop creating economic uncertainty, and stop manipulating the Peel process to suit its own goals?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The Yukon government is continuing to follow the process laid out under the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the member knows it. I would point out and remind the member that the NDP have a practice in this House of being indebted to their imaginations for their facts.

During the 2011 election campaign, we criticized the Peel Commission's proposed document, we made it clear we would be proposing modifications, and we committed to the public to seek a final plan that was more fair and balanced. Yukoners elected us for a third consecutive majority government with more members than the time before. We are doing exactly what we told Yukoners we would do. We are following the *Umbrella Final Agreement* process; we have proposed potential modifications, and — during one of the longest public consultation periods that the Yukon government has ever had on anything — we are seeking public input on those ideas. Again, I remind the member opposite that, in terms of protecting the environment under the concept suggested by the government and under the proposed tools, they would protect over 99 percent of the area and ensure that it remains pristine wilderness. The members don't like the facts because the facts don't line up in the NDP's favour.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister opposite for clearly stating his opinion.

The fact of the matter is that this government is sending out all the wrong signals to Yukoners, First Nation governments and investors. Yukoners are being told their opinions don't matter if they do not line up with this government. First Nation governments are being pushed into conflict by a Yukon Party that opposed land claims in the first place. Businesses are being invited to a land of disputes, threatened legal actions and worsening relationships between governments. For a government that claims it understands the economy, this path of creating economic uncertainty shows that they do not get it.

When will this government begin to work for the best interests of all Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: There is one thing with lots of certainty that occurs here and that is this government will not listen to the advice of the NDP when it comes to the economy. The NDP has a proven track record when it comes to the economy — double-digit unemployment, a mass exodus of thousands of people from the Yukon, mostly our young, skilled workers — and they did not produce one job.

We still see the legacy of the NDP government every month when we open our electrical bill.

Question re: Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act amendment

Ms. Stick: Yesterday I asked the Minister of Highways and Public Works to apologize for misstating the position of the Information and Privacy Commissioner on changes to the access to information law that would shroud the government in secrecy. The minister had plenty to answer to, but he did not answer my question, so I'll ask it again.

Why did the minister say the proposed changes to the ATIPP act are supported by the Information and Privacy Commissioner when they are not?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I'll say again that we do value the role of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to act on behalf of the people of the Yukon to ensure that the government and public bodies achieve the balance between transparency and the protection necessary to ensure good governance. We consulted with the IPC and shared the draft legislation with him. He provided his perspective on the amendments and we did incorporate several changes based on his feedback. We appreciate his contributions to the legislative development process.

Ms. Stick: Of course, it's the Information and Privacy Commissioner's role to look at legislation and to protect the privacy and access to information of all Yukoners. But the refusal of the minister to admit he got it wrong and clarify that the Information and Privacy Commissioner does not support the government's attack on our democracy is shameful.

The minister likes to say the proposed changes to the ATIPP act are minor and narrow but, again, those are not the facts. In fact, the Information and Privacy Commissioner has called several of the changes significant. In fact, the changes apply to vast amounts of information, just beyond Cabinet briefing notes and, in fact, we are well on our way to becoming the worst jurisdiction in Canada when it comes to access to information.

Will the minister admit that the information changes he's proposing are significant and explain why he's keeping Yukoners in the dark?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I thank the member opposite for the question. Every government in Canada deliberates in confidence. That is the Cabinet process. They are in receipt of sensitive and private information, and it could be potentially harmful if it were to be released to the public. For full and fair consideration of options, Cabinet needs to be able to receive information in confidence, which allows them to make decisions with all the facts.

If the public servants can't provide information with some sort of confidentiality, then Cabinet will deliberate without the

knowledge of the full facts. Cabinet ministers take an oath of office to keep information in confidence. If this is to occur, then it only makes sense to treat information the same way.

Ms. Stick: The minister's response is disappointing. He has refused to address the real issue.

Last week, the minister was asked by a local radio journalist to explain why information relating to the making of government decisions or the formulation of policy is being locked away from public view. The journalist suggested that members of the public might want to know what shapes government policy. The response from the minister — the quote: "I think we're the government."

No one questions the fact that the government is the government. It's how the government governs that is the issue here. Will the minister tell this House why he thinks Yukoners shouldn't have access to information on the making of government decisions or formulation of policies?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Our decisions are still public. We continue to make ourselves available to Yukoners to discuss our decisions. We have a dedicated period for questions in the Legislative Assembly every day it sits. We also have debate in the Committee of the Whole, where we answer questions from the opposition. We have been, and will remain, fully accountable to Yukoners for decisions. What we're doing is making some minor changes so that our officials can provide us with clear and candid advice as we deliberate on these decisions.

Question re: Energy and infrastructure accessibility

Mr. Silver: I have further questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that focus on the recommendations from the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board. Under the heading "Access to Energy and Infrastructure", the board puts forward a long list of issues. For example — and I quote: "The current instability of the territory's electrical grid ... continues to diminish the Yukon's competitiveness on the national and international stage." It also recommends the government find a long-term solution to our limited energy supply by pursuing options to connect our grid to B.C. and/or Alaska. I know when I talk with the mining industry on this issue, it keeps on coming up again and again. What is the minister doing in the short term to improve the stability of our grid and in the long term to connect the grid with the rest of North America?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I thank the interim Leader of the Liberal Party for his question. What I would say to the member is, of course, we are continuing to work with the boards of Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation.

We have worked with them over the time since taking office last fall to strengthen the relationship and create a more structured relationship between government and those entities. The focus — that we have identified to them — of the Yukon government and its utilities must be on taking the right steps to plan for the territory's future. That includes investing in the maintenance of the system to ensure that it is as reliable as possible, ensuring that we determine where expansions are necessary, and take an approach that is very much focused on minimizing the financial risks to ratepayers and taxpayers, while

being sure that we are taking the appropriate steps necessary to meet the growing needs of the Yukon economy, whether it be through large loads, like the member was referring to, or simply through the residential growth, which is itself driving the need for further expansion of our energy supply.

Mr. Silver: Thank you, and I appreciate the answer from the minister. I'd like to talk more about their connections with the industry, long term and short term. One of the alternatives the board is recommending the government look at to meet increased demand for electricity from the mining industry is liquefied natural gas, or LNG. We currently don't have the infrastructure in place to use LNG. It will require some time and some money to get this industry up and running in the territory.

There have been some workshops on this issue and some discussions, but the government has had very little to say on what progress, if any, has been made on this initiative. How close are we to having LNG to remove some of the burden on our existing electrical grid?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the next step that is necessary to facilitate the use by mines and Yukon's two utilities — Yukon Energy and Yukon Electrical — of liquefied natural gas for energy production is passing the *Yukon Oil and Gas Act* amendments that are before this Assembly right now. So I hope I can take that as an indication from the Member for Klondike that he will be supporting the *Yukon Oil and Gas Act* amendment, which includes a clause that will enable the development of regulations to allow for the storage of liquefied natural gas for electrical production.

Mr. Silver: I would encourage the minister to not count any of those chickens before they hatch.

A lack of planning from this Yukon Party government over the last decade has brought us to where we are today. Another issue that is in the YMAB's report regarding access to energy and infrastructure is our connectivity and broadband access.

Let's go back to the report, and I quote: "The Yukon was once a leader in connectivity and the provision of broadband access in both Whitehorse and the communities. In recent years, this infrastructure has not progressed at a relevant pace with the rest of Canada." The lack of connectivity in rural Yukon is continually diminishing the industry's global competitiveness. The board recommends the Yukon work to improve communication infrastructure so that the mining industry can better utilize technical innovations.

What is the government doing to address these concerns for the mining industry?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I thank the member opposite for the question. Of course, we went through these issues very much in detail yesterday in Committee of the Whole, but I would be happy to reiterate some of the responses for the member.

We continue to work with the telecommunications industry in Yukon to ensure that Yukoners have access to high-level, affordable telecommunications infrastructure and services. We have worked with the company, Northwestel, in the development of their infrastructure as they are the primary provider of those services in the Yukon, and we continue to do so. We know that the CRTC is taking a very hard and new look at the

north and at Yukon specifically, and we intend to submit Yukon's perspective on behalf of businesses and individuals to the CRTC and their deliberations on telecommunications in the north. Of course, as the member said, this is a very important issue, not only to the mining industry, but to a number of other industries in this territory.

Telecommunications infrastructure is important to our ongoing efforts to diversify our economy. So of course, we will be working on this deliberately and diligently, and look forward to reporting back to this House as things progress.

Question re: Energy drinks

Mr. Elias: Two years ago almost to the day, I introduced a motion that requested this House to address the risks of what are commonly referred to as "energy drinks", and to take steps to protect Yukon children from those risks. The motion was not supported. Since then, there have been many more deaths associated with these energy drinks. At the time, members of this government felt that more study and input from experts was required to better understand the risks of these drug- and herb-infused beverages. Health Canada has commissioned an expert panel on caffeinated energy drinks. The panel found, among many other things, that serious adverse event signals — cardiac events and, to a lesser extent, seizures — have been detected. Health Canada should, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, consider steps to investigate further and mitigate these risks. Does the new Minister of Health and Social Services share my concern about these energy drinks being consumed by our Yukon youth?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Thank you. As with anything on the market today, too much of a good thing is not good for your health. As of this point, if these energy drinks are taken responsibly, there's no way of knowing — or there's no immediate danger to most people.

The unfortunate thing is there's no way of knowing which young people are at risk of harm from drinking these so-called energy drinks. We are aware of the legislation being proposed by the Government of New Brunswick, as this was a recent topic of discussion with health ministers. We are as concerned as others are and we will be participating in any Health Canada studies in the future.

Mr. Elias: It's important to note during this discussion that the Yukon Medical Association supports this effort in our territory. In the U.S., the Food and Drug Administration has just launched an investigation into reports of five energy drink-related deaths that occurred last year alone. A 14-year-old girl was one of those deaths. She died just two days before Christmas last year and her parents are now taking an energy drink company to court. That little girl drank two cans of an energy drink — two cans.

Health Canada recommends no more than 280 mg of caffeine per day. Any Yukon kid can walk into a store, buy and consume as much of these chemical cocktails as they like. Eleven percent of boys and eight percent of girls in rural Yukon do that every single day, in fact.

Does the Minister of Health and Social Services feel that it is responsible for us in this Assembly to permit our children to

have unhindered access to these energy drinks now that we know that they can contribute to sudden deaths in our country?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Maybe I'll provide some answers based on what the school nutrition policy states and that's that schools should develop their own school-based policy and guidelines. With that in mind, the first principle of that policy is that the school community has a shared responsibility to take a leadership role in promoting good nutrition and healthy food choices to our students and that good nutrition is vital to the mental and physical health of all students and increases the learning potential of each student.

All Yukon school communities have decided that energy drinks should not be available for sale in their school. Some schools have also banned energy drinks in the school altogether and — with the information I have in front of me — four of the six schools that have done that are from rural Yukon. So school communities are taking steps to control the consumption and use of energy drinks in the schools.

Mr. Elias: We dealt with an identical situation in this House a few weeks ago and that was to deal with soccer nets, but we have to wait for a tragedy to occur in this territory before we, as MLAs, deal with something that is possibly imminent. That's why I keep bringing this issue up.

I'm going to quote from the letter I tabled today that was sent to the Minister of Health in New Brunswick, from Mr. Shepherd, a parent whose son died from an unexplained arrhythmia after consuming energy drinks on January 6, 2008. His son was 15 years old. Mr. Shepherd said, "Success is seldom a result of giant leaps, but rather continuous small steps toward a seemingly unreachable goal." Bill 29, entitled *Energy Drink Sales Act* is scheduled to be debated later this month in New Brunswick, and I hope it passes because across our country, years of voluntary and educational actions have been a dismal failure and cannot keep up to the advertising efforts of the energy drink industry.

Will the Minister of Health and Social Services take the lead in our country and draft our own laws to help safeguard our children from the harmful effects of energy drinks?

Hon. Mr. Graham: As I said, we will work with the Government of Canada and other health ministers across the country in further studying this issue. As I said before, if used responsibly, there's not a huge amount of danger here. I believe with the continuing support of the Education department in the schools that we can curtail the use of energy drinks. If not and if further research determines that regulation or legislation is needed, that would be something that I would propose to my Cabinet colleagues and take forward at that time.

Question re: F.H. Collins Secondary School reconstruction

Ms. Stick: I recently attended a meeting of the F.H. Collins School Council. Parents and school council members want to know what is going on at F.H. Collins high school. Many questions and concerns were raised. One question was about the involvement of the school council with the building advisory committee. This committee is meant to give the school community a say in the replacement of their school. It was stated that the building advisory committee hasn't met in

over a year; this despite the fact that building plans have been redone and the government is finally moving this overdue project along.

Will the minister explain what happened to the F.H. Collins Building Advisory Committee and what his department is doing to give it and the community it represents a meaningful role in the ongoing planning for this new school?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Just to clarify a couple of things, the member opposite has wrong information. I met with the building advisory committee last year, December 1, when we made the announcement that the school construction and tendering would be delayed a year. I met with them again in June at another decision point when the Minister of Highways and Public Works and I had secured additional funding through Management Board to proceed with the school. The building advisory committee has a number of members, as the member opposite knows, from school councils and parents and students to teachers and department officials.

I'm very pleased with the work they've done in designing the school, but now that we've moved into the tender phase — the tender is being publicly advertised now — their role is no longer necessary. We will continue to involve them with public open houses on the F.H. Collins construction project as we move through this process over the next two years, and that's what their role will be. I again thank them for their work in coming up with the design and putting in all that hard work to come up with the design for the new F.H. Collins school, but their work is complete and we're moving on to the next phase.

Ms. Stick: If I'm mistaken, I apologize, but what I heard at that council meeting was that the committee had not met.

Moving on, the best example of where this group should be involved is the planning for the new gym. The government said the gym would be torn down last and replaced first. The new gym would be built in 18 months. We now know that F.H. Collins students will actually be without a gym for two and a half years. There's talk about using various community facilities to fill this gap but there's no clear plan. The F.H. Collins community rightly questions the ability of the Yukon Party government to get the job done properly.

They have not, as a school council and parents, had a chance to give their input on what could happen. Will the minister commit to inviting input from parents and school council before the open house that's planned for this month?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you. Now, with respect to the project's schedule and the changes made to it, the opening date for the new school has been rescheduled to September 2015 from the original September 2013 date due to two factors. The main tender was rescheduled to the winter of 2012-13 to take full advantage of the first summer construction period and what we incorporated upon taking office was a more realistic two-year construction period than the original 18-month period, which could have resulted in increased cost due to time pressures. Again, there is a public open house November 22 at 7:30 p.m. at the F.H. Collins' school cafeteria. I would invite anyone that has any interest in this project — and one of the things that will be presented there is the plan for what we're going to do

for alternatives to the gym. It's not just about the physical education program; it's also about the graduation ceremonies and the annual fashion show. There are a number of activities that take place in that gym, and I think the school community — the teachers and students — are starting to get excited about a number of the other options that exist within the community, including the Canada Games Centre, Yukon College and even the broomball facility.

The deputy and I met with people from that organization. There are a number of great options that will be presented at that November 22 evening.

Question re: Seniors housing

Ms. White: The NDP Official Opposition is listening to residents' safety and accessibility concerns and, indeed, we regularly write to ministers on their behalf. The minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation has unfortunately not answered all of our letters about Yukoners' concerns. There is a high demand for seniors housing, which led to the minister announcing a new seniors home will be built to replace the Alexander Street facility. Yukoners hope the government will learn from the input they have provided and that it will not repeat mistakes it made in the past. One way of preventing costly mistakes is by having a proper design that incorporates the safety and accessibility concerns of a senior population.

Will the minister commit to consulting with seniors, people living with disabilities and organizations that represent their interests to ensure their input is reflected in the design of all new Yukon Housing Corporation buildings?

Hon. Mr. Kent: We at the Yukon Housing Corporation are very excited about the new multiple unit facility that is going to be built at the Alexander Street site and yes, of course, when the design is done we will consult with seniors groups and those with mobility issues — Challenge Yukon, for instance.

