



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Wednesday, April 8, 2015 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

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Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

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Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, April 8, 2015 — 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 International Day of Pink

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to International Day of Pink. In November, many Yukoners demonstrated their solidarity against bullying behaviours on Sea of Pink day with students, staff and community members wearing pink to school.

Today on this International Day of Pink, groups around the world do the same to express that they stand with people victimized by bullying and they're prepared to take action against those hurtful behaviours. There is the potential for all of us to be bullied or to bully other people. Bullying prevention tends to focus on what victims can do to protect themselves. We all tell ourselves and our children to stand taller, walk faster and be stronger. Although these strategies help to keep kids safe and to cope with being bullied, they also place the burden of change upon the victims of bullying. To truly overcome bullying, we must address the perpetrators.

This means we must take an honest look at our own behaviours and teach our children to do the same. Whether intentionally or accidentally, we may have teased someone, participated in gossip, left someone out, intimidated someone or hurt someone's feelings. We must set the example in recognizing when we have been guilty of bullying behaviours, apologizing to those we have hurt and working hard not to repeat those behaviours in the future. We all have a responsibility to our younger generations and to each other to demonstrate every single day how to treat one another with respect and with dignity.

Yukon government is committed to providing safe and caring schools for students and staff, where students can focus on learning. Confronting bullying behaviours is an important part of ensuring the safety of students from the hallways to the playground to the digital world of on-line learning opportunities. Teaching our children that they do not have to tear others down to raise themselves up is a very important lesson.

The Yukon is the best place to live, work, play and raise a family. Let's make it an even better place to live by ensuring that bullying in the Yukon becomes a thing of the past. It is the responsibility of each of us to demonstrate this to Yukon's youth and children in how we treat one another each and every day.

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the NDP Official Opposition to commemorate the International Day of Pink. Today, millions of people worldwide are standing together against bullying, discrimination, homophobia, transphobia and trans-monogamy.

Today, millions around the world are celebrating our rich human diversity by wearing pink. I don't think it would surprise anyone to know, Mr. Speaker, that this movement started right here in Canada. In 2007, students at a Nova Scotia high school retaliated to an act of bullying by flooding their school with pink shirts, in solidarity with their bullied classmates. This act of resistance inspired the International Day of Pink, which now has millions of participants in more than 25 countries.

Organizations and activists across Canada are working to stop bullying, discrimination and homophobia in schools and communities not only in Canada, but worldwide, by offering and facilitating workshops, presentations and training conferences. They customize programming for communities and seek to engage everyone in an important dialogue about the diversity around us. These champions of equal rights chalk up their successes in their ongoing campaign to end bullying, discrimination and homophobia to a youth-led model that better engages both young people and their communities in celebrating diversity.

As legislators, we can tackle bullying and discrimination in a number of important ways. We can stand here once or twice a year and praise the work being done by others, or we can choose to do some of that work ourselves. For example, in 2013, the Manitoba government took action to end bullying in their province by amending their public schools act. The changes make schools safer and more inclusive by combatting bullying, cementing the right for students to form gay-straight alliances and ensuring safe places for everyone.

I look forward to the day that, instead of only paying tribute to the work of others, we can look back on our work as legislators and know that we made our community safer for all.

Mr. Silver: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal Party to also pay tribute to the International Day of Pink. This year represents the 10th anniversary of the International Day of Pink, a day to celebrate our diversity and to push back against bullying.

The day's origins go back to when two students in a Nova Scotia high school saw one of their peers being bullied in their high school and supported him by getting everyone at the school to wear pink. Today we all wear pink to show solidarity with those who are bullied or discriminated against.

This inspired the youth at Jer's Vision, who founded the International Day of Pink, an effort to support their peers internationally, with resources and ways to make their schools safer. At their worst, bullying and discrimination isolate people, severing them from the support that we all crave. As a community, we must stand up against those who bully, discriminate and foster hate and violence against other people.

I urge all who are listening to this tribute or anybody who is reading this later on in Hansard to make your way over to the Day of Pink website, <http://www.dayofpink.org>, and read the Day of Pink quotes from leaders across this great nation.

I was at this time going to read to you one of the quotes that I provided the website but, in order to end the isolation, we must stand together against bullying in all of its forms to create a more accepting and welcoming society for everyone, so, in the spirit of a united front, I wish to quote from another leader who also submitted a quote for the Day of Pink organization — and I quote: “There are many ways in which discrimination can manifest itself. Stereotypical ideas often lead to prejudices that may easily lead to discrimination that will affect how we work, study and treat one another. Ultimately, these stereotypical ideas create barriers: bullying, harassment, hate and violence. I urge... our fellow Yukoners, to stand united against discrimination and bullying in whichever form it may occur.”

Mr. Speaker, that quote was from the Hon. Premier of the Yukon.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the volunteers at Jer’s Vision who organized the great events this year and provide support to anti-bullying against trans and homophobic activities.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would like to welcome to the gallery a constituent — and ask all members to join me in welcoming Peter Wojtowicz.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I have for tabling a letter from me, as Minister of Community Services, to His Worship Dan Curtis, Mayor of Whitehorse, regarding the Yukon outdoor sports complex.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 88: *Pharmacy and Drug Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I move that Bill No. 88, entitled *Pharmacy and Drug Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 88, entitled *Pharmacy and Drug Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 88 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced? Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to conclude the required review of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* within the 2015 calendar year, with a particular focus on the implications of technological advancements on the access to information and protection of privacy.

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

THAT this House congratulates the Government of Yukon for following in the footsteps of the Premier of Saskatchewan, the rural municipality of Gimli, Manitoba and the newly elected senator for New York’s 62nd senate district in declaring their jurisdiction the best place to live, work and raise a family.

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

THAT this House urges the governments of Yukon and Canada to support Bill C-656, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (fetal alcohol disorder)*, to improve access to justice for individuals with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) by requiring the courts to consider, as a mitigating factor in sentencing, a determination that the offender suffers from FASD if the condition was relevant or contributed to the commission of the offence.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Economic outlook

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, members of this Legislature from all parties know that small businesses are the backbone of the Yukon economy. That’s why an NDP government established the Yukon small business investment tax credit. That commitment fostered the growth of Yukon’s iconic airline, boosting other small businesses’ share of Yukon’s economy and building a strong base to support and anchor many other local enterprises. The Yukon Party government has failed to take measures to sustain a strong business climate. The City of Whitehorse’s 2014 annual report showed the loss of nearly 800 businesses from 2012 to 2013. Those that do survive are not doing as well as elsewhere in Canada. Average weekly earnings for all Yukon businesses are below the national average, while small businesses are experiencing negative growth.

When will the Premier acknowledge that when small businesses suffer, Yukon's economy also suffers?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Of course this government is committed to a private sector economy. When it comes to small business, we're very proud that last year we reduced the Yukon small business tax by 25 percent in this jurisdiction from four percent to three percent.

What we are doing with our budget is exactly what the member opposite is talking about. We are supporting medium- and small-sized Yukon businesses by having the largest capital budget in Yukon's history. We are making strategic investments in infrastructure that will benefit this territory and its growth for many generations, but while we're doing it, we will be supporting Yukon small businesses, Yukon trades and Yukon workers to ensure that families can stay here in Yukon.

Ms. Hanson: You know, Mr. Speaker, Yukon's economy is stagnating in the absence of a coherent strategy and the Premier continues to confuse spending with planning. Large capital projects can be good stimulants for economic growth and job creation when they prioritize local capacity, local economic development and are phased in a managed way. But the Yukon Party government has not worked with local industries, suppliers and contractors to maximize local benefits and has effectively prevented Yukon businesses from bidding on their \$300 million continuing care institution.

The Yukon Chamber of Commerce president notes that when it comes to job creation, benefits will largely depend on how much construction work goes to Yukon firms. How is the Premier's most recent spending spree going to ensure that Yukon's small and medium businesses don't lose out in this rush to spend massive amounts of money before the next election?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This government will continue to invest in areas that are a priority for Yukoners. We'll continue to invest in schools. We'll continue to invest in hospitals and health care facilities like the new Sarah Steele facility, like the two new hospitals in Watson Lake and in Dawson City. We'll continue to invest in roads and bridges and in aerodromes. We'll continue to invest in hydroelectricity. We'll continue to invest in areas — strategic investments in infrastructure — that will ensure that Yukon is ready as we continue to grow and develop and, as a result of those investments, we continue to support Yukon families and Yukon businesses.

Ms. Hanson: The Yukon Party's continued barriers to involvement of small businesses in megaprojects and the mismanagement of the economy have left Yukon pulling up the rear in terms of wholesale and retail sales, in Canada. Statistics Canada data shows that Yukon retail sales declined last year, and that trend continues in early 2015. Meanwhile wholesale sales have also declined in the past two years, with the lowest wholesale growth rate in Canada. This government likes to call the 2013 economic downturn a blip, but the downturn persists. Our economy has been in steady decline since the Premier took office and small businesses are bearing the brunt of it.

Will the Premier admit that his trickle-down approach to small-business growth has failed and commit to working with

small businesses to develop a real economic strategy that supports sustained local economic development?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: What I can say is that during the last NDP and Liberal governments, we had a mass exodus of people from this territory because of double-digit unemployment because of debt. This Yukon Party government and the previous Yukon Party governments have seen a rise in the population in this territory by over 20 percent because of that strong growth in our private sector. We can't control commodity prices, but Yukoners trust this government to manage their finances in good times and in bad, and that's why, across this country right now, we see provinces that are cutting jobs and raising taxes. This government is lowering taxes for Yukoners and spending money to create jobs and infrastructure for Yukoners.

Question re: Alaska Highway corridor functional plan

Ms. Moorcroft: On the radio this morning we heard the owners of the Airport Chalet and Centennial Motors raise concerns about the government's plan to twin the Alaska Highway through much of Whitehorse. So far there are 30 business owners who are concerned about the impacts of this development. They calculate that the plan would see 11 lanes, including turning lanes, bypass roads, shoulders and meridians, in front of the airport. Area business owners are opposed to the plan and say it's too much, too complicated and too costly. They think the \$202-million plan responds to a problem that doesn't exist. Business owners have taken the extraordinary step of hiring an engineer to produce an alternative design.

How does the government plan to address the concerns of affected businesses?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The Yukon government is doing what we believe in and are committed to, which is developing a vision for the future and planning for the long term. This includes the Whitehorse corridor of the Alaska Highway. I know that members opposite will know that we received international kudos for the way that this consultation is being conducted. We're in the midst of a 60-day consultation that closes in mid-May. In fact, this morning I reached out to the owner of the Airport Chalet and am in the process of setting up a meeting with him as well as the concerned businesses in the Whitehorse corridor to listen to their concerns.

That is the stage of the process that we're in. The public and industry is getting an opportunity, as they should, to have their say, and I will meet face to face with those business owners to listen to and address their concerns where we can.

Ms. Moorcroft: Some work could be done to increase safety, address congestion and meet future needs, but do we really need to spend \$202 million? Public comment on this massively expensive project is due by May 15 — just six weeks away. Yukoners have taken to social media to point out flaws in the government's plan, such as: there are no sound barriers in places like Takhini; the impact on Squatters Road residences that would be by-passed; the amount of fill needed to twin the highway would be astronomical, and one wonders

where this fill would be obtained; and problems with pedestrian and bicycle trails. There are so many questions that this government must answer before it should proceed.

Has the government considered more affordable scenarios that would still increase safety and meet future needs?

Hon. Mr. Kent: We are in the midst of the public consultation period right now. As mentioned, the consultation period will close in the middle of May — May 15, I believe. There are a number of open houses scheduled for later on this month at, I believe, the Transportation Museum here in Whitehorse to hear from concerned Yukoners. Each and every Yukoner received in their mailbox a form to fill out, describing the project, because this is a piece of the Alaska Highway that is important not only for the residents of Whitehorse, but indeed residents throughout the territory, so we are conducting that public consultation.

Again, with respect to the concerns raised this morning by the owner of the Airport Chalet — and representing other businesses that may be affected in the Whitehorse corridor by these plans — I have reached out to that individual and have offered to set up a meeting. My staff will be coordinating with him and members of the business community who are affected by this project, and we will look forward to hearing their feedback.

With respect to comments on social media and comments that we are receiving, clearly the public consultation is working. We are receiving feedback from Yukoners. They are engaged, and I should also congratulate the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works and staff at Highways and Public Works for putting together such a comprehensive public consultation package and a website that has received international recognition.

Ms. Moorcroft: I am glad the minister has reached out, but the Yukon Party has a long track record of mismanaging capital projects and has repeatedly been taken to task by the Auditor General. There is no doubt that some improvements to the Alaska Highway corridor are needed to improve safety, address congestion and meet future needs, but local businesses and private citizens are questioning this government's \$202-million plan.

The deadline for public comment on this massively expensive project is May 15, just six weeks away — why the rush? This is too little time for the public to consider whether such a massive expenditure of public funds is warranted.

Does the government have a tender ready to go for May 16, no matter what the public says, or will the government extend the consultation period on the Alaska Highway corridor?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Of course it's important that government make plans for infrastructure. This piece of the Alaska Highway between the turnoff to the north Klondike Highway and the turnoff to the south Klondike Highway is well utilized now by residents in Whitehorse and the Whitehorse periphery and indeed throughout the Yukon. It is an important piece of infrastructure that supports not only passenger traffic, but industrial traffic going through to Alaska

and some of the ore trucks that are travelling from central Yukon.

It is important to plan. I know the members opposite are quick to criticize us for not planning. This is a 60-day public consultation on this important piece of infrastructure. I have personally reached out to business owners in that corridor who feel that they may be adversely affected. We are in the consultation phase. This is very much a long-term plan — a long-term vision — for improving an important piece of infrastructure and we are going to work through the consultation phase before we make any decisions.

Question re: *Income Tax Act* amendments

Mr. Silver: I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Many signed Yukon First Nation governments have tax-sharing agreements with the Yukon government. It allows them to collect income tax from people who live on First Nation settlement land. In some cases, it is a substantial amount of money. When the Government of Yukon changes income tax rates, as it does in this budget, it has a direct impact on First Nation governments' revenue. If any level of government did something that was going to impact my bottom line, I would expect to be consulted about it before it happened.

Can the minister explain why there was no consultation with First Nation governments before these tax changes were introduced?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This government on a daily basis consults with First Nations and works cooperatively with First Nations in many, many areas. I know that the opposition likes to find the small instances — the few instances — where there are disagreements between governments and tries to make a big deal of it. The reality is that we continue to invest and work with First Nations on a daily basis.

Some recent investments working with First Nations: \$2.7 million to the Carcross learning centre; \$250,000 working with Kwanlin Dun First Nation and Carcross-Tagish First Nation on a First Nation youth skilled trades and entrepreneurship program, building tiny houses, which — my understanding is that all of those houses, while not completed yet, have already been agreed to be leased out — have been a tremendous success; and \$538,000 for Kluane First Nation's geophysical data along the Kluane ranges, looking for geophysical data and mineral potential in those areas. The list goes on and on of the examples where we continue to work with First Nations and will continue to do so.

Mr. Silver: I would like to congratulate the Premier for successfully avoiding the answer and randomly pointing to something in his binder about money spent.

I am pleased to see these tax cuts — don't get me wrong. Personally, I will be saving hundreds of dollars, but First Nations who are losing revenue may not be happy with this government, especially when you consider that they were blindsided by this announcement. There was consultation, no discussion — just an announcement. First Nation governments are only now finding that their revenues could be impacted by this. Signed Yukon First Nation governments have tax-sharing

agreements with the Yukon government. These agreements say the government must discuss any possible changes with First Nation governments before they happen and not after. This did not happen.

Can the Premier explain why there was no consultation beforehand?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: We continue to work with First Nations and we will continue to do so. There will always be an opportunity to deal with First Nations on the potential impacts of any changes where we are reducing the taxes for Yukoners by a total, in 2015, of \$5.5 million — \$5.5 million going back into Yukoners' pockets so that they can spend that money as they choose. I know some of that money will go back into the economy, which is something that we need right now. Some people might choose to put it away for a rainy day or to invest it whichever way they choose, and that is important.

Of course, if there is an impact to some of the First Nations, we will certainly be willing to sit down and talk to them. As we know, the government does do this work on behalf of First Nations, and we're very proud of the agreement that we have on the tax sharing for people who reside on settlement land. We'll continue to have dialogue with the First Nations.

Mr. Silver: I'm glad that the Premier has committed to some consultation after the fact, but this is a colossal oversight. This government's track record when it comes to consultation with the First Nations is not good. Our courtrooms are full because this government has a bad habit of not meeting its obligations under the agreements with the First Nations. These are not small oversights, Mr. Speaker. This is yet another example of an obligation to meet with First Nations that was discarded by this government. These changes will impact First Nation governments' revenue, because what they collect is tied to the income tax rate.

Does the minister know what the financial impact will be to the First Nation governments because of this cut to taxes?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I don't have the exact number with me at this time, but I know that it is a nominal amount by First Nations. As I've stated in the past, we are more than willing, as we always do, to sit down and talk to First Nations about what we are doing together and the many partnerships that we have and the investments that this government makes every day to invest in ensuring that we are building capacity for First Nation governments, working with their development corporations, because, in the end, that benefits all Yukoners.

Question re: Housing as a human right

Ms. White: Does the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation believe that access to housing is a human right?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I thank the member opposite for the question. I think it's important that all members and all Yukoners look at the track record this government has with investments in affordable housing and seniors housing. I think Yukon Housing Corporation has done an incredible job over

the past number of years in making investments for housing in the Yukon.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I was hoping that, with my third minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, I would get a clear answer on what this government believed — whether or not housing is a human right.

This is not a rhetorical question. This isn't just some lofty principle. This question changes everything when it comes to housing. Whether or not this minister thinks that housing is a human right will determine how he will approach all issues around housing and how he'll take that to his Cabinet table.

So I would like to give him another opportunity to answer this question: Does the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation believe that housing is a human right?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I believe that it's important that government take a collaborative approach to anything it does, and I believe we've done this with our investments in housing and we will continue to do this with our investments in housing.

Ms. White: The right to housing is enshrined in article 25 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, as well as the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. So I'm going to ask for a third time: Does the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation believe that housing is a human right?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I have to again say that I believe that it's important that we recognize all people when we deal with these issues in housing, and it's important that we try to work with all Yukoners when we deal with housing issues — or with any issues, for that matter.

Unfortunately, when we're in government, we're faced with this difficult task of trying to keep all people happy at all times, and I don't believe that that is physically possible. I believe that we just have to keep doing the good work that we're doing and do the best to keep all Yukoners as happy as we can keep them, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: Seniors facilities

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon government likes to state that they've done their homework and that their health care system decisions are based on evidence and strategic planning. Given this, one would believe that the decision to build a \$330-million, 300-bed institution in Whistle Bend — the largest capital project in Yukon history to date — is the result of clear and transparent decision-making, but no plans or demonstrated needs for the 300-bed institution can be found in the 2008 *Yukon Health Care Review*, the 2014 *A Clinical Services Plan for Yukon Territory* or the *Health and Social Services Strategic Plan* for 2014 to 2019 released this past December.

If plans did not come from the Yukon Health and Social Services data and analyses, where did they come from and based on what information, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: My initial response to the member opposite would be very brief. The study would be based on the needs of Yukoners, Mr. Speaker.

Let's be very clear. In this budget, moving forward, we have plans for a 150-bed facility in Whistle Bend. That construction will continue with the Department of Health and Social Services working with the Department of Highways and Public Works. There were two needs assessments completed and a business case conducted for government that looks at the current use of the long-term care facilities and looks at the number of people who will be coming into those facilities. This government believes in putting Yukoners first, and we're looking forward to a very community-based, home-based facility to take care of our seniors who require a very high level of care.

Ms. Stick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and a reminder that the news press release that came out was for 300 beds.

Let's review some of the real data. The number of Yukon seniors being assisted by home care services is falling as our population ages. The Yukon has the highest ratio of seniors aged 65 and older living in long-term care beds in Canada, yet these seniors are relatively younger, more fit and more independent than their national counterparts.

If this government is focused on addressing root causes behind this high demand, we could reduce that ratio of seniors using long-term care beds. If we could bring this ratio to the national average, it would reduce the government's projected need for long-term care beds by over half.

Did this government consider that investing in home and community care would ease the demand on long-term care beds in the Yukon before announcing —

Speaker: Order please. The member's time has elapsed.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: What we have here is a clear example of the opposition being extremely confused on continuing care and extended care for seniors. They are getting this confused with independent living; they're getting this confused with home care; they're getting this confused with supported and assisted living.

Mr. Speaker, what we're talking about is a community-based facility to provide care to 150 seniors in Whistle Bend. This government, unlike the members opposite, has the ability to plan ahead, to look into the future and provide infrastructure and land set aside for the potential for growth in that facility.

Those decisions will be made by a future government, but, for now, home care and this continuing care facility are not an either-or question. This Yukon Party will do what the other two parties have proven they're unable to do, and that's plan for the future.

Ms. Stick: The 2008 *Yukon Health Care Review* advocates for — and I quote: “the right care at the right place at the right time”.

The Yukon NDP has long emphasized the importance of patient- and family-centred collaborative care and that extends to continuing care. The minister clearly does not understand that helping more Yukoners age in place at home and in their communities is better for Yukoners, for their families and is more affordable.

Will the minister shelve plans for the proposed 300-bed institution, consult Yukoners and look at ways to support Yukon seniors and elders to age in place at home and in their communities?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The last thing that this Yukon Party government will do is exactly what the members opposite have done and refer to our seniors care facilities as institutions and warehouses. The members opposite should be ashamed of those comments.