I know there is a gentleman who often represents that organization who is extremely involved with that type of planning. So that's something that is very important to me. I did do the tour of a number of the seniors facilities that were built with the stimulus money, and I'd like to thank the officials for delivering those projects in a timely manner under the time constraints that were imposed by the federal government. We have some time to develop some plans that work and we will take into account the issues that the member opposite raised.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for his answer. Consultation at the design stage may help prevent some of the mistakes made in the past. Several of my constituents have raised concerns about the accessibility of bathrooms in their Yukon Housing Corporation complex where they live. I asked the minister responsible to come and meet some of the residents so that he could understand their concerns. Residents talked about being afraid of using their bathtubs because they have a hard time getting over the high exterior wall and are worried they might fall. Issues with the tubs installed at 600 College Drive were communicated at the very beginning, and yet the same model of tub was chosen for installation in the Waterfront Place seniors residence at Spook Creek. Those seniors are expressing the same difficulties.

What direction will the minister provide for those residents not involved with the design and now living with tubs they are afraid to use?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Over the past year, I've worked with the board of the Yukon Housing Corporation to develop a new protocol agreement, which is something we have to annually.

But we have inserted something new into the agreement this year, that being a letter of expectation from the government to the Housing Corporation Board and staff. I should inform all members of the House that it is available on the Yukon Housing Corporation website.

One of the things I've asked the Housing Corporation Board to undertake is to increase the supply of accessible social housing by developing a comprehensive plan to address mobility challenges in the corporation's housing units to ensure a supply of units that are free from structural barriers. So I think this addresses what the member opposite is talking about.

I did visit those units at College Drive with her. I visited units in Teslin and Watson Lake with the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin; and I visited the Whitehorse waterfront station units as well. Rather than deal with it on a case-by-case basis, I have asked the Housing Corporation — through the board of directors and through their leadership — in this letter of expectations to undertake that initiative to ensure a supply of units that are free from structural barriers.

Ms. White: I look forward to taking back a timeline to my constituents who can't use their bathrooms currently.

Residents are raising their concerns for a reason: they want to know the government is listening. People with mobility and other health issues and who do not live on the ground floor are dependent upon elevators. They do not feel safe when there is a power outage. They would not be safe in the case of an emergency when elevators are shut down.

Will the minister ensure that Yukon Housing Corporation residents with disabilities have a 24-hour safety plan for power outages and possible emergencies that may require evacuation without an elevator?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I know there was an incident, probably within the last couple of months, where the elevator went down at Closeleigh Manor. I was in close contact with the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Whitehorse Centre, whose constituents were affected by that. We did have Yukon Housing officials on-site to help with the everyday tasks for those people who were no longer able to use the elevator — taking groceries upstairs, and that type of thing. At that time, we did inform Emergency Services that the elevators were down at Closeleigh Manor.

I should also mention that this morning I did sign off on one of the letters the member opposite had sent to me with respect to this issue, so I anticipate she will get it this afternoon. I signed off on it just prior to coming down to the Legislature today.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 283

Clerk: Motion No. 283, 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, in keeping with the commitments outlined in its 2011 election platform, to implement initiatives and actions emanating from the "Our Towns, Our Future" review that included 75 findings in relation to the following 18 themes:

- (1) Yukon Government and Municipal Relations;
- (2) First Nation and Municipal Relations;
- (3) Regionalization and Governance;
- (4) *Municipal Act* Review Process;
- (5) Community Development Teams;
- (6) Municipal Sustainability Indicators;
- (7) Climate Change Adaptation;
- (8) Yukon Municipal Resources Website;
- (9) Provision of Local Services;
- (10) Municipal Infrastructure Deficit and Asset Management;
- (11) Revenue Generation;
- (12) Lot Development and Land Availability;
- (13) Comprehensive Municipal Grant;
- (14) Increasing Cost and Burden of Regulations;
- (15) Impacts of Peripheral Residents, Businesses, and Industries on Municipal Services;
- (16) Energy Costs;
- (17) Employee Recruitment and Retention; and
- (18) Training: Building Local Capacity.

Ms. McLeod: It was my pleasure to bring this motion forward and I'm certainly pleased to rise to speak to it today. Before I really get going, I'd like to point out that the review called "Our Towns, Our Future" was almost a year in the making. The review process included the partnership of the Yukon government, Association of Yukon Communities and officials in consultation with the public, business, First Nations, municipal councils and local advisory councils.

In April of 2010, the then Minister of Community Services, who is fairly well known in the community of Watson Lake, announced the creation of a process that became "Our Towns, Our Future" supporting municipal success from finance to operations. He started this process because the *Municipal Act*, which established many of the fiscal and government frameworks for municipalities in Yukon, dated back to the 1980s. The minister recognized how Yukon has changed over the past 25 years and recognized that processes needed to be modernized. On that note, I am happy to say that in June of this year our current Minister of Community Services, together with the support of the Association of Yukon Communities, announced that the Yukon government will be moving forward

to review and update the Yukon's *Municipal Act*. I'm sure that the minister will have much to say on that.

A committee was established, which consisted of equal partners from Yukon government and the Association of Yukon Communities. The committee met with the public and, as I mentioned, mayors and councils. It also met with First Nations and the local advisory councils. The committee adopted nine guiding principles that would guide how they did their work.

The principles to be included being inclusive, engaging, practical, accountable, evidence-based, partnership-led, innovative, inspirational, and open communication. I wanted to go through some of the findings of "Our Towns, Our Future" review because I think it's worth mentioning so that the public is aware of why we're discussing this today.

With regard to the Yukon government and municipal relations, the recent memorandum of understanding between Yukon government and the Association of Yukon Communities, which was signed in September 2009, has been a successful ongoing collaboration. It was to be regularly reviewed to ensure it was relevant and understood by all parties.

Improved information sharing is essential for continued strong relationships. There is a direct link between sharing information, building trust, and being able to ensure municipal resilience. Meetings between elected municipal and Yukon government officials are extremely important to enhance the continued flow of information and the sharing of concerns. It is essential that Yukon government works not only bilaterally with the Association of Yukon Communities, but continues to foster direct relationship with municipalities to understand their unique concerns and interests.

Regarding First Nation and municipal relations, when opportunities arise and interest is expressed, the Yukon government can facilitate municipal First Nation discussions in areas of mutual interest. Local relationships are the most important factor for communities to develop productive ways to work together.

Clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each level of government can help in the development of service agreements and relationship building. There are many examples of First Nation and municipal collaborative successes at providing direct, on-the-ground programming in areas such as recreation, public works and planning.

Regarding regionalization and governance: there is minimal support for creating a new level of regional government, but there are opportunities for shared-use agreements and cost-sharing of existing infrastructure and services on a case-by-case basis. Solid-waste management may benefit from a more regional approach as many of the challenges are generated by the regional nature of this service.

Fire protection and other emergency services challenge available resources in some rural municipalities. There may be significant value in considering a more regional approach in the provision of fire and emergency services. Shared contracting and procurement may help attain better economies of scale.

With regard to *Municipal Act* review, the review process was not formalized and it leads to confusion and misunder-

standing, but as I mentioned, there is now a commitment to move forward with that.

Community development teams: The development of a comprehensive team approach has worked in a number of jurisdictions and may be a way to overcome the multi-dimensional challenges to sustainability that municipalities face. A group made up of YG representatives, municipal representatives, and potentially FN representatives, dedicated to each municipality or region may be a way to tackle issues, overcome silos and create efficiencies. Other stakeholders may include community non-government organizations. By taking a community development approach, community development teams can build relationships with key people and organizations to empower communities to create change.

Municipal sustainability indicators: There are few standardized measures to understand municipal sustainability in the Yukon. The value of a municipal sustainability tool kit would be to better evaluate the current situation of communities, measure efficiency, provide an early warning system, improve strategic planning, prioritize critical issues and provide data to improve planning for the future.

A list of indicators should provide a whole picture of the community. A sustainability indicator tool kit would be useful for municipalities and, given the readily available data, would not impose a burden on Yukon communities.

Climate change adaptation: "Climate Change adaptation practices are built into some, but not all, long-range planning and infrastructure development processes in Yukon municipalities. Yukon government continues to support municipal leaders to incorporate climate change considerations into their decision making. Community adaptation projects, similar to those recently done in Dawson and Whitehorse, are providing many innovative ideas for adapting to changing climates. There may be value in additional community adaptation projects in other Yukon communities... There are many opportunities for municipal leaders to work with citizens, community groups and businesses in relation to climate change adaptation."

Yukon municipal resources website: "Across Canada, municipalities are working hard to engage the public. Sharing practices, information and projects with each other and the public could enhance public engagement, transparency and accountability. The development of a municipal resource website to serve as a database of best practices, bylaws, reports, and policies would provide a user-friendly forum to improve the exchange of information and increase the capacity of Yukon municipalities."

Provision of local services: At times there is a disconnect between the services the municipality wants to provide and what it can afford. Understanding the cost of services more accurately — as well as improved integrated community sustainability planning — can help make choices about the services municipalities want to see in their communities and reflect community long-term interests. Efficiencies can be gained by looking at the provision of local services from a whole-of-Yukon approach. All four orders of government in Yukon provide some local services. Finding ways to maximize the use of

existing resources will become more important if costs of services continue to rise.

In terms of delivering local services, costs and opportunities vary tremendously from municipality to municipality depending on local factors. Local solutions are important and one size does not fit all. Linking Yukon government funding to core services may provide a better system for ensuring that these services are maintained to an adequate level.

Fire protection is becoming particularly challenging and developing a shared-provision model with YG may help Fire Services overcome concerns about increased liability and rising costs.

Recreation is viewed by most Yukoners as an essential service.

Municipal infrastructure deficit and asset management: In some municipalities there is a lack of clarity and/or accurate data regarding the condition of municipal infrastructure. More capacity is needed to manage municipal infrastructure projects in communities outside of Whitehorse. There may be an opportunity to engage Yukon government internal engineering services to assist municipalities to meet this need on an ongoing basis.

Just as an aside, I know that the community of Watson Lake has in fact worked very closely with the Yukon government engineers to facilitate the replacement of water and sewer lines.

Municipalities outside of Whitehorse would benefit from participating in an asset management system supported and developed by Yukon government. Public Sector Accounting Board changes have moved municipalities some distance toward improved asset management.

Revenue generation: Municipalities are interested in exploring options related to increasing revenue.

“Some are particularly interested in creating development corporations and/or local power production companies. Some revenue generating options already exist within the *Municipal Act*. Clarification is needed to address possible misunderstandings. There is a lack of understanding as to how to implement reasonable “fee for service” policies (such as local improvement charges) and potentially more revenue could be generated this way.

“Lot development and land availability: There is significant frustration regarding the availability of affordable housing and land development in Yukon. Some see this as partially the cause of shrinking populations and limited economic development in the smaller municipalities. The land tenure system is seen as slow, difficult to understand and overly complicated to access. Successful land development processes take time to achieve public engagement and participation. Some municipal governments have limited capacity with respect to planning. Robust planning checklists and/or guidelines may help planning processes.

“Yukon municipalities have a number of options available to them in terms of encouraging land availability including infill, zoning changes and taxation practices.

“More readily available recreational land would create economic benefits in rural Yukon. The development of land

planning strategies on a regional level ensures that land development initiatives in unincorporated communities complement objectives of municipal Official Community Plans and helps the Yukon as a whole attain strategic priorities.”

There is an entire section, of course, on comprehensive municipal grants, for which there has been some great progress on and, in fact, a new agreement which I’ll leave to the Minister of Community Services to discuss.

“Increasing cost and the burden of regulation: Municipalities believe that the continued growth of regulations is a challenge to municipal sustainability. Increasing reporting and regulatory requirements means municipalities have less to spend on the operation and maintenance of facilities and in the provision of the services. In order to improve communication and better understand the impacts that potential regulatory changes might have on municipalities, Yukon government systems for inter-departmental discussions could be reviewed to make sure the Department of Community Services is aware of impending regulatory changes that would affect municipalities. Wherever possible the cost of implementing new regulations by municipalities should be determined prior to making regulatory changes.

“A forced growth factor in the comprehensive municipal grant calculation relating to the cost of implementing changing regulations could be considered. The Yukon government and municipalities can work together in regard to federal guidelines and legislation that will have cost implications for municipalities.

“Impacts of peripheral residents, businesses and industries on municipal services: This is a long-standing concern shared by all Yukon municipalities. Much work has been done over the past decade to try to understand this challenge and come up with solutions, but there is no consensus as to the best approach. Some municipalities want to explore a two-tier system for services where local residents pay one fee and those from outside the municipality pay more.” An example of those services might be “recreation facilities or landfills.”

“Energy costs: Rising energy costs are viewed as a serious risk to long-term municipal sustainability”. Coming from a municipality that uses diesel-generated power, I can assure you that we’re sorely affected by that.

Municipalities are interested in exploring options for meeting the challenge of rising energy costs, including utilizing local sources of power, enhancing demand-side management opportunities and developing community energy plans to guide sustainable decision-making. Some municipalities have expressed interest in forming local power production companies or utilities to address this issue. Many municipalities lack the financial and technical capacity to meet this challenge and partnerships with other governments and organizations will be important. As a potential outcome of rising energy costs, addressing food security is seen as a valuable component of sustainability planning, particularly in isolated northern jurisdictions.

Employee recruitment and retention: Intergenerational and intercultural dialogue in the workplace can attract and retain young professionals and engage long-serving employees. Rural

municipalities across Canada have found that a solid branding initiative that emphasizes unique quality-of-life features can attract outside professionals. Municipalities need to develop more sophisticated HR strategies and need support to do this. Housing is difficult to find in some municipalities, making it difficult to attract and retain staff. Modern technologies, like high-speed broadband Internet services, are important to attract and retain young professionals. Yukon could enhance resources for improving municipal support during times of staffing transition.

Training and building local capacity: Innovative and accessible training is an integral component of any strategy to motivate, retain and develop local municipal capacity. A comprehensive and coordinated approach, perhaps resembling a “School of Governance”, with the potential for increasing certification options, would better meet existing and future training needs and most effectively make use of limited funds. Success in training for rural municipalities happens with the sponsorship of the senior government and with input from professional bodies and organizations, such as the Association of Yukon Communities and Yukon College.

In June of 2011 there was a summit hosted by the Government of Yukon and the Association of Yukon Communities to identify priority action items and develop a workplan to implement the findings of the “Our Towns, Our Future” review. In May of this year, the Government of Yukon and the Association of Yukon Communities met to continue to collaborate on these initiatives.

Indeed, this is moving forward. The Yukon government has reached agreement with Yukon communities on a new five-year comprehensive municipal grant. The Town of Watson Lake is certainly looking forward to working with the Government of Yukon. There is much to do in regard to infrastructure renewal in Watson Lake and indeed throughout the Yukon. The municipality has worked hard to develop a strategic plan that will work well with the 75 findings of the “Our Towns, Our Future” review.

I know that the Yukon government has made forward progress on many of these discussion points and I really look forward to hearing other comments.

Mr. Barr: I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward this motion. The relationship between municipal governments and the territorial government is very important. Municipal governments and local advisory councils are created by the territorial *Municipal Act*.

The “Our Towns, Our Future” review says, “It is sometimes forgotten that in Canada municipalities are created for a reason by senior levels of government, including Yukon. They are expected to deliver services to property and provide good government to the residents and taxpayers.”

Though created by senior governments, municipalities must not be treated as silent partners, where they are expected to merely follow direction. As territorial legislators, we have an obligation to work constructively with municipal governments to ensure that citizens’ voices are heard and that the territory is

ensuring governance at the local level is effective, accountable, transparent, and meets citizens’ needs.

Yesterday the *Vancouver Sun* ran an article entitled, “More money needed to deal with crumbling infrastructure, Canadian cities tell feds”. It went on to say that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities want \$5.75 billion a year — up \$2.5 billion a year — for the next two decades from the federal government to address aging infrastructure which threatens Canada’s economic development. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities said this funding “should be matched by the province and municipalities themselves to provide \$13.25 billion a year for municipal infrastructure.”

Because the Building Canada fund ends in 2014, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities is launching the “Great Canadian Infrastructure Challenge”.

They stated: “This is the next phase of our efforts to make sure the new long-term infrastructure plan is part of the 2013 federal budget and that it meets the needs of our cities and communities. The challenge will bring people from every corner of the country into conversation about municipal infrastructure and its importance in our everyday lives. The campaign will demonstrate how Canadians use local infrastructure to raise their families, build their businesses, and take part in their communities. It all starts with the launch of the campaign’s website, www.fcmchallenge.ca. Please visit the site and invite members of your community to visit it too. We have a brief window of opportunity — just six to eight weeks — to make sure we get the plan and investments our communities need.”

We would also like to urge the Yukon Party government to support the Federation of Canadian Municipalities by talking to their federal counterparts.

The FCM also called on the government to tie the gas tax fund to a cost-of-living index and create a new core economic infrastructure fund, in addition to continuing the Building Canada fund.

A bit of history explains the federation’s request for funding. Municipal governments across Canada have significant infrastructure deficits. For over two decades the federal government has downloaded services to the provinces and territories that have in turn downloaded services on to the municipalities.

The Yukon context is slightly different. The territory has uploaded services like fire management in municipalities, but it is also pursuing cost savings through regionalization and other schemes that have been foisted upon municipalities and provinces as cost-saving measures. Through this motion, the Yukon government wants to congratulate itself for being a solid partner and benefactor to Yukon’s municipal governments, but actions speak louder than words, and there are significant problems that exist in our local communities that have not been addressed by this government. Municipalities provide the core local services such as water, waste water, sewage disposal, recreation and community infrastructure. In the Yukon, there are eight municipalities, with unincorporated communities able to negotiate municipal-like services and authorities under the *Municipal Act*, and they experience significant challenges and problems.

Many are contained in the “Our Towns, Our Future” findings report, including: small tax base and the inability to generate new revenue beyond transfers and grants from senior governments; capacity problems; difficulty in training, recruiting and retaining good staff; declining volunteerism; needs not being met, i.e. recreation, community gathering places, aging infrastructure — in most cases 40 years old plus — declining citizen engagement in elections and stepping up to council; and dissatisfaction of citizens. The backdrop to all of this is that Yukon communities and citizens have significant needs that are not being met — needs which require resources. From the report on page 26, most municipalities feel they are being asked to provide more services without offsetting increases in revenue. In the review, the committee took stock of existing resources and practices and looked at ways of doing things with the addition of new resources. We are debating a broad organizational review. The five most significant municipal challenges are, in order of importance: (1) housing and land development; (2) infrastructure; (3) energy costs; (4) not enough money; and (5) recruitment and retention of staff.

How well has this government addressed these needs after 10 years in office?

From the report, on page 28, the municipal dilemma — increase taxes or decrease services and what services should go in the absence of new revenue? Should it be recreation or sewage? These are essential community needs. We all need recreational opportunities, but there is a huge disparity in the Yukon.

In the budget we see Ross River’s community centre will be delayed for another year. We see no action on Carcross residents’ desire to replace the rotten old recreation building with something that will bring all community members together. Mount Lorne residents have built their own community building and have for years been asking for government to step up with some O&M funding that other government-built community centres receive, but their pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

Page 30: “Much of the municipal infrastructure in the Yukon is at least 40 years old.” Page 35: “...lack of affordable land available for housing, industrial and commercial use.”

This government’s commitment to land use planning is questionable, so that is what we are here to debate today. It is about “Our Towns, Our Future,” the extensive review process launched by the previous Yukon Party Community Services minister, but it is also about whether Yukon communities and their citizens are better now than they were 10 years ago, and whether the government is making good choices.

We’re now over three years into this “Our Towns, Our Future” initiative. It began with a memorandum of understanding between the Association of Yukon Communities and the government in September 2009. This massive organizational review was launched with the brand “Our Towns, Our Future” in October 2010. The minister set the perimeters of this review: “It will consider and address the following principles: 3.1 Maximizing Use of Resources: Solutions must look beyond funding increases; 3.2 Improved Efficiency: Opportunities to reduce service duplication and increase operational efficiencies are to be explored; and 3.3 Sustainability: Balance and integrate the social, economic and environmental components of Yukon

communities to meet the needs of existing and future generations.”

The Yukon Party said to improve how they operate without additional resources. There was a summit of municipal and territorial leaders and the public in June 2011 at which there was one rather significant announcement; namely, the takeover of municipal fire services by the Yukon government. Now, three years on with the tabling of the municipal financing bill, we have another action that contains some improvement, but also moves the formula for devising the comprehensive municipal grant from legislation, where it can be debated in the Legislative Assembly, to regulations where it just needs to pass Cabinet. Contrast the direction coming out of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which is that we have a serious municipal infrastructure deficit that needs funding from senior governments and what the Yukon Party has said — municipalities need to improve their operations without additional resources. What might a process have looked like that asked what their needs are — an interactive process that involves citizens and elected municipal leaders in which short-, mid- and long-term priorities around recreation, community infrastructure and services could be identified? Communities and the territorial government could be adding their voices.

Communities and the territorial government could be adding their voices to the national debate and the debate in the north about the infrastructure gap and calling for the federal government to invest in our communities in the interest of economic development, public safety and security. It would look a lot different from the “Our Towns, Our Future” organizational review.

The motion is essentially calling on the Yukon Party government to implement initiatives and actions emanating from “Our Towns, Our Future” review that included 75 findings in relation to the following 18 themes, then the motion repeats the table of contents of the report. I have some points in reference to the findings that are not binding on any party and, to most of the points, I will ask the same questions: what is being done; what has been achieved; what is going to be done; what’s the plan; how does this improve life in our communities and our municipalities and unincorporated municipalities and their citizens?

The findings speak of ongoing collaboration between AYC and Yukon government: information sharing, building trusting relationships and lots of meetings between the two. No one will argue with that. The findings then say it is essential that Yukon government works not only bilaterally with the Association of Yukon Communities, but continues to foster a direct relationship with municipalities to understand their unique concerns and interests.

Question: Can the minister shed some light on the direct relationships? What are the unique concerns and interests of the incorporated and unincorporated municipalities? For example, the Carcross infrastructure and the Carcross and Tagish emergency backup power — these examples show the Yukon Party seems to either not listen or not care what the communities want. I was at a public meeting recently and the community stated that they are glad for the improvements that have been

put in place in Carcross, for example; however, if they had the money, their priorities of what would be in place in that community would be much different from what we see today. What has been done? What has been achieved? What is going to be done? What is the plan? How does this improve life in our municipalities and unincorporated municipalities and their citizens?

The findings say the Yukon government can facilitate municipal First Nation discussions in areas of mutual interest. There are also words about clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. Again, I point out in the situation last sitting when the minister opposite — if we look at *Hansard* — issued a challenge for the community to come together. The community came together. They signed a letter stating what priorities they as a community would like to see. For those of us who have lived in the Yukon, this is a great day for Carcross. I would hope that the minister responds to this letter, which was sent to her some time back, that would enable the community to come together, growing as a community, not only ensuring it for the tourists who come for fewer months of the year than the people who live there 24 hours a day, 12 months of the year — walking, talking and who very much have the priorities of what they see this community needs. This is just one example of one community.

Again, no one can argue with that. We are all Yukoners. We all deserve core essential services. Local governments — municipal and First Nation — should work together, share and do more for Yukoners by not duplicating. One of the things in government working with First Nations is that CTFN has a plan to build a community house, which is part of the priorities of the community. There is a deadline for them to be able to obtain money that will allow this to go forward and they do require a response from the Yukon Party government for this to come to fruition.

Regionalization has been a favoured approach of senior governments embarking on cost-cutting and municipal down-loading agendas in southern Canada for a while. The argument is to cover a wider area and achieve cost savings. The results down south have been mixed to negative. The report, though, recognizes the difficulty in achieving benefits and saving through regionalization. So this is a bit of a dead end.

The findings say the process of reviewing the *Municipal Act* is not formalized and leads to confusion and misunderstanding. Though the Yukon Party amended the act in 2003 and in 2008, there is no formalized understanding of how future reviews will occur.

Through this process an act review committee was established and it will be working over the next two years. It will be holding public consultations in the future. I was told this at a Community Services briefing yesterday. This is good news that the public will be able to participate.

From the report on page 5, many municipal leaders feel that the governance and financial systems established decades ago are no longer able to ensure continued municipal resilience. The definition of resilience is coping, bouncing back, survival. When an NDP government brought in the *Municipal Act* in the 1990s, it was heralded as a landmark piece of legislation, par-

ticularly in terms of enabling citizens to hold their local government to account. The public vote section of the act enabled citizens to organize referenda on any matter. The drafters saw this as an effective counterbalance to giving municipal governments more power.

There are some politicians at the local and territorial levels that are just not comfortable with the people having this kind of power. There have been challenges to public votes in the 10 years of Yukon Party rule and they have been very consistent. They don't like citizen referenda. So yes, review process — and the *Municipal Act* is currently being reviewed. We need to ensure that citizens are aware of this process — that they are engaged and not just point to it through an on-line questionnaire or an evening public meeting, because the *Municipal Act* is such an important piece of legislation.

This is something about a comprehensive team approach with Yukon government. Municipalities and occasionally First Nations get things done at the municipal level. What has been done? What has been achieved? Do we have community development teams now working in municipalities? Are they tackling the issues, overcoming silos and creating efficiencies? What's going to be done? What's the plan and how does this improve life in our communities, in our municipalities that are incorporated and unincorporated and their citizens?

The concept here is how to measure municipal sustainability as a planning tool. From the report such an assessment can measure efficiency; give an early-warning system to provide an alert to problems before a crisis arises; identify barriers to success; enable the prioritization of critical issues; and help focus efforts and clarify strategic approaches to improving viability and sustainability. Holy buzz words — maybe the Yukon government needs such a powerful tool.

A warning system to provide an alert to problems before a crisis arises might have helped this Yukon Party government deal with the international medical graduates, doctor-shortage issue and the housing crisis — it might have. What has been done? What has been achieved? Is there a municipal sustainability indicator that we have adopted? What does employing this cost? What kind of results do we expect to achieve? How does this improve life in our municipalities and unincorporated municipalities and their citizens?

Climate change and adaptation: What has been done? What has been achieved? What is going to be done? What's the plan? How is thinking around climate change factoring into decisions around municipal infrastructure and community plans? How does this improve life for citizens in our municipalities and unincorporated municipalities?

This is a very good, concrete idea — Yukon municipal resources website — and it will create efficiencies by allowing municipalities to share information such as templates on by-laws. The draft site just has some links to groups like the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and government entities with brief descriptors. It is hard to fathom how this draft site will be of much use to municipal administrators. When will a proper site be launched? What will be included on this website?

These findings talk of efficiencies, provision of local services. These findings talk about efficiencies to be gained but

Yukon government funding to core services may provide a better system for ensuring these services are maintained to an adequate level. We've seen the transfer of fire management from municipalities to Yukon government. What has been the result? What is the evaluation? Are other services next? What has been done? What has been achieved?

These findings say that the Yukon municipal infrastructure is at least 40 years old and then suggests we need an assessment management database. What is the plan to replace old, crumbling infrastructure?

Revenue generation: What has been done and what has been achieved? Taxes, fee for service, comprehensive municipal grant — these are the tools. There is talk of municipalities generating revenue through energy generation, but where is the independent power production policy and the plan?

Let's put revenues aside and ask: Where is the adequate funding for municipal services and capital? Where is the territory, and how is Yukon government advocating for new municipal infrastructure funding to the federal government?

Lot development: Where is the action? Where are the affordable lots for Yukoners? I say "affordable lots". Municipalities identify the need for action on housing and land availability, but this government has been lacking in ideas to address the housing crisis.

This is one of the rare items — the comprehensive municipal grant — with this organizational review, where there has been some action. The municipal financing bill contains some improvement, but also moves the formula for devising the comprehensive municipal grant from legislation, where it can be debated in the Legislative Assembly, to regulations where it just needs to pass Cabinet. We do look forward to seeing the draft regulation, as was promised by the minister, before it's rubber-stamped.

I'm curious about this one. Regulations — be they for occupational safety, public safety, environmental protection, et cetera — they have a cost. There is, of course, the cost of not having strong rules to protect people and the environment — that we pay down the road in sickness, class actions, and institutions of last resort.

I can appreciate that municipal-like governments see a new regulation and worry about the cost implications. It is a terrible bargain that a government representing its citizens would have to make the choice: implement a law effectively or replace other services. Is this the crux of "made in the Yukon" solutions? Why can't we have it all? Why is it a choice? We need to live within our means, but we do risk personal safety to achieve this. I'm very curious to hear the minister describe the actions he plans to implement in regard to conjectures about the regulatory burden.

No. 15: Impacts of Peripheral Residents, Businesses and Industries on Municipal Services. What has been done? What's the plan? No. 16: Energy Costs. What has been done? What's the plan? No. 17: Employee Recruitment and Retention. What has been done? What's the plan? No. 18: Training: Building Local Capacity. This is extremely important, but again, what has been done? What's the plan?

With Yukon College campuses, as well as developments in curriculum for First Nation governance, there are opportunities to offer more training to improve service and administration.

I'd like to hear the Minister of Community Services when she gets up to speak. Tell this House the cost of the "Our Towns, Our Future" process and how long it will continue.

In conclusion — much words, little action. What has the government achieved in the three years plus of this review? Have municipal tax bases outside of Whitehorse increased? Has the Yukon government, the largest employer, looked to locate offices outside of Whitehorse, particularly as the federal government has cut federal public sector jobs, particularly related to Parks Canada in Haines Junction and Dawson City?

Back to the motion. Should the Yukon Party government implement more findings as part of this long, continuing organizational review? Yes, it should. It should do more for training municipal staff, for sharing information through websites. Is this enough? No. The premise of "Our Towns, Our Future" review was finding efficiencies, finding synergies, finding waste, and don't ask for new money.

Though there are good findings, they are hard to find within all the buzz words, and Yukon government needs to sift through the motherhood statements and deliver. A real improvement lies within recognizing the serious deficiencies, the real needs, in our communities, and working with the citizens and their local representatives to increase the quality of life and give them a meaningful say in their future.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would like to extend my thanks to the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this very important motion to the floor of the Assembly. It is important to not only those I would coin as legislators of this Assembly, who represent all of the territory, but to each of our local municipal and local governments.

I had high hopes when we embarked upon this motion of talking about the positive things that are actually evolving in the territory. It is truly unfortunate that the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes has chosen to take a different tack. Rest assured we will get into his comments in due time.

I want to take a little bit of time to respond to some of those comments, because I look forward to clipping his comments and perhaps those of members opposite and sharing them with members of the Association of Yukon Communities. I think they will find it very intriguing — very interesting — to hear what, in fact, the members opposite think of the "Our Towns, Our Future" review. So I look forward to hearing their feedback on the member opposite's feedback.

It's interesting — the member opposite from Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes just posed the question: Are Yukoners better off today than they were 10 years ago? Well, when we talk about indicators — it's interesting to do a comparison of those indicators from years past under the previous NDP government. I don't want to go back to that time, because it was not a very good time. It was a very dismal time, actually. But I think it's important for Yukoners to remember what it was like under that regime.

Compared to where we were well before 10 years ago to where we are today, I would say that yes we are indeed better off. You know, when we look at the economic situation of the territory, we have had record-level employment rates compared to the rest of the country, despite the global economic recession. We've had a hiatus in terms of the population growth in each of our respective areas within the territory. In terms of land development being made possible to accommodate some of that growth, when we take a look at the mineral exploration and the development expenditures, I would say yes, in fact we are better off than where we were a number of years ago.

It starts with having money in the bank. I want to talk about this too, because under the previous NDP government, what we experienced was Yukon's first-ever debt — debt which precipitated a bill coming to the floor of the Yukon Legislature called the *Taxpayer Protection Act* to prohibit that from occurring again, making it illegal. So we actually have money in the bank. We have net financial resources in the bank today and that's a really key point because it does take resources to grow our communities; it does take resources to bring viability and resilience to our communities.

We have enabled strategic investments in every one of our communities throughout the territory that have been able to sustain growth. This has resulted in significant growth in all our communities. I think it is very important to take note of how this government has doubled the fiscal resources allotted to the Government of Yukon and how we have worked in collaboration and in partnership with First Nation governments and municipal governments and many organizations and agencies throughout the territory to leverage that funding.