What this Yukon Party government has done over the last 10 or 12 years is increase the budget for home care by over 350 percent. That's something that the members opposite never did in their tenure in government — and why? Why is that? Maybe we should flip Question Period around here.

We actually agree with the NDP, though. Expanding home care has been in our platform since 2002. This Yukon Party government will take action over words, and I think that we've proven that we've made these commitments to Yukoners and we fulfilled these commitments to Yukoners.

Question re: Mine closure security

Mr. Tredger: When this Yukon Party government allowed Yukon Zinc, a subsidiary of Shaanxi province, to defer their security payments well into the mine's operation phase, they were in effect giving them a loan with no guarantee of seeing the money back. They took Yukon Zinc's word that they were good for the \$10 million, and we see the result of that. Now the minister is telling Yukoners that he is taking court action to recover a fine, but Yukon Zinc has been granted creditor protection, meaning they cannot be forced to pay the monies owing. The horse has left the barn and the Yukon Party government, despite the Premier's special relationship with Shaanxi province, is not getting that \$3 million back.

Why did this Yukon Party government let Wolverine operate for two years without having received their full security payments?

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to the Wolverine mine and mining in general, of course, we recognize that mining is the cornerstone of our economy here in the territory and the impacts that this closure is having on Yukoners. We are holding almost 80 percent of the security that is required from this mine. We chose not to shut down the mine given that we were holding nearly 80 percent of security. That's causing hardship for families and sending workers home. We chose to work with the company. Unfortunately the company defaulted on payments.

We still do hold that \$7.8 million in security. They have missed two payments. We have laid charges against the company to recoup those payments, but again, I think it is important to note that we chose not to take action to shut down the mine. Given that we were holding a significant amount of security, we wanted to ensure that those Yukon families could continue to work there while we resolved this issue. Again, I will repeat what I offered last Thursday in Question Period: we will be offering a technical briefing to members of the opposition. I sent an e-mail to both the

Member for Mayo-Tatchun and the Member for Klondike prior to coming into the House today offering a technical briefing on this mine closure for Monday, and we intend to follow through on that.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, public accountability is well overdue. Yukoners don't want or need a technical briefing. They want the minister to stand up and be accountable for what happened at Wolverine. Last Thursday, and again today, the minister implied that he had the opportunity to step in at an earlier date, but he decided not to do so. Yukon citizens have many questions. How did this government decide that it was in the interest of Yukoners not to step in and correct the situation at an earlier date? Why didn't the government step in when they couldn't meet their original payment schedule? Why didn't the government step in when they missed their \$350,000, October 31st payment? Why didn't the government step in when WCB had a stop-work order? Yukoners want to know.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Well I guess, taken from that question, we no longer have to offer the technical briefing to the Official Opposition. I will still extend that offer to the Leader of the Third Party on Monday. Clearly the Member for Mayo-Tatchun thinks he knows everything that is going on at the Wolverine mine.

Again, when it comes to the Wolverine mine, we chose not to shut down the mine, given the fact that there were a number of Yukoners employed there. We tried to work with the company — and given the fact that we were holding \$7.8 million in security for the mine at the time. Professional staff at EMR is responsible to ensure the Yukon Zinc Corporation is meeting its obligations, as required by the legislation and its mine licences. Again, as I have mentioned, legal action is being taken in regard to the failure to make the security payments. We recognize the importance of the mining sector to the Yukon economy, whether grassroots projects, advanced exploration projects or producing mines. We try to work with our clients from Compliance Monitoring and Inspections in Energy, Mines and Resources to ensure that we give them every opportunity to voluntarily come back into compliance — in this case, with respect to the security.

Again, we have laid charges and I am happy to note that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun will not require a technical briefing on this.

Mr. Tredger: He doesn't listen to the questions. I do look forward to a technical briefing on Monday. When I see it come, I will reply. Yukoners are looking for accountability. What we have here is a sad reminder of the Faro mine. Then, like now, reclamation securities were promised to Yukoners at a future date, but they never materialized. When the minister says that the mine is in a state of temporary closure and that Yukon Zinc Corporation is planning on coming back, he is being highly optimistic. But when it comes to millions of public dollars, optimism doesn't cut it.

Wolverine mine represents a failure of this Yukon Party government to oversee and regulate mining in the Yukon. Will this Yukon Party government admit that they have failed in their responsibilities to the Yukon public when a mine leaves

the territory, leaving behind a multi-million dollar tab for the Yukon —

Speaker: Order. Order please. The member's time has elapsed.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Just listening, I took the time to reflect on what we've heard today and recently. What we've heard very clearly from both parties on the opposite side is no to tax cuts to Yukoners to put more money in their pockets; no to highway corridor; no to a long-term care residence for seniors who need the care; no to a sports complex for athletics and for soccer; no to LNG; no to free entry; no to mining; no to hydro development; no to oil and gas development; no to all those positive initiatives that we have in our budget.

Mr. Speaker, the parties on the opposite side say they promote and they support economic development, but yet they rule out and they vote against all of Yukon's economic mainstays. This government plans and invests for the future; those two parties have no plan at all.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Before proceeding, I would like to remind members to watch their time. I'm trying to help you with a 10-second warning. I'm not obligated to give it to you; you're obligated to keep your questions to the time period you have and your answers to the same time period that you have. If you want, I will cut you off and, if I have to cut you off, I expect you to respect that, sit down and stop talking when I call "Order." Thank you.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 896

Clerk: Motion No. 896, 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 examine options to provide Yukoners with taxation relief by both lowering taxation rates and by increasing tax benefits such as the Yukon child tax benefit.

Ms. McLeod: I'm honoured to rise today in support of Motion No. 896, urging the Government of Yukon to examine options to provide Yukoners with taxation relief by both lowering taxation rates and by increasing tax benefits, such as the Yukon child tax benefit.

First I would like to speak a little bit about the Yukon Party's record on taxes. It's a long-standing policy that Yukoners know that something they can rely on is that the Yukon Party will not raise taxes and has not raised taxes, and that we will maintain Yukon's extremely favourable general tax environment that promotes investment in this territory.

These promises are taken right out of platform promises from many past elections.

It remains a long-standing policy because the Yukon Party believes that the private sector is the engine that drives private sector growth. We know that the key to growing the economy remains, and will always be, our Yukon businesses, which form the Yukon economy's backbone here at home.

First and foremost, we have always been and always will be champions for a vibrant and successful Yukon private sector. The Yukon Party remains the lone party in Yukon politics that has proven it can create an economic climate for Yukon businesses to succeed. We remain the best choice for Yukon's economy and Yukon's business community. Last year, the Premier announced that the Yukon government will be cutting the small-business tax rate from four to three percent. I am sure members will recall that we had a discussion about that in this House, and that was a motion that passed.

Over the past decade, consecutive Yukon Party governments have been ensuring that the business community is presented with a tax regime that enables them to be successful, to grow and create jobs for Yukoners. In 2004, the Yukon government tabled Bill No. 54, which gave Yukon government responsibility for setting the small-business tax-deduction limit. We recognized the strength of local governments when determining economic policy.

With this authority in place, the Yukon government announced that they were raising the small-business tax-deduction limit from \$300,000 to \$400,000 effective January 1, 2007. Previously, the small-business tax rate was reduced from six percent to four percent, effective January 1, 2005, where it did sit until last year. In 2010, the Yukon government further increased the small-business tax-credit limit from \$400,000 to \$500,000, again providing Yukon's small businesses with the freedom to reinvest capital into the economy and their companies.

On the personal income tax side of things, in 2008 the government increased the Yukon child benefit by 53 percent and increased the threshold to qualify for the benefit by 20 percent. As a further bonus and aid to Yukoners, this was backdated to July of 2006.

In addition, the Department of Economic Development introduced the small-business incentive tax credit that benefitted growing Yukon businesses — notably, one of the mainstays and cornerstones of our economy, and that is Air North.

Recently, the new minister responsible for the Liquor Corporation announced that Yukon outlets licensed to sell liquor products can purchase them at a wholesale price of 10 percent off retail. Until now, these Yukon businesses were not granted the benefit of wholesale pricing that forms a portion of the profit margin for all other Yukon businesses. These changes demonstrate how this government is making sure that the Yukon continues to remain a business-friendly jurisdiction.

The government has done a lot of work to assist the business community. We have developed a very competitive

tax regime designed to promote private business, and we have done all this while maintaining a positive net financial position through strong fiscal management. But now we are seeing some challenges for Yukon businesses and they need our continued support.

Tax changes must be focused and they must serve a purpose. With this in mind, I am very pleased to hear the highlights of the Premier's speech to the Yukon Chamber of Commerce and his Budget Address in this House. We are seeing this government step up to address these challenges by recognizing that they also present an opportunity. This government is putting Yukoners to work on strategic infrastructure, programs and services that will benefit all of us in the long term. The government budget will put Yukoners to work and keep them earning paycheques to support their families.

The budget will also keep Yukoners supporting our local businesses and communities because, Mr. Speaker, now is the time to provide tax relief for Yukoners. It's time, as the Premier put it, to put money back into Yukoners' pockets because they know how best to spend their own money.

The Premier noted that the changes will revise the income tax rate structure and increase the child tax benefit. Both of these changes help accomplish the goal of helping Yukoners support Yukon businesses. With this tax relief, Yukoners will see more take-home income and that is right in line with our goal of helping Yukon businesses navigate these challenging economic times. The government is putting more money back into the pockets of customers of Yukon businesses, and that's a strategy. That's this government's strategy, and it's all about creating opportunities — opportunities to work, opportunities to raise families, opportunities to be successful, opportunities to live in this great territory that we all call home.

There's a flip side to this, Mr. Speaker, and that is the depressing contrast to Yukon Party management of the economy. Throughout the Yukon's history, NDP and Liberal governments have resulted in population loss, no investment in the territory, and Yukoners having to leave their homes to seek jobs and opportunities outside of the Yukon. When Yukoners look at the many investments made by diversifying our economy through film and sound, IT, knowledge, cultural industries and tourism and culture, anyone can see that this is completely untrue — the opposition has said as recently as yesterday, I believe, that this Yukon Party believes in a boom-and-bust cycle of economic activity and, of course, as I've said, nothing could be further from the truth. However, the NDP do claim that they'll flatten out the cycle, and history shows us that, yes, they will deliver on that promise, but not in the way that we would want.

The Yukon Party will continue on the good work to support Yukoners, keep them working and provide opportunities to help them support their families. Yukoners will welcome these tax changes and we will see the impacts around our great territory.

I would like to thank the Finance minister, our Premier, for making these changes for Yukoners and their families, and I look forward to seeing the changes to the *Income Tax Act*

when they're tabled for further debate and hearing from other members on this motion.

I trust that all members will support this motion. It's good for Yukoners. With that, I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward this motion for debate in the Legislature today.