You know, when it comes to matters that matter the most to Yukoners in terms of housing initiatives and land development initiatives, health care facilities, in terms of schools, investments in education and training, that too leads to resilient communities. So, I will get to the member opposite's comments in due time.

I want to start just by thanking the many individuals who have contributed to "Our Towns, Our Future". The idea emerged as a response by the previous Minister of Community Services to concerns that were raised by municipal officials and municipal leaders over a number of years. It was really a way to address questions as to how municipalities can enhance resilience and ensure their sustainability in the face of current-day pressures. The review was really meant to address challenges, including our aging infrastructure, recruitment and retention of municipal employees, provision of local services, rising operations costs and changing our regulatory requirements. As a result, we embarked upon a process. The wide-ranging review really started in 2010, and involved a full year of consultation, research and debate around municipal sustainability.

The review looked at everything from finance to operations in order to fully explore the issues that truly matter to healthy, sustainable Yukon communities.

A full year of work led to the "Our Towns, Our Future" findings report that was released at the Association of Yukon Communities annual general meeting back in May 2011. This document is a road map toward continued municipal sustaina-

bility and I very much hope that all members of the House have had an opportunity to review the findings. Our government recognized the value of "Our Towns, Our Future" to Yukon communities and citizens and made this part of our platform. Since taking office, we have built on the strong partnership created during the consultation process, while also moving forward in partnership with the Yukon municipalities through the Association of Yukon Communities to address a number of the findings.

I'm going to talk about just a few of the many accomplishments to date that have come out of the "Our Towns, Our Future" process because as the member opposite referred — what is the plan and what has been done? Rest assured I will do my utmost considering I only have a limited amount of time to speak to the motion at hand. I will do my best.

Also, before I do, I want to stress that this has been a collaborative, partnership-driven model for municipal relations that I would say is both unique and far beyond anything that has been done compared to the rest of the country. That has been articulated time and time again by not only the current president of Association of Yukon Communities but also the past president of Association of Yukon Communities and other members of the Association of Yukon Communities executive and others. In fact, it has been of considerable interest to my colleagues around the country who are often amazed, if not perhaps a bit envious. We can never take for granted that here in the Yukon we have been able to develop what I would coin a level of trust and ability to work together. "Our Towns, Our Future" was composed of a committee of senior Yukon government and municipal officials who worked tirelessly and in the spirit of open and transparent partnership and collaboration.

You know, in my time as minister I have heard from a number of mayors and councillors with a long history of municipal government about how much relations have improved as a direct result of this very process. In turn, the openness and the trust that has been built between municipal governments and the Government of Yukon is really the primary reason we've been able to achieve so much in a relatively little period of time and with relatively few resources. It only makes sense that we would continue to work together in this manner to help keep our municipalities healthy and sustainable. I want to say that this is a very important key point: I was born and raised — I'm very proud to say — in the Town of Watson Lake in rural Yukon. I have family who continue to reside in the community of Watson Lake. I know just how important it is for municipalities to be sustainable, to respond to the pressures of the day and how very important it is to have those strategic partnerships in place with other governments and other agencies in terms of stretching and leveraging those resources to adhere to the priorities. I can say that is why, when I was asked to serve as the Minister of Community Services by the Premier, I was very honoured and humbled to take on this very role.

I have very much enjoyed my year tenure as minister, working with municipalities. I have really taken great time over the past number of months to visit a number of communities a couple of times, if not three times, throughout the territory — and sat down with mayors and councillors of past and also pre-

sent, and hear first-hand some of the issues of importance in each of our communities. I certainly commend each of those municipal leaders within our territory for taking on the challenge and also the opportunity to experience working on behalf of the citizens whom we all serve.

So, the “Our Towns, Our Future” findings report was, in fact, an end product. It was also the beginning, however, I would say, of continued collaboration between our respective levels of government — and really a blueprint for how we will continue to work together to address the findings. Our government recognizes the importance and the value of these findings, and since the report was released we have been working in partnership with AYC and all Yukon municipalities to identify areas where we would like to either take action or look further into a particular issue.

You know, this work has happened on a number of fronts, including a number of routine meetings between me, and the president of Association of Yukon Communities and also through the day-to-day work of the Department of Community Services, in particular the Community Affairs branch through our respective community advisors. I take my hat off to each of those individuals who have worked tirelessly over the years and have really garnered a good, healthy working relationship built on trust and respect. As a result, we have been able to advance so many different issues.

Using the successful model from the original “Our Towns, Our Future” process, our government and Association of Yukon Communities established three working groups last year, one of which was the comprehensive municipal grant, the *Municipal Act* review and an implementation working group. In my most recent meeting with the Association of Yukon Communities, we’ve agreed to also establish a new working group to look at municipal solid-waste issues.

Much like the original process, these working groups are small, they’re efficient, they’re dedicated and they get an incredible amount of work done within a relatively short period of time. In fact, I am very honoured to report that more than two-thirds of the 75 OTOF findings have been implemented or are underway, including several major initiatives.

One of the biggest accomplishments to date was the successful review of the comprehensive municipal grant. Earlier in this sitting, the *Act to Amend the Municipal Finance and Community Grants Act* was passed unanimously by all members of the Legislature — putting a number of the “Our Towns, Our Future” findings into legislation. It also opened the way for a new grant formula that is simple to understand, will respond to growth and changes in a community and ensures that no communities are left behind. The formula was developed by the working group and presented to Yukon municipalities, which gave it unanimous support.

As part of the new grant program, we also announced an increase of over \$1 million subject to approval, of course, of the Legislature in the forthcoming budget. This will bring the total amount of CMG funding next year to over \$18 million. I want to say again just for members opposite — as a reminder — that it was the Yukon Party government that actually enhanced the level of funding over the past five years — and we

are in the last of the five years — by over 30 percent. In fact, it resulted in about an \$800,000 increase each year over five years.

This new funding arrangement will build on the successive funding increase and will go a long way toward enhancing municipal viability. Part of the CMG increase is \$2 million over five years, paid directly to the municipalities in support of fire services, and of course that complements the almost \$2-million investment that we announced earlier this year through the Fire Marshal’s Office, which will go a long way toward municipal sustainability and the safety of our communities. It is related to a number of findings across several theme areas.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is short. Of course the *Municipal Act* Review Committee has equal representation from the Government of Yukon and municipalities and we have completed an initial round of consultation with governments, local advisory councils, interested First Nations and the public at large. I know the member opposite had wondered when those meetings were about to kick off. Actually, they already did. It’s unfortunate that the member opposite didn’t know about the community meetings that took place earlier this year.

As I have stated before and I’ll state again, this is but one step within a two-year process. These two undertakings are just a couple of the major undertakings being adhered to by the respective governments, housed under the review itself. With respect to other findings within the “Our Towns, Our Future” review, it’s unfortunate I don’t have sufficient time to articulate all of that but I did want to make mention of the infrastructure requirements.

There has been reference made about the importance of infrastructure to each of our communities. I did want to say that the Government of Yukon has been working collaboratively, which all started with a 2009 Yukon-wide infrastructure plan. Since that time, we will have invested just over \$265 million in support of critical infrastructure in all communities.

Just to wrap up, I again want to thank all of the officials, who have worked so very hard over the past couple of years on this very important initiative. I can say that this has really been a truly important process — that we have been able to establish a great partnership between our municipalities and the Yukon government and how we remain committed to continuing to work together to ensure that our municipal governments remain healthy, sustainable and vibrant.

Mr. Silver: It is my privilege to stand in support of this motion, Motion No. 283, in the name of the Member for Watson Lake, encouraging the Government of Yukon to implement initiatives from “Our Towns, Our Future.” The future of this territory is dependent upon intergovernmental relations. Relations with all governments and increased communication and cooperation will help identify common issues and will streamline solutions found in one community that are transferable to others.

I can attest to the importance of close relations between all levels of government in the Klondike. A working relationship with the Government of Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in has allowed me to work on very important files in education, for example, and

being able to pick up the phone at any time with Chief Taylor or with any of his officials in education has given me the knowledge I need to speak on the issues that are important specifically for this First Nation and that they have identified as priorities — and what items have worked and need support from the territory.

I can also attest to the importance of relationships with our federal counterparts. Our MP, once recognizing the importance of the Dredge No. 4 tours and the cuts to Parks Canada, gave me a phone call to discuss the topic. We spoke prior to his meeting with the CEO for Parks Canada about the motion that we passed in this Assembly this fall on this issue. His concerns were that our motion basically asks that all of the cuts be taken back and that would not be possible. We spoke of priorities, and we shared information, and we talked about issues that we felt Parks may not have considered. I feel confident that communications such as this do a lot of good for all the communities — which brings me to communication with municipalities, which is the focus of our day today in the Legislative Assembly.

“Our Towns, Our Future” is an example of an excellent facilitation of municipal issues communication. I absolutely applaud the Minister of Community Services for her efforts in this area. I have been paying very close attention to her activities and communications with municipalities, her engagement with the Association of Yukon Communities, and her solutions to certain messes that she may have inherited. She is moving in the correct direction and deserves credit and encouragement to continue.

In the spirit of cooperation, I would like to offer my comments and suggestions in terms of the 18 themes emanating from “Our Towns, Our Future.”

Yukon government and municipal relations: It is the opinion of Klondikers and most Yukoners that, so far, the lines of communication have been opened for the municipalities with the Yukon government, and we encourage this to continue.

In terms of First Nation and municipal relations, I believe that this theme came out originally through AYC from the Village of Carmacks, if I’m not mistaken. It is up to the individual First Nations and municipalities to keep and enhance relationships between these governments. It is the job of the territorial government to help facilitate the ability to meet and also to listen to their cooperative voices and after such meetings.

In terms of regionalization and governance, we encourage this government to ensure autonomy in the communities in terms of municipal control over municipal issues.

The *Municipal Act* review process is an ongoing and integral theme. There are many concerns within this review and far too many to get into here with a limited time frame. For example, PSAP management standards alone will create issues in funding to offset assets as they age. There are many issues in here, so I’ll leave that for another time when we have more time for debate.

Moving to community development teams, identified in the municipalities has been the tendency for the Yukon government in the past to silo departments, which has an effect on communications and problem solving. In the past, a community

with an issue would have to pick a department to address that issue; it would take a considerable amount of time to realize, perhaps, that this is not the correct department. Sometimes the community would find itself starting over in a new department, identifying concerns, setting up appointments with busy officials, and so on. Under this new theme a community team — I believe they’re called “tiger teams” — would come in and work on developing solutions and we support this theme.

Municipal sustainability indicators: I am concerned that this particular theme is dying a slow death. At issue is how could one possibly accomplish this theme without a common accounting system? It’s a valid theme, but we have a lot of work left to do to accomplish this.

Climate change adaptation: The municipalities have yet to be instructed on who is championing this file and are still in the dark as to what this looks like on the ground floor.

Yukon municipal resource website: Once again, in order to get all points across today I’ll keep my comments here very brief. It’s basically valid.

Moving on, there is the provision of local services. There are still a lot of questions as to what this means and how these items are to be facilitated. What local services? Are we talking about energy and being able to contribute to the energy grid? Or are we talking about waste management?

In terms of municipal infrastructure, deficit and asset management, this was completed with fire departments and it meant thousands of dollars to the Klondike fire department. As it was not as much as was identified as the need, it is a very good start.

Revenue generation: Municipalities want to develop revenue, but their hands are often tied due to territorial legislations. They are boxed in and ask what the intentions are and what the initiatives are to change legislation to make it easier for the municipalities to earn.

That brings me to lot development and land availability, and I could go on — and I have gone on, and on, and on — for this file and this theme. It basically comes down to that the territorial government is the solution to lot development, and I urge the minister responsible for housing to look again at housing strategies. We have social housing vacant and waiting for doctors and nurses. We also have teachers who are in their first year in the Yukon and they have to couch surf because that’s no longer a guarantee. We also have people with real social housing needs on waiting lists. The solution would involve, in my opinion, a land development protocol agreement. This will establish how both levels of government — not just the Yukon government, but also the municipalities — are accountable to solve these issues.

Comprehensive municipal grant: Here I give credit, as it is due. Where there used to be a closed funding that found communities fighting for monies, there is now common sense. This is one ex-math teacher who is quite happy that that algorithm is gone.

For increasing cost and burden of regulations, there is an example where suppose there were new regulations in the Department of Environment for monitoring wells. It could bring a new burden to municipalities or, for example, Dawson is about

to go to a no-burn policy at Quigley landfill. Whether or not this is a good idea, it still brings an increased burden in terms of more landfill to the municipality. We need to work with municipalities to factor in considerations such as this.

Impacts of peripheral residents, businesses and industries on municipal services: How does the government fairly offer access to services to those residents living outside the boundaries? I'm very interested to hear what the territorial government suggests we do with this theme.

For employment, recruitment and retention, the municipalities wonder about post-secondary training for public service administrators. We offer this for First Nation government professionals. Let's extend this to all public service professionals.

For training and building local capacity, the big issue here is access to funds for local capacity. The big issue here is access to funds for locals to be trained — a huge issue in rural communities.

In conclusion, I urge this government to focus in on action items and timelines. The Association of Yukon Communities has done significant work; now let's take the lead with concrete and real initiatives, action items and with real timelines.

Ms. Hanson: It's a pleasure to speak to this motion from the Member for Watson Lake. In reflecting on the issues that she identified when she outlined the 18 themes from "Our Towns, Our Future", I recalled being at the meeting of the AYC in May 2011 when this was rolled out for the AYC, and I note there are at least one, maybe two members present — members of this Legislative Assembly — who were wearing different hats at the time when these findings were discussed. As is my want, I was sitting there and the discussion was going on about the 75 findings and the 18 themes and there was this quick overview provided, which was very helpful, and as has been discussed already this afternoon, it was a fairly extensive process of working within the Association of Yukon Communities and community — because it really is a community, from observation — and none of the 75 findings were surprises.

It was clear that the approach as it was described was taken because the committee members and the representatives of the Association of Yukon Communities expressed — and I'm reading from notes that I took during that meeting — a need to an end to an ad hoc one-of approach. What they determined was a need to move away from prescriptive approaches — there is nothing prescriptive in these findings — and to step back and allow for development of a common vision for all community leaders through the Association of Yukon Communities, where we see our young people staying in the communities, particularly rural communities, which comes as a result of effective planning rather than — and I'm quoting here — just reacting. As it was described at that meeting, it gave rise to the need to work together.

I thought it might be helpful in the context, and there are two areas I'd like to touch on — one in particular, just a quick overview of some of the comments that were made at that meeting in respect of the findings and the 18 themes from each of the eight municipalities and a couple of the local area councils, as well as a particular moment on First Nation municipal

relations and regional governance and the *Municipal Act* review process, because they are areas, and I have attended at least one of Whitehorse consultations on the *Municipal Act*.

I think it's important — two years later or a year and a half later — to reflect back on what people said when this process or the result of the "Our Towns, Our Future" was rolled out. Community leaders represent the other level of government here, and I think it was safe to say that all of the community leaders who were there saw it as a good starting point. Someone from one of the communities in southern Yukon expressed some scepticism but said this is a good starting point and stressed that they hoped it didn't get shelved. So I'm thinking — I'm hoping that I'm hearing from the articulation from the minister opposite — that there is no intention to shelve the findings, nor the findings of the "Our Towns, Our Future" working group and that, although it's a bit organic in terms of the process of how working groups are getting structured and what gets tackled at what time, over the course of time the minister will be able to go back to the AYC and show the link between the finding and an outcome.

One of the observations from the Member for Klondike — one of the councillors there — talked about the importance of the actual fact of the *Municipal Act* being an excellent piece of legislation and that there was an importance placed on the *Municipal Act* review being substantive. There was some concern — and I think I heard the Member for Klondike expressing this — that the Yukon government at that time was not recognizing the need for a uniform accounting system for all municipalities and the concern there — the cheapness that exists now — that that may or may not work for major municipalities like Whitehorse, but perhaps they're common themes. I'm only reflecting the kinds of views that came out in the context of the response to "Our Towns, Our Future" themes that were expressed.

You can start to see where some of the communities are coming from, a key focus being the provision of local services. Those are the kinds of issues that the *Municipal Act* does provide for and that are spoken to in the themes that were identified. There was an express need for a major rethink of what we think about and how we fund and describe recreational facilities — whether or not they're actually just for fun or they actually contribute to the overall health of the community and also have an economic component. There's the whole issue of revenue generation and the need for stabilization grants and the timing of implementing and working through with local communities, opportunities for revenue generation and the importance of economic development, to the sustainability, which was really getting at the notion in smaller communities of how economic stability can be linked to regional governance structures or regionalization.

There was a fair amount of discussion identification as they went around the room — and this was done as an around-the-table type discussion — around the room, I guess — and there was a real concern about the burden and the cost of implementing regulations — reflecting comments that we've heard a little bit of already this afternoon — and reiterated by municipal leaders on the need to link the whole of government approach to the implementation of any regulatory regime.

Small communities in central Yukon expressed that what we do for next steps is absolutely critical. The City of Whitehorse, in fact, rated their priorities. Their number one priority was the *Municipal Act* review; then it was the municipal grant, which has been achieved. The third was revenue generation, and the fourth was lot development, and the fifth was community development teams. The statement at the time — actually, several councillors were there, and several of them spoke about the importance of making sure that this not get shelved.

I'm using all of these examples because that's why the continuity and the carry-through of these major initiatives is so important because people put an awful lot of work in, as the minister said — work on their own time — because they believe in their own communities and they want them to be successful.

There was again another comment about the *Municipal Act* review being much-needed. Concerns were being expressed by local advisory councils and how they were going to be included and how it reflected their issues and needs, and they expressed a need for an opportunity to provide their concerns to this exercise and have that sort of set out in a very direct way.

There was discussion about a timeline for action — again, implement priorities — and they didn't want to lose the momentum of this. So the more that, as the minister outlined, there can be some demonstration of momentum and actual achievement against some timeline and outcomes, the more the credibility of this exercise is enhanced.

In terms of prioritization and identification of potential costs, there was a very positive sense, in terms of the direction it was going here. I think that's indicative of what I have observed with respect to the potential that exists in municipal and local government in the territory, which is why I think it's really important that when we think about the changes and we look at those issues associated with the *Municipal Act* review, in particular — you know, it's not that long ago that municipalities were very much like *Indian Act* bands in this territory. Their ability to make decisions was very restricted, just like an *Indian Act* band and, as we saw with the evolution of First Nation governments, and we saw that the powers of First Nations were changing — or the recognition of certain powers they would have was changing — there began to be an understanding.

I have to give credit where credit is due. In fact, a *Municipal Act* review committee was established, I think, in 1992 — so that was Bill Brewster from Kluane who actually initiated that. He believed, as I understand it, that local government was a legitimate level of government, and he thought they needed to have more say. He also recognized, in 1992, that we had established the framework for negotiating self-government agreements, so that change was coming in this territory, so we needed to begin to give some thought to change.

The *Municipal Act*, as the minister and other speakers have mentioned, dating back into the 1980s, was quite restrictive and it didn't enable municipalities to do very much without ministerial sanction. I think that one of the things that we've seen is that, over the course of a lengthy period of time, we move from a pretty extensive consultation process all the way through the

1990s to the end of the 1990s when we in fact knew what self-government was going to look like and we knew that you couldn't have a municipal government — or hamper municipal governments — in a way that would put them at a disadvantage or in contradistinction to what a self-governing First Nation's powers were. So the movement to change the philosophy and the thinking about what municipal government was — this really did result in a pretty revolutionary piece of legislation. The *Municipal Act* in the Yukon that was brought into force in 1998 is significant and seen as — the minister perhaps wasn't there, but others were there at the public consultation that was done on the *Municipal Act* review. I think it was in June at the MacBride Museum.

People who study local government look at this act and say it has got so many forward-looking provisions in terms of recognizing and enabling. Municipal governments in this territory are enabled to do things. They're not prescribed and that's very similar to what's provided for under the self-government legislation. If we look at what we see in the self-government agreement, First Nations are not prescribed or dictated what they must do. In a similar way, the territorial government has recognized that we don't achieve good governance by dictating what another level of government will do. It doesn't take away from the obligation or the responsibility of this territorial government or this Legislative Assembly because the *Municipal Act* is created by — and I used the language one time “creature of”, but that is the technical phrase. It's created by this Legislative Assembly, so we have a responsibility for making sure that the philosophy and the principles that provided this landmark legislation are not lost.

One of the key things as we look forward into the future for the *Municipal Act* was ensuring that what came out of the *Municipal Act* Review Committee in the mid-1990s and into the late 1990s and into the new *Municipal Act* — that *Municipal Act* Review Committee had made it very clear that one of their key principles was a principle of public participation being fundamental to good local government.

If it was going to be anything more than symbolism, the new legislation had to provide tangible opportunities for such participation. So that's why I think it's so important that as we move forward into the *Municipal Act* review that we not lose sight of that participation aspect.

I had the opportunity to read an unpublished text. It's called “Searching for a Democracy in a Democracy”. It might sound unlikely, but it's actually a history of the *Municipal Act* in the Yukon. So I just want to quote from it briefly, because it sets a context to why it's going to be so important and where we as the Official Opposition will be coming from in terms of wanting to ensure that these principles are protected as we go forward in this review. It states that the minister of the time understood that the municipal statute would have to include provisions to empower citizens — a chance for citizens to develop and mature politically and at their own pace.

If the legislation were to succeed, if municipal and First Nation governments were to have an opportunity to cooperate and work together for the benefit of their respective political

communities within broader integrated communities, a new political culture would have to be created.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition indicated that she's quoting from a document that she referred to as "unpublished". It's standard practice in this House that she table that document so that members could see it.

Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition, on the point of order.

Ms. Hanson: I didn't realize it was a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Is the Leader of the Official Opposition in fact quoting from a document that is unpublished?

Ms. Hanson: Yes, I am, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't aware — can I speak to that?

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: If the member is going to quote extensively from this unpublished document, I would ask that she table it. The Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, may I ask a point of clarification? I have one or two paragraphs — is that extensive?

Speaker: I would say no.

Ms. Hanson: Okay. Thank you. Essentially, what the author was getting at was the importance of restructuring the foundation of municipal government on democratic principles. So the principles that were put forward — which really were so important — included the ability for citizens of a municipality to petition for changes, and allows citizens to have a voice in a municipal government and that allowed the territorial government to have some assurance that the principles of representative democracy were being effected. So there are the issues of public participation through the referendum and petition provisions that were absolutely vital and really did change the government/citizen relationship at the municipal level in the territory and, as we've seen, set a model for governments elsewhere.

The other aspect of the *Municipal Act* review — we'll be looking to hear and see some articulating principles, because so far the *Municipal Act* review seems to have sort of stopped for a bit — because if we look at the website, I can't find the minutes of any of the public meetings. I can find meetings of AYC and city council and the *Municipal Act* Review Committee, but the public meeting, for example, that occurred at MacBride Museum — I'm not sure if there were subsequent public meetings. There doesn't seem to be any record of those. So that will be important to be able to track over the next year, so the timelines become more clear for citizens to know when and how they articulate their views and to whom — because the website has a SurveyMonkey questionnaire. But that's about

the only input you can really find, and you can't see what happens when that survey data goes in.

I will raise in the Legislative Assembly for debate — when we get to — hopefully — a more detailed conversation about that whole democratization of the *Municipal Act* and its implementation — incorporating provisions in the *Municipal Act* with respect to the political campaign financing.

Those provisions don't currently exist in the *Municipal Act*, unlike the territorial *Elections Act*. There are no spending limits for municipal elections, nor are there any requirements for disclosure. Certainly, as we see municipalities and the importance of municipal governments — the enhancing and strengthening of that government and its role in so many dimensions of people's lives — it's like any other government. It's the whole importance of openness and disclosure and transparency, which are some of the fundamentals of a democratic society.

From a public government point of view, the Official Opposition feels strongly that we should engage the public as we review the *Municipal Act* in that conversation. So the public participation through the petitions and referenda, as well as the financing of political campaigns, are some of the key areas we'd like to see reviewed.

Briefly, with respect to the issues —

Speaker: Unfortunately the member's time has elapsed. We did make allowance for the interruption.

Mr. Hassard: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak on behalf of Motion 283 put forward by the MLA for Watson Lake. The "Our Towns, Our Future" report is quite significant in many regards. Firstly, it was a commitment in our 2011 election platform to move forward with the outcomes from this review. In April of 2010, with the *Municipal Act* being in need of review, the Minister of Community Services at that time announced the creation of this process, which became "Our Towns, Our Future". Being a councillor for the Village of Teslin at the time, I am happy to say that I was very fortunate in working with many people throughout the Yukon to provide input for this important document. The *Municipal Act* review Committee consists of three members from the Association of Yukon Communities, a councillor from Faro as well as a councillor from Whitehorse and a municipal administrative officer. Government of Yukon is in fact represented by officials by the Community Affairs unit. This working group has been working very hard on this issue and has met numerous times between December 1, 2011 and May 25, 2012.

I would like to mention a little bit more about the *Municipal Act* review. I'm especially impressed by their guiding principles. When performing its duties, the *Municipal Act* Review Committee, or MARC, will consider a few principles. They considered if it was inclusive, stating that, "the review process will strive in its design and implementation to engage all governments, stakeholders, and individuals who have an interest in the review." They considered if it was engaging, stating that, "the review will provide multiple, flexible, and creative avenues for two-way communications and meaningful dialogue." They considered if it was practical, indicating, "the review will

strive to develop findings that can be realistically accomplished.” The committee considered if it was accountable, stating that the MARC “will regularly report on its activities to the partners, other interested stakeholders, and individuals. It will also be fiscally accountable for its work.”

They considered if it was evidence based, stating “the review will draw from best available research and analyses and will involve subject-area experts to inform decision-making throughout the review.” The committee wanted the process to be partnership-led, stating that the “Yukon government and AYC will work collaboratively toward a common purpose while respecting the autonomy and mandates of each party.” They considered if it would be innovative, so MARC will “encourage and apply innovative thinking and actions in the review.” They considered if it would be inspirational, indicating that the review will “strive to inspire people to think long-term about local governance.” Finally, they considered if it would open communications, stating that the review will “ensure consistent communications to all stakeholders to facilitate engagement and help to generate shared understanding.”

Access to land is key to the development of a community, so I’ll tell you a few things that we’ve done on lot development. The investment in the Ingram subdivision here in Whitehorse is now complete. This resulted in 40 single-family, nine multi-family, eight duplexes and 72 townhouse lots available for Yukoners.

The construction of the Whistle Bend subdivision is well underway with lots available and construction ongoing. The Willow Acres subdivision in Haines Junction features 27 country residential, 49 single family, three multi-family, and two commercial lots. In my own community, the Village of Teslin is currently in the process of doing further development on the Sawmill Road subdivision. This work is being done in partnership with the Teslin Tlingit Council as well as the Yukon government.

On the topic of land development, I want to mention our work to streamline the process for acquiring title. There are two aspects to the land titles modernization. Firstly, the immediate fix is to increase the level of service that the land titles office is available to provide, and secondly, a full scale modernization of legislation, the supporting computer platform and business processes.

The legislation, computer systems, and business processes used in the land titles office are no longer sufficient for timely transactions, as the number of real estate transactions and their complexity has risen dramatically over the last several years.

The *Land Titles Act* and the *Condominium Act* have not been substantively amended since they were enacted, and in the case of the *Land Titles Act*, it was over a century ago. Similarly, the supporting computer platform was put into operation over 15 years ago and does not offer many of the features needed by the land titles office to facilitate service to the public today. Business processes need modernization because they are based on out-of-date legislation and system. Immediate fixes to improve efficiencies have been completed. An inspector was appointed under the act to review the processes in the land titles office. Many of the recommendations from her report have

been implemented. Discreet changes have been made to the legislation and improvements have been made to the supporting computer platform.

A separate full-scale modernization of the land titles regime in Yukon is now underway. This is being done in three phases. The scoping phase, which began in March of 2012, includes retaining legal and technical expert advice, preparation of discussion papers, stakeholder consultation and option identification. This will be completed by the end of 2012.

Development, including new legislation, selection of a new computer system and review of business processes by a business and functional analyst is due to start in 2013 and be completed by March of 2014. Implementation, which entails implementing new legislation and installing a new computer platform and business process in the office, should be completed by December 31, 2015.

I’d like to talk for a minute about what we’re doing with respect to First Nation and municipal relations. Seven Carcross waterfront projects were finished, including the most recent project, the *SS Tutshi* memorial, and four more projects are currently underway. We are working on several Whitehorse waterfront projects, including the KDFN Cultural Centre and Whitehorse Public Library project that opened earlier this year. Most of you know that the Whitehorse Public Library leases space in the new KDFN Cultural Centre.

To date, more than \$177 million in federal and territorial investment have been allotted for Yukon infrastructure improvements from the Building Canada base funding. A total of 22 projects under the municipal rural infrastructure fund, including the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Cultural Centre, have begun. Many, if not all of these projects — well, many of these projects — are complete. Five communities, including Ross River and Teslin, Haines Junction, Carcross and Marsh Lake, received improved public water treatment systems through the Building Canada fund.

I’d like to talk for a minute about the provision of local services. It was very nice to see the Ross River volunteer fire department take delivery of a \$309,000 state-of-the-art fire pumper truck on August 3, 2010. The Marsh Lake volunteer fire department took delivery of a new \$185,000 pumper tanker on October 5, 2010. These trucks incorporate the latest in fire-fighting technologies and will increase fire-response capacity in their respective communities.

Community Services has also purchased three new ambulances to replace aging equipment and provide communities with modular units as they become available. I am glad to see that we have proceeded with design for an emergency response facility here in Whitehorse to enhance EMS response times. Construction is well underway now and I look forward to seeing the finished product.

Another aspect that has been considered and acted upon is local training opportunities. For example, Community Services signed a three-year agreement with EMS volunteers. This memorandum of understanding governs the delivery of ambulance services in rural Yukon. I have also provided more than \$800,000 in FireSmart funding to 28 Yukon projects across the Yukon. These FireSmart projects are very helpful, both as op-

portunities to train workers and to help mitigate the fuel load around Yukon communities. All three communities in my riding have utilized this program and it has proven to be quite successful.

I'm looking at Community Development's "Our Towns, Our Future," which held meetings with the general public, municipal councils, local advisory councils and First Nations governments in communities across the Yukon. The report generated from these meetings has resulted in many improvements, including the amendment to the municipal grant and the *Municipal Act* review.

It's also important to note that 100 municipal gas tax projects have been approved to date in Teslin and Faro, as well as Carmacks, Dawson City, Haines Junction, Watson Lake and Whitehorse. On the subject of local services for folks on the periphery of communities, to date, 63 projects have been completed or are in progress under the rural electrification program to provide electricity and telecommunications services to Yukoners. I'm also given to understand that approximately 150 projects have been completed or are in progress under the rural domestic water well program to ensure Yukoners have access to safe drinking water.

I commend the process and the input that everyone has provided into the "Our Towns, Our Future" report. This report gives us a clear sense of how people are able to work together in collaboration and cooperation to reach a common goal.

In closing, I'd just like to again thank all of the people involved in the "Our Towns, Our Future" process for their hard and dedicated work in this most impressive document. I would again like to thank the Member for Watson Lake for putting this motion forward, and I hope to see unanimous support for this motion. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I rise today also definitely in support of this Motion No. 283, brought forward by the Member for Watson Lake, and I thank her for that. I would just like to speak a little bit on each of the 18 recommendations — or the themes.

When we talk about the first of the Yukon government municipal relations and the First Nation municipal relations, I think it's very important not to lose sight that maybe they're all intertwined together. The government can facilitate a lot of this stuff between municipalities and First Nations, and within the government and the First Nations — when it comes to mutual interests in the local areas, but also in the bigger areas with the existing municipalities or unincorporated municipalities.