In speaking to the motion, I would like to first reflect on the fundamental values lens through which I, as a New Democrat, view policy options that are presented for debate and, in particular, with respect to the discussion of subject matters in this motion. When I'm asked to consider whether I support the notion of examining options to provide Yukoners with taxation relief by both lowering tax rates and by increasing tax benefits, such as the Yukon child tax benefit, I do so through a values lens that meets the principles of modern democracy.

As legislators, let us look at those options as they are presented to us and ask, are they consistent with the principle of equality? Will they work toward ensuring that everyone has an opportunity for meaningful work, satisfying activity and shared responsibility? Will these measures provide equitable access to a reasonable income, good quality health care and education, affordable childcare and secure housing? Will the options considered improve or strengthen the notion of democracy — that is, that democracy is the cornerstone of a society based on dignity and equality? Will the options being proposed in the member opposite's motion improve democratic control of our social, political and economic institutions, which are essential to eliminating poverty, addressing unemployment and helping us decrease the ever-growing concentrations of wealth and power?

Will the proposed options result in social and economic structures that provide a balance between the needs of our generation? Because when we start talking about tax and tax policy, we're not talking about the quick fix for today. We're making structural fiscal changes. These are structural changes to our economy. So will they provide a sustainable balance between the needs of our generation and the needs of future generations? How will the proposed options foster or reinforce a strong sense of community? What tangible outcomes will the proposed options contain that will support the community values that I believe we as Yukoners share — a caring and compassionate community with a goal of eliminating poverty. How will the tax policy measures that we're discussing today or considering work toward that? How will the proposed options to be examined as contained in this motion ensure that the fundamental principle of cooperation, a core principle of a civil and civilized society — how that core principle of cooperation is fostered through the social and economic development opportunities that may arise from the implementation of the options brought forward for consideration under this motion? After all, it is through the cooperative and collective raising of taxes that citizens, residents and businesses can do things together that we could never do on our own.

Sometimes when we're considering ideas that are brought forward and sometimes in our eagerness to put forward options, we say, "I don't know why they just don't buy it; it's simple; it's obvious" and I'm often reminded of a famous quote that has come back to haunt me perhaps many times during my career. It's by H. L. Mencken and I think it does apply to the discussion that we're having here today, and it's simply this: "For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple and wrong."

I bring this quote forward not to disparage the premise of the motion, but to point out that often what appears to be just a simple, commonsense answer is, upon reflection and application of some intellectual rigour, quite frankly not the outcome we had assumed or wanted or even wanted to believe would occur.

As people elected to represent the broad spectrum of Yukon citizens, residences and business interests, it is incumbent upon us to make sure that we approach all policy decisions, especially those that have long-term and far-reaching fiscal implications, as how we, as elected members of this House, are best able to respond to the evolving needs of our citizens and our economy.

Tax policy is one of the tools in our legislative toolbox. Nobody expects a good worker to use a sledgehammer when a small tacking hammer will suffice. Hence the importance of due consideration to the outcome sought when examining the options contemplated by this motion.

I also think it's important to dispel the notion that, somehow, all taxes are all inherently bad. Quite frankly, that represents a starkly naïve view of society and a view in stark contrast to the democratic principles of our country, or any democracy.

Oliver Wendell Holmes is famously quoted as saying, "Taxes are the price we pay for civilization." I would also say taxes are the price we pay for the country, the territory, the cities and towns we love. Taxes put out fires, keep our streets safe, provide our children with education, provide our families with health care, ensure our food and water are safe, create legal standards and safeguards for businesses and employees. They provide parks. In other words, taxes provide us benefits every hour of the day, every day of the year.

Past generations paid taxes for what we have today: schools, hospitals, our courts, roads, the public transit systems we have across this country, our national parks and our municipal parks. Our taxes today allow us to pass along those benefits to our future generations — our children, our grandchildren and, hopefully, our great grandchildren.

The notion of tax relief included in this motion is an interesting one, because it sounds like aspirin or something that you need to have for relief from pain. It's not necessarily the same approach taken in all democracies. What we've seen over the last 25 or 30 years — in particular in certain political spheres primarily in North America, emanating from the United States — is really an anti-government tax bias — somehow the notion that people are elected to government to get rid of government.

That is I think, Mr. Speaker, when we started to see — my recollection, going back to the Bush era — this whole notion that somehow we needed relief from taxes and that that was going to solve the problems of the world.

I am wondering if there is not a more progressive way to consider how we, as legislators, view the tax toolbox. Perhaps a more apt metaphor would be the notion of dues. People understand that when we pay dues, there is an expectation that everyone pays their fair share. We pay our dues to be Canadians and enjoy the benefits of Canadian society. Taxes are what we pay to live in a civilized society that is democratic, offers opportunity and offers the kinds of infrastructure that I hear all members of this Legislative Assembly, in particular the members opposite, talking about spending Canadian tax dollars on.

Those infrastructure benefits are available to all citizens, by virtue of them being citizens. Those dues represent us being part, being a member, being part of a community. When we pay the dues and we maintain those dues, we maintain the infrastructure, the health care system, the educational system that we want for our children and our children's children. Being a dues-paying member in good standing is part of our democratic responsibility as well as our rights. We expect people to pay their dues. We know there are some who don't, but that is a whole other area and it has been a difficult challenge for governments to deal with that aspect.

We have had a lot of conversation in this Legislative Assembly about the evolution of governance in this territory. The Premier, in his Budget Address, clearly identified a goal that he — I assume both personally and politically — believes in, and that is — and I quote: "...our goal of making Yukon a net contributor to Canada." He said: "Why is this important? It's important because economic self-sufficiency is the best path to economic strength... As long as we rely on federal transfer payments and as long as we rely on other hard-working Canadians, we will not be economically secure..."

Mr. Speaker, in order to meet and beat the challenge there, we have to move from the simplistic rhetoric about tax relief or a notion that all taxes are bad. We have to give serious consideration to how we consider options contemplated by this motion, because I think there are opportunities in this motion to address the notions of the fiscal capacity of the territory, to talk about the notions of the opportunities presented by this motion to represent a progressive approach to taxation — that is they are based on the principle of the ability to pay and that can be demonstrated to contribute in a net positive way to Yukon's economic performance.

We have all heard for years about the Alberta advantage, the flat tax rate that was supposedly the model to emulate. Yet in both British Columbia and Alberta, services such as schools, hospitals and roads are being severely affected by low tax rates, by the lack of public money to meet the demands that the Premier says we as a Yukon economy should be striving to meet. I agree — that is our obligation, but we can't have it both ways. We have dues to pay and we have to decide — and that is why I am hoping that the

member opposite, when she puts forward this motion — is that she is really inviting Yukoners to talk about what role we play in moving toward that goal that the Premier articulated, of economic self-sufficiency.

Both the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta provide a clear opportunity for lessons learned about the reliance on the simple notion — and probably easy-to-sell notion — of across-the-board tax cuts, but the fact of the matter is — as we consider talking about becoming net contributors to Canada, let's look at our track record. We talk about not relying upon the other hard-working Canadians, but the fact of the matter is that, under this government, we are getting further and further and further from being a net contributor to the Canadian economy than we were before this government came to power. In fact, the dependence on federal transfers has grown under the Yukon Party government's direction. It has increased more than threefold since they came into power — 1.3 times since this Premier came into power. Our own-source revenues — whether they are from campground fees or resource royalties or personal taxes or corporate taxes — have decreased as a proportion of the total revenues over that same period. They too — our own-source revenues — have decreased by 21 percent. That is a significant drop, so when and how does the fiscal framework of this territory begin to change?

I think the opportunity may exist in the member opposite's motion as long as the member opposite, in putting forward this motion, truly intended it to be a broad conversation and not simply a conversation about implementing a government's platform, regardless of the implications and regardless of the contradictions inherent in that platform to the stated objective, the objective stated by the Finance minister in his Budget Address on April 2.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, I'm putting these notes together at very short — scribbling as the speaker opposite was speaking, so just give me a moment.

There is also —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Minister of Health and Social Services, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming David Miller from Vernon to the gallery. He is visiting and perhaps considering making Yukon his home, so welcome, David.

Applause

Speaker: Leader of the Official Opposition, please.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we look at the notion and the implications, as I was saying earlier, about our own fiscal capacity and how we structure our ability to ensure that not only are we carrying our weight within the Canadian constitutional framework and moving toward the long-term objective of becoming net fiscal contributors, we also have to look at, as I said, the lessons that

can be learned from what has happened in British Columbia, Alberta and other boom-and-bust economies. Also at the federal level, we have lessons to be learned about the implications of the reliance solely on the ideology that tax cuts will result in more jobs and more investments.

I think we've seen and we've heard federal ministers of finance — several of them over the last five years — express serious consternation at the fact that, as they said — as former Minister Flaherty said — that they did their part to cut corporate tax rates to ensure that there was — because the ideology is that you cut those tax rates and people will invest; that they will create jobs; that they will invest in research and development. I don't know if you recall, Mr. Speaker, but certainly Minister Flaherty — now-departed Mr. Flaherty — in several speeches to the business community expressed his frustration that those successive tax cuts over the last 10 years have not resulted in the expected private sector investments and corporate investments in research and development, manufacturing and job creation. But as he said, and as the Bank of Canada's governor said — creation of a \$600 billion-plus stash of cash that sits there unused by the corporate sector — \$600 billion. Imagine what kind of stimulus could be created — unleashed in this country — if the private sector would do as the Conservative Government of Canada thought it was helping them do by giving them those cuts, creating the environment to do what they do best, which is to create jobs, to invest and to innovate.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said when I was responding initially to this motion, the idea of inviting the conversation to talk about ways that we frame our tax system so that it will allow us to grow as an economy and grow us as a territory is really, really important, but we must not do it with any assumptions that we are not open to questioning.

So, as I said, the intent of the motion, if the perception that we have is that this is a move that meets the test that I outlined at the beginning of my response to the motion — if it meets those five or so major, clear assessments as we go through each of the options to be considered by the motion that the member opposite has put forward — then I think we're on the right track, because we do support careful and reasoned exploration and evaluation of policy measures to support a strong and inclusive Yukon. We want our economy to be one, as I said earlier, that is inclusive and leaves no one behind.

I'm encouraged by the words “exploring options”, but I am concerned that it has also been revealed in the comments by the member opposite that this is — and I'm hoping this is not going to simply be a statement or one of these motions that is put out there just so that we can hear the opposite members' statements of platform, as opposed to a real sincere opportunity to engage in a discussion about ideas around tax and tax policy.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. Hanson: I see.

Mr. Speaker, I think we're trying to move beyond that kind of cynicism. We've seen the scepticism and cynicism, quite frankly, of citizens about what goes on here. So if we're

serious about wanting to talk, as opposed to the platform of the Yukon Party just being read into Hansard, then we're open to that and we think it's a possibility that this has been presented by what the member opposite has put forward.

I think we need to make sure that we're clear. As I said earlier, there are lots of aspects of tax policy that sound the same, but I don't think that they necessarily are. There is a statement — I think I've heard it from the Finance minister and I heard it from the member opposite — and the notion that it's simply all about cutting tax rates, but perhaps there are other aspects here about taxation relief and not conflating the two. I think there's an opportunity for a discussion here.

I think it's important to do that because — I don't know, God forbid, but you know, who knows who would be — this government could, in fact, pass a whole bunch of tax cuts and then find itself, in 10 or 15 years, back in government with a taxpayer protection act that refuses to allow them to raise taxes.

One of the challenges that we need to think about, as we consider the motion put forward is that, as I said earlier about what happened in British Columbia, and what happened in Alberta and other jurisdictions — but those two in particular, which had an ideological sort of bent on flat rates and low rates across the board — is that, when you commit yourself to cutting taxes during a time of economic uncertainty, it may be sort of a desperate Hail Mary approach to stimulating the stagnating economy, but we saw what happened to the Canadian economy too. It has not worked.

I'm not making that up. I said already earlier — I cited the references of two Finance ministers and the governor of the Bank of Canada. We have more tools available to us as legislators to stimulate the economy. Let's use them. Let's use our capacity to do that.

Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of studies that have looked at what the implications of cutting personal income tax are. A 2012 Canadian study found that cutting personal income tax rates does not affect the growth rate and investment rates. Another more recent study in 2014 made an interesting comment, I thought. It said that there's this common argument that income tax cuts raise growth. It's repeated so often that sometimes it's taken as gospel. That study says theory, evidence and simulation studies tell a different and more complicated story. It concludes — and I quote: “Tax cuts offer the potential to raise economic growth by improving incentives to work, save, and invest. But they also create income effects that reduce the need to engage in productive economic activity, and they may subsidize old capital, which provides windfall gains to asset holders that undermine incentives for new activity.”

This is the part that I think is most challenging to governments. We've seen across the board that tax cuts — as a stand-alone policy that is not accompanied by spending cuts — typically raise your deficit. Mr. Speaker, we've already seen this territory verging pretty damn close to it. We're at \$23 million at this time of year in anticipated surplus. The Minister of Finance has seen that surplus decrease under his

watch year over year over year. By this time next year, there will be none.

At least theoretically cutting taxes — and it is pretty theoretical in this situation because of the bubble that the territorial government still lives in — even if it's only a two-percent increase projected over the next year for the formula financing arrangement, it's still more of an increase than any other jurisdiction is going to get. With prudence, we can manage within that. The challenges, if we are going to move toward, as the Premier and the Finance Minister has alleged, making the hard decisions of government — that means that you act as if you are doing it within the confines of the allocated resources, and they actually project the implications of all the measures you take that affect your fiscal capacity. That is part of the conversation that I think needs to be taken into consideration as we look at the implications and the possibilities of the motion presented today by the Member for Watson Lake.

As we go forward and as we look at these tax options and the options — not just for the motion presented today because those are limited. They are narrow in the broad scheme of things when we talk about the potential of tax and tax policy. I think it is going to be important that we look and encourage the sharing of the economic models and tools of analysis that are used by government to make the changes to the Yukon *Income Tax Act* and regulations so that we can look at and have an informed discussion about aspects of those models.

I would also be interested in seeing what impact any proposed changes, including the changes contemplated by the motion put forward by the Member for Watson Lake, can be expected to have on Yukoners — basically their inclination to consume and their inclination to save and, by extension, the projected impact on the economic multiplier effect in the territorial GDP. Those are all important and serious questions for us as legislators, and we need to think about those. I think we need to think about those. If we take it seriously — talking about tax is not something that is simply political rhetoric. It affects the day-to-day decisions taken by members of this Legislative Assembly and the day-to-day decisions taken by citizens, residents and business interests in this territory.

I think that the Official Opposition sees that the Motion No. 896 presents, as I said, some options and talks about examining options. We are prepared to support the exploration of those options, subject to the kind of important democratic lens that I applied to that review, and any options that come forward from the government side can anticipate being reviewed and discussed by the members of the Official Opposition through that lens, because that is what it is about. That is what our job is — to hold this government to account, to make those fiscal decisions, those tax policy decisions, in a way that is democratic, promotes the notions of equality and equity, and supports a sustainable economy.

I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward the motion and I look forward to hearing from other members in the Legislative Assembly, who no doubt have some wise words to offer.

Mr. Silver: Thank you to my colleague from Watson Lake for bringing forth Motion No. 896.

I was surprised to see the income tax cuts in the budget before us. Like so many initiatives of this government, it simply was rolled out with no discussion beforehand. I would like to know from the government as we move forward today — questions. I'm sure we will get questions to answers as we debate this further in this legislative session — how these tax cuts were decided on, for example. Who did they consult with, and how did they calculate the percentage cuts for each of those brackets?

As a Liberal, I do support giving tax breaks to those in the middle class, who receive the lion's share of the benefits in these changes. The Yukon can be an expensive place to live and I am happy to see more money in the pockets of families. For low-income earners, though, the tax cut does mean only about \$90 a year. I would have preferred to see the cuts directed more toward those in the lower brackets, who are likely most in need. I am not sure that those earning between \$138,000 and \$500,000 need to see a tax cut of this magnitude and, on average, they are going to save about \$800 a year, compared to those earning under \$44,000, who see the smallest percentage decrease.

I also look forward to the rationale of such cuts. I don't think we are necessarily proving to Ottawa that we are capable of standing alone. I don't think it's lost on our federal counterparts as all the provinces are tightening their bootstraps, as the federal government downloads repercussions of their austerity measures federal budget. The Yukon relies heavily now — more than ever — on Ottawa, more than we did a decade ago. These are definitely concerns. We are lowering our income tax, which is an own-source revenue. We are increasing the size and expense of government — so lots of questions, Mr. Speaker, on the cuts themselves. It is worth noting that the last significant tax relief for families and individuals was under a Liberal government in the early 2000s.

Unfortunately, as I raised in Question Period today, there is a piece in the tax cut that needs to be addressed and that is why I am proposing a friendly amendment.

I'll provide that. I have copies here for everybody in the House.

Speaker: Do you want to read your amendment and then I can move it forward?

Amendment proposed

Mr. Silver: I move:

THAT Motion No. 896 be amended by inserting the words “, in consulting with First Nation governments who are impacted by these changes,” after the word “options”.

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

THAT Motion No. 896 be amended by inserting the words “, in consulting with First Nation governments who are impacted by these changes,” after the word “options”.

Leader of the Third Party, you have 16 minutes and 42 seconds left on the amendment.

Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be as brief as possible here. I just want to read the motion with its amendment:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to examine options, in consultation with First Nation governments who are impacted by these changes, to provide Yukoners with taxation relief by both lowering taxation rates and by increasing tax benefits such as the Yukon child tax benefit.

As I had expressed during Question Period today, I am concerned that the tax cuts were made without consulting those who it is going to affect adversely. Many signed Yukon First Nation governments have tax-sharing agreements with the Government of Yukon that allow them to collect income tax from people who live on First Nation settlement land. This isn't just aboriginal citizens of that particular First Nation; this is anybody who is living on settlement land in the Yukon. That money, collected from income tax — 95 percent of that money goes back into the First Nation to which they are situated at on their settlement land.

When the Government of Yukon changes the income tax rate, as it does in this budget, it has a direct impact on First Nation governments' revenues. If Ottawa were to do that to the Yukon government, I'm sure the Premier would like to be consulted on the changes that were impacting the territory's bottom line and would want to know about it before it happened. I would also argue that there's an authority here to consult the First Nation governments. I'll get to that in a second.

As happy as I am personally because of the cuts — everybody in this Chamber will be affected and will get some money back — the First Nations that are losing revenue might not be so happy with this government, especially when you consider that they were blindsided by this announcement. There wasn't any consultation or discussion, just an announcement, and First Nation governments are now only finding out that their revenues could be impacted by this.

Signed Yukon First Nation governments have tax-sharing agreements with the Yukon government. Those agreements say that the government must discuss any possible changes with First Nation governments before they happen, not after — and that's what happened here.

So, Mr. Speaker, the government's track record, when it comes to consultation with First Nations, as mentioned, is not necessarily great. Our courtrooms are full, because the government has a bad habit of not meeting its obligations under the agreements with First Nations. This may be another example of an obligation to meet with First Nations that was discarded by this government. These changes will impact First Nation governments' revenue, because what they collect is tied to the income tax rate. So this is a great place to have this discussion and this debate, and I hope that there's a response from the government today as far as this information.

As I have said in my previous remarks on the initial motion, I do support taxation relief for Yukoners — absolutely — but given the potential loss to Yukon First

Nation governments, I think it's important to calculate that into the equation and have a discussion on the floor of the Legislature on what those impacts will be.

Unlike the territorial government, Yukon First Nations are not operating on the same massive scale as far as their budgets go. These cuts will disproportionately affect the bottom line. It doesn't matter if it's \$5, \$500, or \$5,000 or \$500,000. What's more important here is: Does the Yukon Party government have the authority to cut money that is going to Yukon First Nation governments?

Having spoken to a number of chiefs in the last few days and officers inside the financial departments of self-governing First Nations, they all learned about this in the newspapers and are just now calculating what this loss could mean for their budgets for the next few years. I would like to reiterate that I do support tax cuts. That's not the issue here, but what I do hope is that the Yukon Party government recognizes that this was an oversight and take steps to rectify this issue with Yukon First Nation governments. That is why I'm proposing this amendment and I look forward to hearing the response from the government side. This motion as amended — I have no problem agreeing with.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As was recently discussed during Question Period today, this government continues to invest time, people and money into working with First Nations on a day-to-day basis. We could go into the amount of money that is invested with First Nations every day — and it is significant. We continue to work with First Nations because it's in our best interests to ensure that First Nations can build up their capacity to be able to be stronger and stronger partners in a small economy in Yukon — in Yukon's economy — whether that's the First Nations or whether that's their development corporations, we continue to invest in ensuring there's capacity. There are agreements within individual final agreements that allow for some First Nations — for example, the Yukon asset construction agreements that exist with some of the First Nations. We continue to find areas to support and grow and foster the development of First Nation governance capacity, but also fiscal economic capacity as well and we'll continue to do that.

What we won't do is give away our right to set our own tax policy. The public government must retain the right to set out our own tax policy and we will not cede the responsibility and control of the finances to another government. What we will do is we will live up to all of our obligations to consult per the agreements as they have been agreed to. As I stated earlier as well, there can potentially be an impact to some of the self-governing First Nations. That impact is not significant, but we will work with First Nations and we will live up to all of our obligations as per the agreements to consult with First Nations and therefore we will not be supporting this amendment.

Ms. Hanson: On the amendment, I would like to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing this matter forward. I

quite frankly had not considered the implications of Chapter 14 of the self-governing agreement until he raised it this afternoon.