So the success of providing good direction from government is imperative. Then looking at some examples, like in my riding with the unincorporated communities and an incorporated community in Haines Junction — also having three First Nations along there — if we're working on a tourism-related issue, everybody is collaborating and working together.

To the regionalization and governance findings — something I work with in my department in Highways and Public Works also plays into the big scheme of things. When it comes to cost-sharing of existing infrastructure services, we look at things on a case-by-case basis.

We have a very beautiful facility out there — the cultural centre in Haines Junction — which is a partnership with the federal government and a partnership with the Yukon government and with the local First Nations. I believe that's a big benefit to an area when we talked earlier about the relations between the First Nations, the Yukon government. That's a success we have seen. Within that success, that just shows this Yukon government working with First Nations.

My colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, alluded to some of the stuff that we've been doing with the First Nations — some of the YACA agreements that we have. Also coming into the "Regionalization and Governance" is the contracting and procurement end of things — looking at having the municipalities — maybe they require the same stuff that the local grader station does, whether it comes to the premiss for fixing potholes in a road or sanding material — maybe they partner it together and get a better price or a territory-wide price. I think that's very, very important.

Fire protection — that's another thing regionalized. We have issues in some of the smaller incorporated and unincorporated communities with subdivisions outside.

It's a challenge for the people at Community Services but I'm in agreement with a lot of Yukoners that the service we are providing in the communities is top-notch. I've seen many fires in my 44 years in Haines Junction and the fire department should be commended for the service that they provide.

The *Municipal Act* review process — I was thinking about this a little bit and I think it's just imperative as this process goes forward that our mayors and councils understand what this is and that they're part of the process.

Going on into the community development team stuff — I spoke a little bit earlier about the representatives from the municipality whether it's First Nation — and I talked about co-sharing, looking at some of the common issues that we have in the community and working together, maybe looking at planning for some of these things and putting priorities on the key issues.

When it comes to climate change adaptation, this is something that is near and dear to most of us. We talk about it a lot in the House and I know within my Department of Highways and Public Works we do this, but some of the stuff that we're doing, for example, our Fleet Vehicle Agency is 10 percent more efficient than we were a few years ago when it comes to emissions that we put out.

Working with municipalities, working with First Nations on some of the projects that we have and some of the goals that we're attaining and working together with them — it can work with the climate change adaptation that we have, and that's whether we're looking at vehicles or just procurement of green product. It sort of plays into the next one, which is the Yukon's municipal resources website — that's website sharing. Social media is huge. I've seen it within my department just on comments on certain issues that come up. It's a topic of conversation and e-governance and stuff like this is the direction that we're going, but incorporating the municipalities, whether working with the municipalities and the First Nations or a

chamber of commerce — we're all on the same link for accessing information.

I want to go into the provisions of local services, talking about costs of service in rural communities. In the City of Whitehorse, I don't know how many Bobcats there are, but there are a lot of Bobcats, so you can always find somebody to remove snow, but in rural communities or unincorporated communities where we have a grader station and not a town council or a First Nation there, it's imperative that the Community Services people work with what infrastructure we do have to partner together so that we can have the same access for rural Yukoners as we have in Whitehorse. Local solutions are usually your best way to go about doing this. Services need to be available for everyone, whether it is fire protection or snow removal.

The municipal infrastructure deficit and asset management: that is kind of a database for all communities' needs and we need to understand as a government, as a partner with many municipalities, unincorporated or incorporated, that there are needs in the communities and we need to look at what we have for assets across the board in the Yukon in all communities. We need to strive to make sure that every community is at the same level. A lot of this stuff comes to the Building Canada stuff that we have seen in working with Canada on infrastructure money that they have. Just look at the accomplishments of the Yukon Party. I think we've done a great job working with Community Services on rolling out some of these programs. There is a lot of great new infrastructure in these communities and I hope to see more in the future.

Revenue generation is something that is a little bit near and dear to my heart because we need revenue for communities; we need jobs in the communities. We have to have revenue; we have to understand whether we are looking at revenue for creating power, creating development corporations or local power-producing companies, whether we're looking at biomass, or we're looking at LNG or at damming, that we have to have a balanced approach to this look. We have to take into consideration everything, but we really need a balanced approach to also allow for development in some of the rural areas, so the communities can thrive, they can keep on living and they can wind up with better infrastructure, better facilities and more access to what we have here in Whitehorse for the local communities.

I listened to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin speak a little bit about lot development and stuff, and I can speak to that a little bit in my community. We have lot development, I believe — and this is me who believes in official community plans that the municipalities have. The unincorporated communities don't have that luxury of getting together. They have some of the local advisory councils and some of their interests are in different things, but I believe that we really need look at that process and we need to understand the concerns that the local residents have when we go to develop in their area. That needs to be taken into consideration.

The comprehensive municipal grant is something I was very proud to be part of with this government when I went up to the AYC in Dawson City, when we spoke at their general meeting and the Minister of Community Services — the posi-

tive feedback that we heard and the working together and looking forward is quite important.

One thing I hear lots — and I know it from our oil-fired appliance tour — when you hold community meetings and when you get out of the city limits of Whitehorse and you go out to Mayo or Beaver Creek — this speaks to the increasing cost and burden of regulations, which is one of the themes — number 14. That discussion is a little easier for someone I spoke to earlier in the City of Whitehorse to access, whether it's servicing a furnace or looking for snow removal or buying a part for your lawn mower. Everything is here. So we have to be cautious and careful what regulations and what burdens we put on rural municipalities and what they — incorporated or unincorporated — can actually handle.

The other thing I would like to speak to and I spoke to it with energy costs — a lot of our unincorporated and incorporated communities are on diesel generators. I applaud this government for looking at options. I'm proud to be a part of this government that looks for other options, whether it be LNG, looking at Yukon Energy's 20-year plan or working with the key stakeholders, trying to find solutions so we can have greener energy.

Another one that I was going to speak a little bit to was employee recruitment and retention. It's very important and I've seen it in my community from the First Nations and from the Yukon government, but also from the municipality — I've seen employees get trained and what we have within the city limits of Whitehorse is a pretty good drawing point. That pulls people to want to move and come in to Whitehorse instead of staying in the municipalities with their families. I think an HR strategy is something, and that there are human resource strategies that we can develop with municipalities and maybe First Nations. When we talked about the governments working together through partnerships to retain — maybe look for outside people to move to the Yukon, but not move to Whitehorse; instead move to some of the communities. I've been to every community in the Yukon many times and they all have their own niche and they're all very interesting and beautiful. The Yukon is a beautiful place. There are a lot of assets in every community and reasons for them to come, I think, but we need to work together on that with the Yukon government, with the municipalities and the First Nations to retain our well-paying jobs.

When we get someone to move to a community, people lose sight of the fact that if we bring a husband and wife with two kids, that's two more kids who are playing in minor hockey or showing up at the bake sale, going to the library and getting a membership, and in our schools — in our education system. So that plays into the last one, which is training and building local capacities. That's very important. It plays a little bit into the employment recruitment and retention. We need to understand that. One thing that I've seen with some of this Building Canada money is a lot of our local employees — public works employees, whether they work for the First Nations or whether they work for the municipalities — in town on water courses and on some of the procurement stuff that Highways and Public Works is doing. I've seen rural municipal em-

ployees and First Nations employees coming on these courses. Those are partnerships with Yukon government — opening the doors to the municipalities and opening the doors to the First Nations so they can be part of this progress. We're bringing up a keynote speaker to talk about procurement or some new ideas and new systems to make everybody more accountable. I believe that it's very important that we build these local capacities and we have to have that opportunity to offer this to our rural areas, as we do locally in town here.

Just in closing, I would really like to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this forward. I just wanted to — I've listened to my fellow colleagues, and fellow colleagues from across the way, talk about some of their things. I see a very positive, positive relationship between municipalities and the local First Nations and municipalities. In my riding we work well together. I hope to see this continue on down the line, and I thank the member opposite from Watson Lake for bringing this motion forward.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I'm proud to stand up today in support of this motion. I'd like to thank the MLA from Watson Lake for bringing this forward. I would also like to recognize all of the people who have been involved in putting the "Our Towns, Our Future" document together. We'll start with the former Minister of Community Services and certainly all of the people who have been engaged in this process, from the staff at Community Services and the former council members in the municipalities, some of whom are no longer part of the current municipal government, and also for the feedback that was received from the local advisory councils as well. Then I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the current Minister of Community Services for getting the baton and not only continuing to move forward, but to raise it to a higher level.

I was going to make comments on a number of things within "Our Towns, Our Future" and the very positive impact it has for all Yukoners, but I, too, need to take an opportunity to comment on some of the things that we have heard today from the NDP. This is certainly another example of the fact that the NDP, from their comments and from their history, have no ability to understand the fiscal management of how to run a territory or to understand — well, I guess, maybe they just think the money grows on a tree, so you can continue to spend money and spend money and commit to more programs, without any realization that somebody has to pay for it.

However, we did hear from the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that we can have it all and live within our means, which will be a quote that should be remembered for a long time, because I think that really does speak to and epitomizes the position of the NDP. Maybe they would like to duplicate the financial record of the country of Greece that certainly thought it could do the same thing, and we see where that has taken them and some of the other members of the EU.

The other comment by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that was quite riveting to me was asking the question of whether Yukoners are better off today than they were 10 years ago. I guess I'd like to talk about a few things that are occurring as a result of Yukon Party government over

the last 10 years. Starting off with one of the most recent things, that's our renegotiation of our resource-revenue sharing agreement with Canada to ensure that Yukoners continue to be the beneficiary of investment here in the Yukon, and subsequent to that agreement, moving forward with an agreement to share in these additional revenues with First Nations here in the Yukon, because that's how we do business. We will continue to work with First Nations and allow them the opportunities to grow their capacity and grow their businesses and their opportunities within the greater Yukon economy.

Earlier this year, we presented a budget for 2012-13 and it included the entire Yukon entity in that budget. It's the first time we've had a consolidated plan that really — not just describing the spending authority we were requesting from the departments, but also looking at the corporations as well, such as Yukon College, Yukon Hospital, Yukon Development Corporation, Yukon Liquor Corporation — speaks to the transparency of this government in ensuring that we can show Yukoners that we are continuing to move forward and allowing them to see the big picture when it comes to finances.

Again, we created — for the fourth consecutive year — a budget exceeding \$1 billion in investments in capital projects and in programs and services. Certainly, all the ministers have spoken at length through this session about some of the great work that has been done on a program basis and also in terms of investing in Yukon infrastructure to ensure that we are not only meeting those infrastructure needs, but we are also creating jobs, creating business opportunities for Yukon — and also creating competition at the same time.

The 2011-12 fiscal year that just ended, not one department required more expenditure authority. As a result, a supplementary budget was not required in this fall sitting for the 2011-12 fiscal year — a very rare occurrence, which is a testimony to the continued strong financial stewardship with which this government is leading the territory. Things that we could not even fathom talking about, based on the comments of the NDP and based on their record of taking us into debt, the Minister of Community Services mentioned the *Taxpayer Protection Act* that had to be implemented after the last NDP government because not only did they spend all the money that had been amassed — you know, as we try to move forward as a territory through our maturity — but actually put us into debt.

There had to be an act — the *Taxpayer Protection Act* — to ensure that such things didn't happen again. Effective for this year, we've added an additional \$2,000 tax credit for caregivers caring for a relative with a disability, including seniors and adults with severe disabilities. The government has already introduced the child's art tax credit in the amount of \$500, and this is enhanced or doubled for children who are living with a disability. If people are wondering where this is, I'm speaking to the comment about fiscal management and where we are now, compared to 10 years ago, and how these things tied together allow us to continue to provide more support for municipalities.

This government has a savings account; only two jurisdictions have a savings account. We have cash on hand and we can take all our liabilities — including environmental liabilities

and accounts payable — and with our assets, our investments and cash we can pay them and have money left over. We have net financial resources. I think it was actually in October that Standard & Poor's reaffirmed their credit rating for Yukon as AA. There are only three provinces that have an AAA rating — certainly this is an outstanding rating for a jurisdiction of our size and again speaks to the financial management and the economy that has been created by the Yukon Party government in the last 10 years.

Speaking of that economy, real GDP growth in 2010 was four percent; in 2011, 5.7 percent — more than double the national average for GDP. Own-source revenues increased by over 100 percent during this Yukon Party mandate of 10 years — more than a 100-percent increase in our own-source revenues. Tax revenues have grown by more than 100 percent, despite several new tax credits lowering the tax burdens for Yukoners. So we added more credits and we still increased our tax revenues by 100 percent.

During that time, the consumer price index or inflation has only risen by probably about 22 percent. Inflation has gone up 22 percent; tax revenues have gone by over 100 percent. We have kept taxes low for 10 years. We have by far the lowest taxes on fuel in the country. We don't tax home heating oil or propane. We have no payroll taxes. We don't have a retail sales tax. We have the lowest manufacturing and processing tax rate in Canada, and we have some of the lowest personal income taxes in Canada across all levels of income and family sizes.

Our unemployment rate as of October is 6.3 percent, well below the national average. As well, of all our employed workers, 87.9 percent are full-time — unbelievable. So are we better off? If you look at some of those numbers, if you look at the stuff that we have spoken about on other days in terms of our increased commitment to social services, to seniors, investment in infrastructure, in new buildings — you know, we could go on for a long, long time and really talk about the success of this territory in the last 10 years. I think it is a very simple answer for the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes as to whether we are better off today than we were 10 years ago.

I'm very proud of the work that the Association of Yukon Communities and the municipalities, the local advisory councils and the Government of Yukon, with a particular emphasis on Community Services, has done to put forward this document of "Our Towns, Our Future". Certainly we live in a colourful jurisdiction with a very inspiring history. There are eight municipalities, as we have heard through the debate, and each one is unique. I believe that to be the case. I think we all think every area of the country is unique, but certainly within the context of Yukon, each of those municipalities is unique. Each one is working hard to create that vibrant and healthy community that's required and necessary to be successful moving forward here as viable communities in the Yukon.

In order to do that, it does take a tremendous amount of effort, dedication, skill and certainly financial resources to ensure that these municipalities are viable. The *Municipal Act* dates back to the 1980s. We all have to admit that Yukon has changed over the years. That is one of the main reasons why in 2010 the previous Minister of Community Services announced

the creation of "Our Towns, Our Future", supporting municipal success from finance to operations.

Speaking of that relationship, this government, since taking over in 2011, I think has taken that relationship with the municipalities and with AYC and has stepped it up another notch.

We as a group were proud to attend the Association of Yukon Communities' AGM last May in Dawson City. I'm not sure the last time the Premier had attended — certainly the Community Services minister was represented, but I believe we had six members of our caucus there for the weekend — to be involved, to talk to members of AYC, to talk to people from various municipalities. I think that shows that engagement and support and we intend to be a presence at the AYC orientation that will occur in Haines Junction here later this month for new council members as they are taking up their responsibilities to be leaders within their municipalities.

The morning after the municipal election I took the opportunity to talk to all the new mayors, to call them personally and congratulate them on behalf of the government and share with them our commitment to continue to work together to meet the expectations of all residents they and we serve collectively.

I know that there are a lot of challenges for communities today. There are a lot of things that are causing those things: expanded expectations by the citizens; accountability and regulatory standards; demands for infrastructure; enhanced programming; and the list goes on and on and on.

But we have been there. We just went through a five-year agreement with the municipalities where we increased funding by \$800,000 every year — every year an additional \$800,000. We're very proud that we recently had announced a new funding formula for the municipalities, which includes the largest ever single increase to the municipalities and also ensures that we have some protection for things like inflation by having a built-in consumer price index. So we continue to understand the important role that these municipalities play and to work together with them.

The report listed a number of very important principles that they used: exclusivity; to be engaging; to be practical; to be accountable; needing to be evidence based; partnership led; needing to be innovative; needing to be inspirational and to ensure that there was open communication.

I just spoke to the municipal funding, and part of this is the fact that like this government, the municipalities also need to be financially responsible. That means they need to be able to make decisions — unlike what the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes said, you can't have it all and live within your means. Unfortunately, sometimes that means we have to make decisions — because this government does have many more priorities, as well as the municipalities — health and social services, tourism, economic development, education, housing, youth directorate, environment, highways, bridges, technology and justice. There are many, many pressures on this government and we continue to ensure that we work on growing and sustaining a strong private sector economy, because by continuing to grow our own-source revenues, it allows us the op-

portunity to deliver on all of those expectations that Yukoners want from us.