I am astounded — absolutely astounded — at the dismissive tone in the response from the Premier. What the Member for Klondike's motion does and what the issue he has brought forward speaks to is not a challenge to Yukon government's taxation authority. It is simply another example of an opportunity lost by this government to actually do what it said it would do when it signed these agreements. I will admit, Mr. Speaker, that I haven't gone back and looked at the taxation agreements that were negotiated pursuant to section 14.8 of any of the First Nation self-government agreements, but I do notice and I do note that all the way through and in the conversations — and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the issues of taxation and tax room are one of the most — no government gives that up. But the idea was that First Nations, as was mentioned by the Member for Klondike, negotiated provisions to tax interests in settlement land and residents of settlement land, persons and other entities.

I think the Premier may want to reconsider his harsh words and his rash words in the context of section 14.5.1 of the self-government agreement because it speaks there to the coordination with existing tax systems. All the way through the agreements, there is an obligation of one government and the other government — the Yukon government and First Nation governments — where the subject matters of legislative decisions taken will impact the other to consult. It's in the agreements, Mr. Speaker. It's not about how much money the Government of Yukon gives to First Nations. Again, that's a very paternalistic typification of that relationship. What the Minister of Finance needs to recognize is that the relationship established in these agreements is not one of paternalism; it's government-to-government. When it speaks in these agreements about the obligation to consult, it is a serious one.

Mr. Speaker, the materiality of the issue — whether or not we're talking about hundreds of dollars or thousands of dollars — at this point in history, it may not be materially significant but it is, on matter of principle, incredibly significant. I do hope that the Premier will review, and perhaps as we're sitting here he is sending BlackBerry messages to his advisors elsewhere to reconsider and agree to the eminently reasonable amendment proposed by the Member for Klondike.

Ms. McLeod: I just want to say briefly that obviously I won't be supporting the amendment. I think that the way the motion is worded currently allows for an examination of options, which is precisely what the motion calls for.

Speaker: Does any other member wish to be heard on the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Disagree.

Mr. Elias: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are seven yea, 11 nay.

Speaker: The nays have it. I declare the amendment defeated.

Amendment to Motion No. 896 negatived

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the main motion?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this important motion forward today. In preparation for today's debate, I spent some time reading up on taxation policy. I came across a number of very helpful websites and commentaries on the merits of lowering taxes. All of us realize that some taxation is appropriate. We all benefit from common infrastructure, from common programs, from common policies and from common services.

I started to build a list of different jobs public servants perform and very quickly I realized that the list would be very, very long. We all benefit from shared public services and I think it is fair that we all contribute through our taxes to support that public infrastructure, but I think it is helpful to recognize that taxpayers should have to pay only what they need to pay.

Many years ago, a man was commenting on a proposal for a new tax. If memory serves, it was to pay for a bus transit system, because the system wouldn't ever break even with just charging the bus riders. He said that for everyone who receives a benefit and doesn't earn it is someone who earned it but doesn't receive the benefit. I think that succinctly reminds me of the challenge of finding a fair tax policy.

As we discuss taxation policy, I would like to point out a few arguments for lower taxes. Some of these comments came from an editorial piece by David Boaz. One of Mr. Boaz's comments that I thought was important to note is that, in a free country, money belongs to the people who earn it. The

most fundamental reason to cut taxes is an understanding that wealth doesn't just happen, it has to be produced, and those who produce it have a right to keep it. I am a firm believer that people who work should be able to enjoy the benefits of their labour. That brings me to a related point, which is that high taxes discourage work and investment. When the difference between the reward-to-risk ratio of creating a job is diminished because of taxes, the capital investment will often flow to other investment opportunities. High marginal tax rates also discourage people from working overtime or from making new investments.

I believe that the best way to help people is to create an environment where existing and aspiring businesses can grow. That, to me, is a place where taxes are low. This is in keeping with our platform commitment to implementing *Pathways to Prosperity*. We committed to implement the vision outlined in the Yukon government's *Pathways to Prosperity: an Economic Growth Perspective 2005-2025*. To summarize, that calls for us to continue to expand the Yukon economy by promoting our economic mainstays in the resource extraction fields, by promoting the diversification of Yukon's economy and maintaining Yukon's extremely favourable general tax environment that promotes investment in our territory.

The motion before us today speaks to that commitment. Mr. Speaker, in one of the blogs I read, the author argued that the ideal tax system reflects a compromise between two conflicting goals: equity and efficiency. The author argued that equity requires that those who are able to pay more taxes do so. In his view, that meant taxing the rich and giving to the poor and thereby reducing inequality in addressing poverty. Efficiency, on the other hand, he argued, meant opting for the lower marginal tax rates.

I found those comments interesting, but I think they are only partially helpful. I don't think that wealth redistribution is the key to ending poverty. Many of us are aware that one of the aims of communism was to make everyone equal. I think most of us in this Assembly would agree that the reality of communism didn't match its aspirations, so, to me, we need to think carefully about using taxation policies to redistribute wealth. To me, the way to end poverty is to work to create an environment where those who wish to work are able to find meaningful jobs. I don't think it's the government's job to be the economy. I think it's the government's job to help create a context where the private sector can flourish and can grow. I think we need to look at options to create an economic environment that encourages Yukoners to work. Rather than taking a wealth-redistribution approach, I would argue that we should look for opportunities to take a wealth-creation approach.

Yukon government has several tools as its disposal to implement public policy, including legislation and regulations, programs and projects. Governments have a crucial role to play in establishing regulatory regimes that enable people to undertake activities to pursue dreams, to generate wealth and to build communities, while at the same time protecting other citizens and the environment. We committed to helping Yukoners achieve a better quality of life, to protecting our

environment, to promoting a diversified economy and to practising good government. In each of these areas we have delivered.

I have spoken previously about the things that we need to build a better economy: transportation, communications, energy, skilled workers, access to capital and a balanced, consistent, modern regulatory regime. This motion fits with our platform commitments. Yukon offers a very competitive tax regime with no territorial tax and numerous tax incentives for small- and medium-sized businesses. As a former business owner, I believe this is very important to Yukoners.

Yukon was built on and still remains predominantly serviced by small- and medium-sized entrepreneurs. Today's business people recognize the available labour pool in Yukon communities, the infrastructure in place to service development and a favourable tax regime as successful components in building a healthy return on investment. I would also note that we need to take into account those with low incomes who are raising families.

I am pleased to see this that motion calls for us to find ways to use tax benefit programs to help those low-income earners who have children and all the demands on their finances that come with raising those children. I would like to note that the national child benefit or NCB is a joint initiative of Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments, which includes a First Nations component. The NCB initiative combines two key elements: federal monthly payments to low-income families with children and benefits and services designed and delivered by the provinces, territories and First Nations to meet the needs of low-income families with children in each jurisdiction.

The Yukon child benefit or YCB is a supplement to the national child benefit. Enhancements to the Yukon child benefit in this budget will see a significant positive impact on low-income families, raising the maximum annual benefits per child from \$690 to \$820, starting in July of this year.

Yukon savings associated with the NCB supplement have been reinvested in the children's drug and optical program, the kids recreation fund and the healthy families program. Yukon also invests the Yukon child benefit, a benefit that is not considered low income, when determining eligibility for social assistance.

Having children of my own, I know how expensive and unexpected some of those bills can be. The tax benefit program is available to those living on very modest means, and I think we should look at options to help them too. In previous mandates, we have worked to restore the economy. I have talked at great length before on how the economic situation was dire in 2002 when we took office. Yukon was in trouble; people were leaving the territory. The Liberal government of the day had collapsed and hope was fading. Through hard work and deliberate, strategic investments, we were able to restore confidence and investment in our territory. By working together, we were able to do better. We committed to building Yukon's future. The Premier noted that this government believes and has a desire to make Yukon a net contributor to Canada. The more revenue we generate

locally, the greater flexibility we have in responding to emerging pressures and needs.

As the Minister for Health and Social Services, I am reminded on a daily basis of the demands on government to provide services and programs. If we are ever going to have any realistic hope of providing the kinds of services that so many of us look for, then we are going to need steady, reliable, own-source revenue streams to fund those programs. This motion urges the Government of Yukon to examine options to provide Yukoners with taxation relief by both lowering taxation rates and by increasing tax benefits, such as the Yukon child tax benefits. Yukoners have the confidence in this Yukon Party government to deliver on its commitments and to work diligently on our behalf. I will be supporting this motion, and I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing it forward today.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I rise today in support of Motion No. 896:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to examine options to provide Yukoners with taxation relief by both lowering taxation rates and by increasing tax benefits such as the Yukon child tax benefit.

I would also like to thank and acknowledge the Member for Watson Lake for putting forward this motion — a motion that is in fact very important and very timely right now in Yukon. Certainly, as we have seen — because of where the economy is right now and as we all know — I know that the opposition would like us to take the blame for the commodity prices, but of course neither this government nor any individual government has control over commodity prices. What we are doing is focusing on where we can for the future to make sure that the territory is in a better place to be able to take full advantage of the opportunities as they move forward.

I did have some things I wanted to say with respect to this motion specifically, and then probably a few comments about what we heard from the members opposite as well. As we know and as I've stated in this House, we're at a time right now where we're seeing governments cutting jobs and increasing taxes here in Yukon. Because of the strong financial management of successive Yukon Party governments, we are in the most enviable position in this country.

I will note a couple of things — going east to west of recent announcements. Nova Scotia's budget day is tomorrow and their Finance minister quotes that there will be some pain and some difficult decisions.

In Quebec, they've just tabled their budget. Program spending increases will again be reduced to 1.2 percent this year — a total of \$729 million in fresh cuts, which include cuts to school boards and to education, and they're adding \$16 billion to their debt.

New Brunswick increased taxes. They bumped the price for fuel — their fuel tax. They closed some courthouses. They eliminated 249 teaching jobs — the fifth consecutive deficit budget — and increased premiums for seniors who use the prescription drug plan.

Saskatchewan didn't have any new cuts, but they dramatically reduced a number of tax incentives that they had — encouraging people to come to Saskatchewan is one of the examples. Again, very strict, controlled spending — and they're increasing their public debt by over \$1 billion.

In Alberta, there are the first tax increases in a number of years. About 2,000 full-time positions will be cut, with Alberta Health Services being hit the hardest. A new health care levy will be introduced on July 1 of 2015. Alberta's fuel tax on gasoline and diesel will be raised. It's worth noting that Alberta had the second-lowest fuel tax in the country. Yukon, of course, had the lowest fuel tax in the country, and our rate was over 30 percent lower than Alberta's. Alberta will now be moving their fuel tax — gasoline and diesel rates — up, and an immediate 10-percent liquor markup and hike on tobacco tax. That is the reality that is going on around us.

What have we done? Last year we reduced the small-business tax by 25 percent. We reduced it from four percent to three percent, putting more money back into businesses' pockets to allow them to make decisions that are important for the success of their business, whether that's reinvesting in their staff, reinvesting in their equipment, or even just the ability to perhaps make some profit.

This year we have focused on Yukoners and Yukon families. We are, through this budget and through the amendments to the *Income Tax Act*, looking at a net increase of approximately \$5.5 million in 2015 — back into the hands of Yukoners to make decisions on what they want to do with that money. I am certain that a portion of that money will be reinvested back into this economy. Perhaps it's to help them make the decision to buy a new vehicle or to go out more frequently, take their family out to the show or buy a meal — whatever it is. A lot of that money will go back into this economy.

We can do this because of the prudent management we have had of our economy, because not only have we not had a deficit in years — one deficit in the last 11 years, I believe it is, otherwise surpluses. I'll maybe talk about the confusion. It's unfortunate that the Leader of the Official Opposition doesn't understand the difference between debt and deficits, but we will get to that.

What we are doing with amendments to the *Income Tax Act* is reducing that tax burden on taxpayers by lowering the rate on the three lowest tax brackets, but then we're also removing the surtax. When you actually add the surtax in as well, all four existing tax brackets will see a reduction in the amount of money that they are paying.

We will be introducing a new tax rate that imposes the same tax on a person's income as the *Income Tax Act* imposes on businesses that take the corporate form. That's for people whose incomes are \$500,000 or greater in a calendar year.

We are going to lower taxes across the board for Yukoners. We're going to remove the surtax, which really is a tax on a tax. What has happened is the fact that this amount has been the threshold and the rate has been fixed for years and, as people make more money, what we've seen is it isn't only the high-income earners who are now paying a surtax. In

fact, people who have an income greater than \$82,000 are also now paying the surtax, so we're removing that surtax. It's old, it's antiquated, it's confusing and not necessary.

We're also going to be making changes to the child fitness tax credit. We do mirror the federal government. In 2014, they had gone from \$500 to \$1,000 for the 2014 tax year. In 2015, they have made the change from a non-refundable credit to a refundable credit. This government continues to support and deliver programs — social-based programs and subsidized sports and recreation — throughout the territory. There are the childcare subsidies, there's the children rec fund — I believe the rec fund is probably about a quarter of a million dollars a year — the low-income family tax credit and, of course, the child tax credit as well.

What we will be doing is making this fitness tax credit refundable, meaning that those people who would not pay tax will still be able to get a refund on the investment in the child fitness tax. That, Mr. Speaker, ensures that all people will be able to benefit from a modified child tax credit.

We're also, as we heard members on this side talk about, enhancing the Yukon child tax benefit, so the cost to the government for the Yukon child benefit for 2015 — we're going to estimate it at approximately \$1.4 million. We're increasing the benefit and the threshold by the cost of living, and we're estimating that the additional cost for a full fiscal year is going to be almost half a million additional dollars that we are reinvesting back into Yukoners.

Here's just one example that I think sort of highlights what kind of impact this will have. If you have a single parent who has three children and is earning \$50,000 a year, they will save \$817 a year between changes to the tax credit and to the Yukon child benefit. That's \$817 in that parent's pocket to make those decisions that are best for their family. I think that is really the fundamental difference that we're talking about between the Yukon Party and the parties opposite, the parties opposite who are very willing to tax and spend — give us your money and we'll decide how to spend it. We know what's best for you.

The Yukon Party government disagrees with that ideology that we heard about. Of course, they feel that they should determine — and they know what's important for our citizens, and so we should just give them the dues that they deserve or the taxes and they will endeavour to spend that money. We believe that putting as much money back in the pockets of Yukoners to allow them to make the decisions of what's important for them is the right way to go. We are very proud of the social safety network that we have and the investments that we make on the social side of the ledger, and we will continue to do so, but, because of that strength that we've had in our fiscal management and the fact that Yukoners trust this government to be able to look after their money, we're able to now, after 12 years of no tax increases — I think we have to remember that since 2002, not a tax increase — give money back to Yukoners on top of a record capital budget where we are investing in infrastructure that is important.

It's a bit ideological, I think. Where the opposition thinks when they can increase taxes that just will increase the amount of money they have to do whatever it is that they feel is important for citizens. The reality is that when you increase taxes, people have less money in their pocket to spend so they spend less money. That means there is less money for business as well. If business has less money, people are spending less money, there are less people working in business as well because businesses don't have as much money. What you do see ultimately will be a decrease. We don't believe in that philosophy. We believe that by keeping as much money in the pockets of citizens and of businesses, we will promote the growth of our private sector economy. I think fundamentally that is the significant difference between us and the parties opposite.

It is disappointing to hear how reliant the other parties are on the territorial formula financing. We rely on that money and it's necessary to ensure that we have an equal level of service for an equal level of taxation, but our vision and goal is to become a net contributor to this country and I think that is the fundamental difference, because ultimately we don't know where that money will go. We know what the Liberal Party did in the 1990s. They did balance their budget, but they did it on the backs of the provinces and the territories. Over a 10-year period, Prime Minister Chrétien and Finance Minister Paul Martin eliminated \$2 billion from Yukon and made major cuts to education. We had doctor and nurse shortages for a generation as a result of those changes.

I know that the Liberal leader doesn't like to hear this and wants to talk over top, but the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that we don't know with certainty what will happen with the territorial formula financing in the future. Perhaps we know what the federal Conservatives have done over that time, but we don't know what will happen in the future. The Liberal government reduced transfers to provinces and territories from 17 percent of the federal budget when Mr. Chrétien took office to a low of 13 percent in 1999-2000.

The Conservative government restored the historical funding arrangement by rapidly eliminating the fiscal imbalance that all provinces and territories were concerned about.

Since 2003-04, the federal government has increased transfers to all provinces and territories by approximately 99 percent. Yukon's transfers during that same period increased by only 77 percent. However, contrary to the assertions by the Leader of the NDP, Yukon's own-source revenue grew an impressive 122 percent in that same time period — contrary to her assertions that our own-source revenues are going down.

The territorial formula financing grant has grown over time. However, in the past 11 years, our grant — as a percentage of the total revenues — has dropped significantly. That is the reality. NDP math — I don't understand it.

Mr. Speaker, there really is a fundamental misunderstanding as well, as I mentioned, about the difference between debt and deficit. Because a government spends more in one year — if their expenses exceed their revenues — that creates a deficit for that fiscal year, which, over a long period

of time, is not healthy, but there has been a case — only one year in the past decade, while Yukon Party has come into government — where that has in fact occurred.

The reality is that, because of the strong fiscal management, we have net financial resources. We have money in the bank, so, if in fact you do spend more in one year — if you spend \$20 million more in one year than what your revenues were but you have \$200 million in the bank — you had a deficit that year but you still have money in the bank.

That is, sadly, coming from leaders of political parties — to not understand the difference between a deficit and a debt. This government is proud of where we are today, from where we were back when the NDP and the Liberals had power in the late 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. We have, since that time, been strong fiscal managers and implemented policy to encourage the development of the private sector. We have seen an increase in population of over 20 percent and diversification in our economy. The work is not done. We have more work to do.

I am proud of the members of this government and the focus that we have, not only on the short term but also on the long-term objectives, like hydro projects, diverse fibre projects — strategic investments that will ensure that we are ready to be successful in the future and ensure that we create the job opportunities for Yukoners so that they and their families can remain here in the Yukon.

We're proud of our accomplishments, we're proud of this budget and we're proud to be putting more money back into the pockets of Yukoners, because Yukon can continue to be the best place to live, work, play and raise a family.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward this motion for debate. Part of our job as legislators is to look at our fiscal system to see how we can improve it and to see what we can do for the benefit of all. I'm glad that, at least on paper, the Yukon Party government is willing to examine options and to consider options.

It's no surprise to Yukon businesses and Yukon citizens that they need certainty. They need to know what they can expect. They need to plan. That's why it's important that our taxation system, our capital projects and our operation and maintenance budgets are examined carefully and we look at them to see what risks are entailed, to see what possibilities there are and to see where we can go.

It's important, as the Member for Watson Lake said, that we start to examine options. It's important that these be debated on the floor of the House; that we consult with the people who are going to be affected. There's a lot of concern among Yukon citizens and Yukon businesses and Yukon industry that the Yukon Party government is making decisions behind closed doors and that they're making decisions based on an election cycle, rather than on common sense and business sense.

It isn't a laughing matter; it's very concerning. I've heard from businesses. We need to be able to plan and today the Member for Klondike raised a very valid concern, perhaps one

that hadn't been considered. Rather than take that and include it in our thinking, it was rejected.

While I support this motion as written, I'm concerned that decisions have already been taken and made that have narrowed the options that we can consider. Just last year, the Premier stood and talked about what an enviable position the Yukon and Alberta were in — Yukon and Alberta, the only two jurisdictions in Canada with positive surpluses. I read in the *Edmonton Journal* today that oil prices have plummeted to below \$50 a barrel and the province famous for low taxes is facing a \$7-billion budget deficit. It went on to quote the current Premier of Alberta as he headed into an election: "We understand that some choices are unpopular...And I...we understand — that no one wants to pay more...But we have made the realistic choices. Any meaningful plan has to contain hard truths".

There's a lesson for us there. Profligate spending and randomly cutting taxes in a run-up to an election is not necessarily wise or prudent. This Yukon Party government continues to take the easy road: ad hoc projects with little regard for risks, planning and sustainability. In report after report, the Auditor General has noted the need for more risk assessment, strategic planning and responsible building.

We in the Yukon, like Alberta, depend on a single source for the majority of our funding. The Premier noted this. As long as we rely on federal transfer payments and as long as we rely on other hard-working Canadians, we will not be economically secure. Yet our transfer payments from Canada have increased dramatically at the same time our own source revenues have decreased as a portion of total revenues. Contrary to what the Premier would have Yukoners believe, Yukon is farther from becoming a net contributor to the Canadian economy than we were before the Yukon Party came to power. In fact, dependence on federal transfers has grown under the Yukon Party government's direction. Own-source revenues have decreased, confirmed in the consolidated Public Accounts consolidated financial statements and are available to those who wish to read them.

The federal government, on whom we depend, is billions of dollars in debt and is currently struggling to eliminate their annual deficit. I do understand, as does the Leader of the NDP, the difference between a deficit and a debt.

The federal government has created an extractive, resource-based economic system, primarily driven by fossil fuel extraction. It should be no surprise that the federal government on whom we depend for our transfer payments is experiencing a boom-bust cycle. Norway recognized this as a problem and ensured that their revenue was not dependent upon cyclical revenues for their operating and capital costs. They ensured that their tax regime was realistic.

Are we going to end up like Alberta and their famous bumper sticker, which I have edited for the Legislature: "Please, God, give me another oil boom and I promise not to waste it this time"?

We have been the beneficiaries of hard-earned federal tax money. It is our responsibility to use that money responsibly to promote the well-being of Yukon citizens, businesses and

industry in a prudent and responsible manner — to pay our fair share through our entrepreneurship and our industry, and pay a fair portion of our earnings to the benefit of all.