Mr. Speaker, I can't believe where the time went — you're saying I only have a couple of minutes left. Well, I think there are many different recommendations through "Our Towns, Our Future", and as a result of that, some of this work has already been done.

We continue to work on more of it, but what I have to say is that in my meetings with people in the communities that work for the municipalities; what I hear across the board is the great relationship and how thankful they are for the people we have in Community Services for the great work and commitment that they have for ensuring the success of these municipalities. That has happened — actually, before assuming this title and this role and what I have done in previous years, I have always heard that. I'm very proud of the work the minister has done and her department as they work relentlessly to ensure that we find a way to meet those needs and to do it in a responsible manner.

So, I see my time is up. I would like to, just again, thank everybody for the hard work that they did. Know that we're continuing to move forward on many of the initiatives, including looking at the *Municipal Act*. I want to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this forward. I'm certainly very proud to be supporting this. Thank you.

Ms. Stick: I'll keep my comments brief. I became confused there for a moment, I thought we were back into budget discussions and supplementaries, but I realize we are not.

We are in a motion and I want to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this motion forward.

I come at this a bit differently and, like members on the opposite side, from the municipal side of government. It's interesting to look at these commitments because when I was an elected official with the city these were all areas we would have identified as having problems, if not great difficulties. There was nothing in municipal governments to address it except the Association of Yukon Communities, which I think worked very hard to bring together municipalities. For many new people elected to municipal government, I think it's a surprise to find you're not just responsible for your city, your municipality, for your town, your village or your local advisory council, but that in fact you're joining a bigger group who has a responsibility for all communities in the Yukon. I know it was a surprise to me when I was elected, but I soon came to understand and appreciate the work that the Association of Yukon Communities and all its members did.

We are the only province or territory in Canada where all communities belong. Kudos to AYC and to the good work they do. I congratulate them on that.

I'm happy to support this motion, because I see things in here that we struggled with and were barriers to providing the best services to our citizens. You have to recognize that municipalities are closest to the people, because they're the ones that bring the water to your home, take the garbage away and plow your streets. Those are all important things that keep us moving

day to day. Without them, everything else would grind to a halt. So municipalities are important. Looking at these commitments and what AYC, the municipalities, towns and LACs have agreed to is important with this government. Let's be frank, it has not always been that way.

My other point to keep in mind is that hopefully this is a living document. This isn't just something we check off and, yes, we did that, and yes, that's done and we don't have to go back to it. But, in fact, there's going to be more with newly elected officials. There are going to be people with new ideas of things that might have to be added to these themes — ideas — so it's a living document and something that we are just not going to check off when it's done and put it away. I count on the Association of Yukon Communities and the way they work together to be able to do that. I look forward to hearing what new ideas are going to come forth with this new group of elected officials. They are in for a big learning curve, and I'm sure this is going to be one of the many things they are going to be looking at in the upcoming weekend in Haines Junction. I wish them well and I wish that they get to meet and become friends and supporters and co-workers with all other municipal elected officials. Like I say, it's a living document; I want to see it keep going.

I hope that the government will always remain open to listening to what this group has to say; I do think there is strength in numbers and they know best what the people are asking for, sometimes better than we do. I would again like to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this motion forward and we'll be supporting it at the vote. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Kent: It's my pleasure to also rise today to speak to Motion No. 283, introduced by the Member for Watson Lake. I know that I did have a number of aspects that I wanted to talk about with respect to this motion, including community training funds and the training aspects, all that Education has done through the northern strategy as well as the Northern Institute of Social Justice and some of the programs that they offer, such as understanding legislation. I also wanted to speak a little bit to the recruitment and retention strategies that have been developed by the Department of Education, but I know that we're also anxious to get this motion to a vote today and move on to the next motion that the Member for Watson Lake has before this House.

I also know that the Member for Porter Creek North wants to speak to this motion as well and as a former city councillor, when it comes to municipal issues I always find his insights very informative and entertaining when he speaks of anything municipal, given his long experience as a Whitehorse city councillor.

So maybe what I will focus on in the brief time that I want to speak for is some of the work that has been done by the Yukon Housing Corporation over the past number of years, some of the work and the achievements of the past calendar year during my tenure as minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, and then some of the plans that we have for the upcoming year.

In 2006, the number of social and staff housing units that were managed by the Yukon Housing Corporation were 658. By March 2011 that number had increased to 775, which represents an 18-percent growth in the number of units, compared to a population growth of just under 12 percent for the Yukon over that same five-year period.

During that same time period, the number of private Yukon dwellings increased by 6.3 percent to 16,259 in the Yukon and, for Whitehorse, an increase of 11.8 percent to just under 10,000 dwellings — 9,648.

Then in that same year of March 2011 to March 2012, the total number of units under Yukon Housing Corporation management had increased to 822, or a further six percent over the March 2011 data. Of these units, 669 were social and 153 were staff housing units that are located in Yukon communities. Not only did previous Yukon Party governments make significant investments in housing — over \$100 million — whether it was the northern housing trust money — \$50 million, \$32.5 million of which was transferred to Yukon First Nations for housing development, there was a further \$4 million to Kaushee's Place to assist with building the transitional housing units there, Betty's Haven. Then we still have some dollars to expend and I look forward to hearing from the Yukon Housing Corporation Board on their plans coming forward to our caucus and our Cabinet for expending those remaining funds. Some of the achievements over the past calendar year of the Yukon Housing Corporation in particular — again, this doesn't take into account the significant investments made by the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Community Services, in lot development and some of the investments made, whether through the youth shelter or other shelter work done by the Minister of Health and Social Services — this is strictly Yukon Housing Corporation achievements.

The coordinator position extended to the Whitehorse affordable housing project for single-parent families was done in partnership with the Women's Directorate in September of this year; the flood relief program for the residents of Upper Liard was announced in August; a new affordable seniors housing project announced — the 34-unit facility at 207 Alexander Street — in August of this year, again; Options for Independence — 14 new housing units started for clients with FASD, again announced in August; 14 new affordable housing units in Carmacks and Ross River, completed in June; and of course the work that has been done in conjunction with Community Services on Habitat for Humanity — not only the recent announcement of the lots in the Whistle Bend subdivision, but also the Takhini build. I know the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes was able to go out to Takhini River subdivision, which is the first build that Habitat for Humanity has undertaken on First Nation settlement land.

The National Grand Chief, the Chief of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, again the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes and the Member for Riverdale South, as well as a number of other dignitaries, were out there to participate in that exciting announcement.

Some of the aspects that we are looking to accomplish over the next year are located in a document that I referenced

during Question Period today. I believe my staff passed it on to the chief of staff of the Official Opposition, the New Democrats, as well as the Liberal chief of staff and the Independent member. On page 3 of that document, members will find the letter of expectations that gives direction to the corporation from the minister for the next year.

The first one, of course, speaks to the corporation's governance and accountability framework. The second one is an important one, when it comes to affordability, because what it speaks to is to further define goals and strategies to address the market affordability gap, with particular focus on evaluating options to redesign the loans program, to support new programming to assist working Yukoners to enter the home ownership market or stay in their homes longer. Moving on from that — just a few more bullets: assess options to address the shortage of rental accommodations for low-to-moderate income households; options to maximize the availability of subsidized accommodation for individuals and families in greatest need; addressing the policy gaps identified by the Office of the Auditor General — one that I spoke to in Question Period, dealing with the mobility challenges in our housing units. I've asked the corporation's board of directors to begin a dialogue with Canada and CMHC on a new approach to northern housing; develop a housing management plan to staff housing needs in Yukon communities, including a review of costs, and to update the staff housing policy.

So there are some exciting things that I look forward to hearing back from the Yukon Housing Corporation and the board of directors moving on that letter of expectations that we've outlined for them. I think a lot of the programs and things that we have put in place with this letter of expectations will help to assist people in moving through the housing continuum, whether they're renting now, moving into home ownership or some of the other commitments that we've made.

I know my time was short, but I did really want to speak specifically to that. There are a number of other aspects that the Department of Education is undertaking. In closing, I would like to thank the federal New Democratic Party for recognizing the incredible achievements and the commitment to housing we've made.

I did speak earlier during this session about the letter I received from the federal New Democratic Member of Parliament, citing our commitment to housing and the innovative approaches we're taking. So, again, thank you to that party for recognizing what we've been doing in the Yukon when it comes to housing.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all the members of this Legislature for what sounds like good support for this motion. I look forward to the vote.

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: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yeas, nil nays.

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

Motion No. 283 agreed to

Motion No. 257

Clerk: Motion No. 257, 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 form a multi-departmental committee consisting of the departments of Education, Health and Social Services, and Justice, the Women's Directorate and the Youth Directorate to:

(1) inventory their programs related to child welfare, cyber safety, bullying, cyber bullying, sexualized violence against children, and victims of crime;

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order please. Would members please pay attention to what I'm saying so you know what the contents of the motion are? Thank you.

(2) review the existing and proposed programs to ensure a continuum of services;

(3) examine partnerships with local organizations like parent groups and with agencies dedicated to child protection like the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canadian Centre for Child Protection; and

(4) conduct awareness campaigns periodically to assist Yukon students and parents in understanding the resources available to them.

Ms. McLeod: When it comes to keeping children safe, everyone in this Assembly shares the same desire and the same goal, which is to create a safe and positive environment in which our children or grandchildren can grow up to be happy

and healthy citizens. Stories we see on TV about bullying and cyber bullying can be opportunities for young people to connect with us about things they are experiencing in their lives.

As I prepared for this motion, I did a lot of reading, went on the Internet and realized that 20 or 30 years ago, I would have done most of that reading by going to the library or getting a book. But that isn't how we do things any more.

As I sat in my computer and typed in the word "cyber crime", in .18 seconds I had 58,400 opportunities to learn all about it. The reality is that technology is an increasingly important part of our lives. We use it to read. We use it to write. As a rural MLA, I use it to talk to my family in Watson Lake when the Legislature is in session and my constituents listen to what goes on in the Legislature on their computers. In other words, we rely on technology to communicate. Technology has greatly increased our ability to communicate and it provides many valuable benefits.

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* says that everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: freedom of conscience and religion; freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association. Section 15 of that act also talks about equality rights and it says that every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and in particular without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

I just wanted to take a look at what we are doing to keep our people safe, especially our young people who are most vulnerable. When I look at the Health and Social Services website for services related to children, there are links to 45 pages. I'm certainly not going to talk about them all, but it really speaks to our duty to protect children and that all Yukoners have a responsibility to ensure the protection of children from abuse.

In 2010, a new *Child and Family Services Act* came into force and made it mandatory for Yukoners to report any suspected child abuse to the law. Prior to that, it was not required under law except for teachers and childcare providers. The Minister of Justice advises that a plan for supporting victims of crime in all Yukon communities has been developed and is being implemented. The government has a number of public education initiatives outlining information on how victims of crimes have rights. The Victim Services unit is a voluntary service that provides support and information to victims of crime whether or not a charge has been laid, and every Yukon community has a victim services worker assigned to work directly with victims of crime.

I really wanted to talk about the bullying in particular, and to say that incidents of bullying, harassment, discrimination, intimidation or any unwelcome behaviour that degrades a person on the basis of personal characteristics, gender, sexual orientation, race or disability will be addressed in a timely, effective and consistent manner in order to maintain a safe and caring school environment. The Department of Education has programs and policies in place to see that that happens.

The Department of Education's technology-assisted learning unit is coordinating a committee of teachers, department staff and administrators to develop a digital-literacy curriculum for grades K to 12. Work was to commence on the development of the curriculum in September of 2012. There are also regular cyber bullying presentations by guest speakers and experts for schools and the public. I understand that DVDs on this subject have been distributed to all school councils and this week I'm happy to say that the Liard Basin task force is hosting Barbara Coloroso to speak to the community of Watson Lake about bullying.

I want to say that I think the government does have an impressive array of programs to respond to bullying and to cyber bullying. Certainly if there are any gaps in our coverage, then we need to look at that and close those gaps.

As a parent, I didn't have to go through this level of child involvement in technology and I really feel for those parents who do. A word that came up in looking at some of this stuff was 'Chatroulette' and if you look at that it's a website that hooks up young people with someone else around the world. To me, as a parent, I find that rather frightening that you have absolutely no idea who your children are talking to and whether or not a website says you have to be 13 or you have to be 18 — well, we all know that's not much of a safeguard.

While that's something that we probably can't control, I think what we can control is education, and we really do need to educate parents and educators and the young people themselves to safeguard everything about them, actually — especially their information that they're putting out there.

I think that's just about all I want to say about this, other than it's a frightening world out there, and I really do feel for parents who are trying to monitor what their kids are doing. But I'm especially worried about those young people who do not have someone monitoring what they're up to. Where that happens, I think society needs to make sure that these young people are well-educated in the dangers.

I look forward to hearing what others have to say. Thank you.

Ms. White: I'm happy to speak on Motion No. 257, and I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing it forward.

The goal of reducing the incidence of bullying is implied in this motion, but is not explicit. It's a good start, but doesn't talk about concrete actions.

It's safe to assume that all members of this House want to make sure children are not victimized or bullied in any way. With advances in technology, being a young person in this day and age is far more challenging than when I was a teenager. How do you navigate this minefield in a time when information is able to spread instantly and consequences come back at lightning speeds?

Bullying is embedded in many aspects of our culture. Bullying is an oppressive power relationship that seeks to exclude rather than include. Bullying is not restricted to children; indeed, it happens at all ages and stages. CBC had a great piece on workplace bullying this morning.

You might be surprised to know that I experienced bullying — not from fellow students, but from a person in authority in my school. When I was in grade 11, I had a 73 percent in social studies, and a person that had been in my life for a long time took me aside with my parents and they told me that no second-rate college or university in the country would accept me with a 73 percent. I can tell you that the consequences of that action — that took seconds — were devastating. I went from a 73 percent in social studies to a 37 percent in less than a semester. That was hard to get over. I mean, this is something I can still talk about and be upset about. That was from an authority figure. That wasn't from fellow students. I'm grateful I had other voices to listen to, other than that authority entrusted with my education.

Bullying is a systemic issue, and for that reason the Official Opposition and NDP supports the formation of a multi-departmental committee.

Indeed, more interdepartmental cooperation is needed throughout all government operations. This motion sounds good, and certainly provides the government an opportunity to speak against bullying, because bullying is bad. In actuality, the motion includes no timelines, no actions for students, and no way to measure the actual experiences of Yukon children in their communities and schools. Reducing any incidences of bullying and preventing its negative legacy for Yukon youth will take action and involve programs that address actual behaviours and provide options for all people involved — those who bully, the victims and the bystanders. We will support this motion, but I also want to take this opportunity to support those school leaders who are taking action against bullying now.

In the week leading up to the session's start I was really privileged to be asked to be an adult facilitator for Challenge Day at F.H. Collins, and I didn't really know what I was getting into. They were a couple of people down, so I told the organizer to contact my father and I contacted one of my best friends. So, the three of us showed up at F.H. Collins at 8:30 a.m. on a Tuesday morning with no idea what the day was going to involve, and I have to tell you that it was hugely affecting. There were 35 or so adult facilitators there, and we got a briefing at the beginning of the day from the two people who had come up from the United States to put on the program.

We were told that we needed to participate and sometimes we needed to go at our own comfort levels in order to support the youth who were coming into the program. You know, bad dance moves were encouraged and sharing to whatever extent you wanted to share — it was okay. It was also okay to keep things back. There were about two hundred grade 8 students from F.H. Collins. It turns out in the end all but three grade 8 students chose to participate. The facilitators of the program said that sometimes the MTV coverage that they've had is negative because everyone thinks that Challenge Day is about crying. I can tell you that Challenge Day was more than about crying, but there were definitely tears involved.

Through this entire day, I was really privileged to be able to work with five youth and I was their adult facilitator, so we spent a great portion of the day together. I think the really important thing about Challenge Day that doesn't often get dis-

cussed is that there are long-term ramifications. There are two reasons why it is successful. I think the first one is that it is experiential; you get to feel it and you get to see it. They have this one exercise that is called “crossing the line”. The facilitator is talking on the microphone and she is talking about all these instances where if this applies to you, then you can cross the line, but only if you want to, so you are not outing yourself as having done bad things or anything, but you can cross the line.

What it does is shows the youth that they’ve both been on the receiving side of persecution, bullying or bad feelings, but at times they have also given it. I think the first reason it is really successful is because it is experiential, so you get to feel and see it. The other reason that I think Challenge Day is so effective is that it is introspective. The organization doesn’t tell you what you’re doing or how you’re supposed to feel, but it gives you the opportunity to recognize how you’re feeling. From my experience speaking to the teachers at the school, it makes a huge impact. Challenge Day is long-lasting and the youth carry it through. They have groups within the school that work on anti-bullying campaigns.

That Tuesday was pretty tough and I thought okay, well I’ve done one and that was really great, and then on Thursday I was on my way to work and I got a phone call of desperation from Porter Creek Secondary School. They didn’t have enough adult facilitators, so I turned the car around and went back up to Porter Creek Secondary School. I can tell you that after my first experience, being able to go into it a second time knowing what I was getting into, it was equally moving and equally important there. It was really important to have the community support for the school, because they needed the adult facilitators so that as many as wanted to could participate. In the end, they didn’t have quite enough so some of the kids we’re unable to, but it was hugely affecting. I think the example for Challenge Day for me is that it’s an action; it’s an anti-bullying action.

It’s not talking about putting together information and it’s not talking about sitting down and talking about it; it’s an actual action against bullying. I want to thank all those members of our community who are involved in that program. Thank you very much for doing it.

One thing we also want to do is encourage the government to look at root causes and root solutions that are suggested by the results of the population-based Early Development Index. If over one-third of our children are not ready for their first day of kindergarten, we need to look at the circle with care around Yukon children — sometimes parents; other times, grandparents; other times, different community members. For those small people who are starting school, if they’re so far behind already, there are two paths that they’re going to go down: they’re either going to be the bully or they’re going to be the bullied. I think we need to start addressing that early on.

Given that bullying is a systemic issue with behaviours embedded in our culture, any solution will need to be comprehensive and inclusive. This motion outlines actions at a provider and programming level; inventories will be collected and

these are great first steps, but only first steps. We will need to work together to make the concrete changes our children need.

With that I say thank you and I look forward to hearing other comments from the floor.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I, too, thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this motion forward. I just spoke to this issue at a recent FPT Ministers of Justice meeting in Regina last month. Recent cases have raised concerns about the posting of intimate images, particularly those of children and teens, on the Internet. These concerns are part of broader concerns about cyber bullying.

Education and crime prevention efforts are critical to informing the public, individuals, adults and children about the dangers of sharing digital images and personal information online. My colleague, the Minister of Justice for British Columbia, brought this topic forward to discuss whether current laws and penalties adequately address this issue. I see that just this morning British Columbia released a website called <http://erasebullying.ca/>.

I deeply appreciate the assistance that we’ve received from the Government of Canada on several fronts. Canada’s willingness to partner with us on FASD-related research and support is making a real difference here in Yukon. The prevalence study we are doing at the correctional centre will help us better protect our society by helping us better utilize our programming dollars. The funding Canada provided to the Northern Cultural Expressions Society for preventive and early engagement has made a real difference in the lives of some youth at risk. We’re grateful for their partnership, and Yukon has been working on this file for some time.

As a result of the motion in 2007, a working group consisting of members of the information technology sector, the RCMP and government reviewed our educational and awareness programs, as well as examined emerging technology. What we heard was that technology is changing very quickly, that young people are embracing it and many are sharing a great deal of information about themselves. We also learned that they may not be fully aware of the risks. We learned that in addition to crimes targeting children, adults and seniors were often the victims of crimes.

I want to make a point here about the ages of the victims. Adult victims tended to be the targets of economic crimes. I wanted to mention this last point because sometimes the victims are too embarrassed to step forward to say they got duped. If it can happen to adults, some of them senior citizens with years of life experience, then it can happen to children and teenagers. I hope that they’re not too ashamed or too embarrassed to step forward and ask for help.

Sadly there are people in this world who spend a great deal of time trying to figure out how to take advantage of other people. I hope that if someone is listening to my comments who is a victim of this kind of crime and are feeling that they are the only one who is foolish enough to fall victim to a scam or a fraud — I hope that you will contact the RCMP or one of our victim services workers and share your story.

As a father of a son with autism, I'm concerned about bullying at school. I know that kids can sometimes get themselves into a bad situation because they are just trying to fit in. Because technology plays an increasingly larger role in our daily lives, we've identified as a priority the need to help kids stay safe. I recently had the opportunity to tour the Canadian Centre for Child Protection in Winnipeg — actually twice over the summer — and I found the tour extremely compelling. I spent a total of two hours with the team, but I could have easily spent the day there learning about the services that they provide to Canadians.

I know that the federal government supports their good work, and for those who are not familiar with this organization, they have four key programs. One of the websites is for reporting questionable web content; one is for teaching children to be safe; one is for teaching adults how to protect children; and the fourth supports families with missing children. I am glad that we will be having a team from the Canadian Centre for Child Protection come to Yukon at the end of the month to discuss how we can cooperate further on this.

While I'm speaking to this, I will put on record the four websites: www.protectchildren.ca; www.missingkids.ca; www.kidsintheknow.ca and www.cybertips.ca.

I want to talk for a few moments about a couple of high-profile cases where young people have been targeted for ridicule and have responded by committing suicide. Many of us are aware of the Amanda Todd story. Miss Todd was a grade 10 student at CAFE Secondary School in Coquitlam, and she took her own life after a protracted period of harassment.

Ms. Todd related her story by filming a video, in which she held up a series of cards that explained that while in grade 7 — and think about how young that is — she made a poor choice that resulted in an embarrassing image being shared. Eventually, that image was distributed to her classmates and others that resulted in her being bullied for two years on-line and in the real world.

As I reflected on this young lady's story, I found myself thinking about how much the world has changed. When I was in grade 7, in 1981, computers were not that prevalent and, certainly, were not that connected to our daily lives. I can remember teachers threatening the class — that if anyone got a poor score on a test, it would end up on a permanent school record, and for many of us that was alarming enough. I'm sure that all of us have made decisions — especially when we were 12 and 13 — that we probably wouldn't make again. We would probably find them embarrassing if they were available on the Internet as well, and I cannot begin to imagine how challenging that must have been for the young lady to have them perpetually revived by some anonymous assailant.

That got me thinking how deeply imbedded — how deeply connected young people are to technology. That connection to the on-line community must be very powerful, if the place that proved itself to be so dangerous is such a part of your life that you still return to it, even after two years of terrible abuse. I suspect that many of us would probably not have gone back on the Internet for a very long time; however, this young lady continued to use the technology.

One of the questions I asked myself is: What structures do we have? What supports do we have, both to prevent other young people from being pressured or tricked into participating in activities that could result in them being blackmailed or harassed? I asked myself: How do we build structures and supports so that young people are able to identify them as helpful and connect with them?

In one of the media stories I referenced, a Vancouver Island professor and cyber bullying expert, Julia Hengstler, called for the school curriculum to include digital citizenship.

I also read about a 15-year-old New York student, Felicia Garcia, who committed suicide by jumping in front of a train on Staten Island. Media reports indicate that she had been bullied by peers. Reports indicate that she, too, used social media to document her feelings about being tormented at school and on-line. There are many commonalities in these stories. One thing that captured my attention is that schools are increasingly being asked to offer leadership in areas beyond the three Rs of reading, writing and arithmetic. So I suspect we could add some more Rs to that list, including “respect” and “responsibility”.

I have tremendous respect for teachers in general, and one in particular. We ask our teachers to do much more than teach academic subjects. Schools are being asked to provide direction to our students in areas that used to be the sole domain of the home. So I'm going to come back to the role of schools in a few minutes. Before I talk about a partnership in that area, I want to talk about what we're currently doing.

I'm told that Yukon children, parents and schools are also grappling with the new phenomenon of cyber bullying. Although in some ways it is just a migration of schoolyard bullying to the on-line medium, cyber bullying is more malicious insofar as it's unrestricted in time and place and is harder for parents and teachers to detect.

I'm told that most of the cyber bullying incidents that were reported involve people in grades 6 to 8. I'm advised that in looking over several years of evidence, these incidents appear to be growing more serious, which suggests that children and teens are becoming desensitized to this type of bullying. Also of concern is the migration of on-line bullying, along with technologies that permit it to even younger children. I'm advised that Internet safety issues including cyber bullying are now a part of the Yukon school curriculum for grades 5 and up. The Department of Education has adopted the Safe and Caring Schools policy. My colleague, the Minister of Education, would be pleased to speak to that I'm sure.

Our Yukon Party government believes that this matter of bullying is very serious, whether it's on-line or whether it's in person. We must continue to work together as a community, as families, as friends, as neighbours and as educators to support vulnerable youth and youth at risk.

Yukon is the first jurisdiction in Canada to take a multi-disciplinary, Yukon-wide approach to threat assessment — including bullying — with planning, training and implementation from the departments of Education, Justice, Health and Social Services and the RCMP. Health and Social Services has many programs, including Mental Health and clinical interven-

tion services for youth and families. The minister responsible for the Women's Directorate has been working very hard to address sexualized abuse. So I think it would be a mistake to ignore that both of the young women who committed suicide were victims of abuse that was sexual in nature.

As I see it, there are several aspects to this issue that we need to address. I see opportunities for us to respond, both in the areas of prevention and in the areas of intervention once bullying has occurred.

In the Department of Justice through the crime prevention victim services trust fund, we provided \$107,000 to support seven projects aimed at crime prevention and victim services in the communities of Dawson City, Faro, Haines Junction, Teslin and Whitehorse. These projects are designed to provide services and information to support victims of offences. They are designed to help reduce the incidence of crime and address the root causes of criminal behaviour. They are designed to prevent violence against women and children and they are designed to publicize information about crime prevention and how people can protect themselves from becoming victims.

Let me just mention the projects quickly. Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon was awarded \$3,000 to support its Dawson City literacy wilderness day camp. I'm not going to mention all of these — the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council was awarded \$30,000 to support the Yukon Sisters in Spirit family gathering. The Yukon Circle of Change was awarded \$19,000 in support of its growing Be the Change movement projects in Whitehorse and Haines Junction. Skookum Jim Friendship Centre was awarded \$13,700 to assist with its summer canoe camp.

It was the previous Yukon Party government that brought in the *Victims of Crime Act* in 2010. The Yukon Party government is implementing the victims of crime strategy. A plan for supporting victims of crime in all Yukon communities has been developed and is being implemented. Regardless of where you live in Yukon, we will assist you. The *Victims of Crime Act*, passed in spring of 2010, has been supported with a number of public education initiatives outlining information on how victims of crime have rights. These include posters, fact sheets and information brochures, and the director has assisted two individuals requesting support under the act. I believe very strongly that young people who have been victims of an Internet-based crime know that there are people who care about them and who want to help them.

I won't go into more detail, but I can tell you that I know how caring and compassionate our victim services workers are. I've had the opportunity to connect with Yukoners, with our staff in Victim Services, and they do a tremendous job.

I want to conclude my comments by referring to one of the articles I read in preparing for today, which included a quote from Nasima Nastoh, whose son Hamed committed suicide in 2000 after severe bullying at his Surrey high school: "We have to work together to stop this," she said. That, I think, summarizes the solution.

Speaker: Before we go to the next speaker, could the minister make sure *Hansard* gets the proper spelling of the names there?

Mr. Silver: I'll be very brief, seeing the time and I'm sure there are a lot more members who would like to speak to this. I am happy to support Motion No. 257, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake.

It is important to have a multi-departmental committee, but I do echo the concerns of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King and urge the government to commit to timelines and other logistics in order to maintain this committee's relevance.

As an educator, I can say that this is not a simple issue — cyber bullying, bullying in general, sexualized violence against children — therefore coordinated efforts among governments, RCMP and others is absolutely instrumental to education process and to support. Other than that, I just want to say that I have no reservations in supporting this motion.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I, too, will be brief in speaking to this. I know that the Minister of Justice and the Member for Watson Lake, as well as members opposite, did a good job of summarizing some of the points that I wanted to make. What I can say when it comes to the topic of bullying and cyber bullying is the Department of Education promotes caring, respectful and safe school environments through policies specifically designed to reduce bullying. Beyond policy, the department believes that teaching students to engage in pro-social, compassionate behaviour is the best way to bring about real changes in bullying behaviour.

The department helps support this work through curriculum programming and recently through the addition of a social emotional learning consultant. Yukon is also at the forefront in preventing cyber bullying through media education and Internet use guidelines and filters.

Just a few of the programs that are underway that I'd like to reference — the first one is a trademark program called MindUP. It's a kindergarten to grade 8 social, emotional learning curriculum that focuses on teaching students emotional self-regulation, focused attention and non-reactive monitoring of experience. The next policy is Safe and Caring Schools that the Minister of Justice referenced. It's a policy in the Department of Education, and it's a commitment of the school community to plan, strategize and create a respectful, safe and nurturing educational environment for everyone. When bullying, harassment or intimidation occurs or is reported, standards and procedures are in place.

A new policy this year is the sexual orientation and gender identity policy that ensures there is a safe place to go to and trained staff is available if students are enduring homophobic discrimination and bullying at school. Also, the Yukon education student network, or YESNET, created a resource page focused on links to support digital citizenship and to address cyber bullying. The department regularly has cyber bullying presentations by guest speakers for schools and the public and the department is developing a digital literacy curriculum for kindergarten through grade 12.

I know the Member for Takhini-Kopper King spoke about Challenge Day, and I'd just like to provide a little bit more background as to what that program is all about. It's a six and a half hour experiential program for students and staff, which started in F.H. Collins in 2005, and it is part of the broader Be the Change movement. Challenge Days also take place now at Porter Creek Secondary School, St. Elias School in Haines Junction and l'École Émilie Tremblay.

The program was developed in the United States — I know the member opposite referenced the two trainers who travelled here from the U.S. — and was designed with the goal of helping students increase their personal power and self-esteem. It aims to shift dangerous peer pressure into positive peer support and to eliminate the acceptability of teasing, violence, and all forms of oppression. The Challenge Day program is designed to unite the members of the school and community and to empower them to carry the themes of the program back to the school population. Throughout Challenge Day, the experiential program may facilitate disclosures by students of various personal experiences. I know the Member for Takhini-Kopper King referenced that during her time facilitating at F.H. Collins and Porter Creek.

Just to close out on this and my remarks today, I wanted to read a letter that a young grade 8 student sent to the vice-principal of F.H. Collins following her experience with Challenge Day. Again, of the 113 grade 8s at F.H. Collins, 108 participated in the Challenge Day.

This is a message from one of them that I'll read into the record — of course, leaving out the student's name to protect confidentiality: "Dear Mme. Klaassen-St. Pierre, This is a short note to tell you how much I enjoyed Challenge Day. I was a bit apprehensive about it at first but when I came in, everyone just seemed so happy and supportive. It really helped me to walk a mile in someone else's shoes. The day after I noticed a marked difference in the way people in the hallway were treating each other. Everyone seemed friendlier, more hesitant to judge and quicker to give someone a chance. Everyone to whom I spoke said that it helped them enormously. It was very enlightening to learn about what the people whom I saw in the hallway every day were carrying on their shoulders. No matter what someone is going through, with Challenge Day they don't have to go through it alone. Thank you very much for giving me and my classmates a chance to look at each other in a different way."

I think that's a very fitting way for me to end my remarks here today. Thank you.

Speaker: Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. McLeod: Thank you to everyone in the Assembly here today. This is a really important initiative — or, not really an initiative, I guess, since we're already trying to tackle this. But we want to build on what we have going, and we want to ultimately protect our youth and to bring this whole world of bullying — whether it's cyber, in the workplace, on the school grounds — to the surface and bring it to light, so that people will talk about it and not be afraid to bring it forward. So I want to thank everyone.

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: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

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

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

Motion No. 257 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, 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 5:18 p.m.