I am heartened to see the motion proposed by the Member for Watson Lake urging the government to examine options. The NDP believes in responsible fiscal governments. We support careful and reasoned exploration and evaluation of policy measures to support a strong and inclusive Yukon economy where no one is left behind. It is our hope that this motion will result in a careful consideration of government's role in our economy.

Our concern is that this government is committing itself to cutting taxes during a time of economic uncertainty in the last quarter of this legislative rotation as a sort of desperate Hail Mary, last-ditch effort to stimulate our stagnating economy. Now is not the time to use Canadian money as election fodder. Now more than ever we need a government willing to make the hard choices that will be necessary to move from dependency toward an independent, diversified, self-sustaining economy. Now is the time to assess the risks and to do prudent, long-term planning.

Where is the Yukon government's long-term plan 10 years hence for our children? What are we setting them up for?

Again, will we end up like Alberta, a notorious low-tax province, now faced with hard times — the inevitable bust phase of boom — having to cut spending for the future, cutting their spending in education, in health and social services, in community infrastructure and services? These are services that ensure all Yukon citizens have a fair shake in life, so that they can live and contribute to our society with dignity.

As noted in many Auditor General's reports on the Yukon Party, the Yukon Party government has either been unwilling or unable to assess the risks, do the planning and make the responsible difficult decisions that are necessary to move forward in a fiscally responsible manner.

The NDP supports the gathering of evidence and performing a reasoned and balanced analysis to determine whether or not, and to what extent, the Yukon Party government's proposal to cut taxes and reduce Yukon's own-source revenue is a fiscally responsible decision that will yield positive net benefits to the economy and to Yukoners, and that these benefits will be shared equitably among all levels of income.

In the meantime, we recommend restraint, robust strategic planning, and the coordination of capital budget implementation with local industry, suppliers and contractors to ensure the massive amount of territorial public dollars being injected into an unprecedented capital rollout will maximize local benefits and sustain, rather than deplete, our territorial resources.

We agree that the government should examine options, but we think the issue of taxation rates needs greater debate than just suggesting all rates should be lowered. It is time for the Yukon Party government to think of Yukon's future, to rethink their cynical pre-election spending binge, to rethink

their poorly thought-out pre-election tax cuts and to consider options, to make the hard choices, to show leadership and truly put Yukon on the path to long-term, sustainable prosperity.

I would like to express again my disappointment at the outright rejection by the Premier and his caucus of the amendment proposed by the Member for Klondike. I am not speaking to the amendment, but the principle contained. It was simply a collegial offering by an opposition member to help this Legislative Assembly fulfill our obligations set out in First Nation self-government agreements. The Premier's harsh reaction to the amendment was surprising and disappointing.

This is not the first time that this Yukon Party government has proposed to make legislative amendments that do not respect the provisions of Yukon self-government or land claims agreements. As the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Member for Klondike both pointed out, the amount of money is not the issue. The fact is the Yukon and self-governing First Nations agreed in section 13.5.4 of the self-government agreements that where Yukon reasonably foresees that a Yukon law of general application — which the tax law is — which it intends to enact may have an impact on a law enacted by the First Nation, the Yukon shall consult with the First Nation.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: In spite of the member's assertion that he was not speaking to the amendment, I believe he has gone beyond that and is now speaking at length to the amendment. You had an opportunity when the amendment was on the floor to speak at that time. You chose not to, so could we get back on track on to the main motion please? Thank you.

Mr. Tredger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Considering that this was just brought forward, the reference to the First Nation governments I would hope was an oversight and the fact that we are debating it — and I'm speaking to the general principle of the debate — when we rush through something, we often don't know all of the consequences. That is why we're having this kind of debate. This kind of oversight by this government is unfortunate. It could have been an easy win and a bridge to First Nation self-government and it would have been much easier for me to support this motion.

I would like again to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing it forward and thank you.

Speaker: Does any other member wish to be heard on the motion?

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.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion No. 896 agreed to

Motion No. 894

Clerk: Motion No. 894, standing in the name of Mr. Elias.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use the 2015-16 budget to make Yukon the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: If it hadn't been for that 2015 budget part, I would have had to take this one off because it already is the best place.

Mr. Elias: I concur, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I'm honoured to rise today in support of Motion No. 894, urging the Yukon government to use the 2015-16 budget to make the Yukon the best place to live, work and raise a family.

This government believes in Yukoners. We believe that Yukon is the best place to live in Canada and it can be made even better. I would like to use this opportunity to speak directly to the 20th anniversary of the first four of the Yukon final agreements and self-government agreements and how I see them contributing to this motion.

On February 14, 1995, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Teslin Tlingit Council, the Na Cho Nyäk Dun and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation led the way. The foresight, sacrifice, compromise and perseverance shown during the 20 years leading up to those agreements was truly extraordinary and their vision of self-governance is an example to all of us as we strive to make Yukon the best place to live in Canada, to work and raise a family.

I recently spoke to my constituents and to the new Vuntut Gwitchin chief and council, and I said to them that when we

speak of governing ourselves, what does that really mean? To me, it means we are in charge of our own destiny and that our future is ours to shape. I believe it also means that when anyone looks to north Yukon to do business, they view the Vuntut Gwitchin government as the resident government to partner with.

I am proud of how far the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation has come since 1994. Our future looks bright, but it also looks very challenging. There is so much yet for us to accomplish. A hundred years from now, our children may be studying our Vuntut Gwitchin heritage and asking: Why were certain leaders able to inspire and mobilize so many of our people to achieve the things we have achieved, and how did they achieve what they achieved? I believe it is by partnering with other orders of government, being solution-oriented and working for our citizens to become healthier, better educated, more secure, better equipped to be strong players in the north Yukon economy and to secure environmental sustainability, and to do this we must work together.

I am proud to be a part of this government, which is partnering with our Vuntut Gwitchin government to deliver on these things, not only for my community and my constituents, but for all communities and all people across the Yukon, and I'll expand on that a sentiment a bit now.

Mr. Speaker, this is the largest capital budget in Yukon history and it is about putting Yukoners to work. I support that vision 100 percent. This government knows that the time is right to invest in public infrastructure in all of our Yukon communities. The Dawson City residents will see the replacement of the McDonald Lodge. They will see their water systems being upgraded. The Eagle Plains area will see rehabilitation and erosion control work on the Dempster Highway. Beaver Creek will see their fire truck replaced. In Destruction Bay, the Destruction Bay Health Centre will receive much-needed maintenance and renovation and their school will get a fresh coat of paint. The St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction will receive a replacement of their underground fuel tanks. They will see investments in their water reservoir and pump station. The Carmacks waste-water plant will be upgraded. The citizens of Carmacks will witness a partnership with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation to develop geothermal energy. The fire hall in Carcross will be replaced. The RCMP detachment in Faro will be replaced and the improvements to their pumphouse will be completed. In Mayo and Pelly Crossing, their water, sewer and road infrastructure will get upgrades.

These are just some of the investments that this government is making in Yukon communities. They are not merely upgrades for the sake of upgrades. This is about putting Yukoners to work, making our communities stronger, safer, healthier and more prosperous. This budget also brings significant tax relief to Yukon families, and, as Donna Summer sang so eloquently, we know that Yukoners work hard for their money and that they deserve to keep as much of that money in their own pockets.

That is why we are amending the Yukon *Income Tax Act* and regulations to revise the personal income tax structure to

reduce the burden on taxpayers, significantly increasing the Yukon child benefit, increasing the political contribution tax credit and mirroring the Yukon's children's fitness tax credit with the federal children's fitness tax credit.

In addition, through this budget we are also improving regulatory and permitting regimes, promoting cooperative governance, partnerships and reconciliation agreements with Yukon First Nations, promoting partnerships with Canada, our sister territories and the provinces, and promoting community development and a clean environment for generations to come.

This is my ninth year serving as the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin, and it is a pleasure and an honour to do so. All of my constituents know that I care for each and every one of them, and I thank them for their guidance and direction over my tenure.

When I reflect on our work here and my work here on behalf of my constituents in the context of this budget and the 20th anniversary of the first four, I feel hopeful and confident about our territory. But our Yukon story didn't end when we signed those first four final agreements that belong to us all. It was only the beginning of the implementation path. Now we are well on our way. We have 20 years of history of truly working in partnership, government to government, but you know what, Mr. Speaker? Working in partnership doesn't always mean seeing eye to eye on every issue. It means that when we do disagree, we resolve our differences respectfully, in good faith, with professionalism, tact and diplomacy. As Yukoners, we all want the same thing. We want our people to become healthier, better educated, more secure and better equipped to be strong players in the Canadian economy.

When we say that we want Yukon to be the best place in Canada to live, work, play and raise a family, we are not making up pretty words. This is about the path and vision to making Yukon a net contributor to Canada. Relying eternally on federal transfer payments, on the sweat of other hard-working Canadians, will not do. This not the legacy I want to leave my children and their children. I want us to embrace our traditional values and be self-sustaining like we have always been. I want our children to take full advantage of all the opportunities provided to them while holding true to our values.

We have a moral obligation to take economic responsibility and environmental sustainability for ourselves. This is the honourable path. It is fuelled by the same spirit that has sustained and strengthened Yukoners as they negotiated our final agreements. It is the same spirit that carried us as we sought and achieved devolution. This government is clear in our aim, and we make no apologies for it. We are moving forward together on the path toward a stronger and more prosperous Yukon.

There is actually a saying in Gwich'in about that. In Gwich'in, we call this [*Member spoke in Gwich'in. Text unavailable.*] That is what it means. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi' cho and merci beaucoup.

Ms. Moorcroft: Today we are being asked to debate government talking points, which have been introduced as a motion in this House.

The motion before us today is not a motion of substance. It is a motion asking the House to debate the Yukon Party election slogan. It reflects a disrespect for this Assembly and for the Yukon public.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Elias: I believe the language used by the opposition member with regard to the word "disrespectful" — as I was the only member who spoke before her, she used my words as being disrespectful. I believe that's in contravention of Standing Order 19(i), using abusive or insulting language that's going to create disorder. I don't see anything that I've said as being disrespectful and I ask for an unqualified retraction of that statement from the member opposite and an apology to this Assembly.

Speaker: Opposition House Leader, please.

Ms. Stick: I heard my colleague provide her opinion on the actions of the government and not necessarily targeting the colleague across the way, so I don't believe this is a point of order. This is the opinion of my colleague, and this is debate in the Legislature.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I'm going to have a look in Hansard tomorrow to confirm exactly the phraseology that was used, but the word "disrespectful" in the way I heard it right now — and recall it — referred to this motion in general and bringing it forward to this House. All members of this House — and I mean all members — are permitted to bring forward any motion that they choose to bring forward. To say that it is disrespectful of the House in the context of the motion, I believe is actually wrong. The member is permitted to bring forward their motion the way they word it, and all motions and all ideas before this House are worthy of debate.

I would ask the member to refrain from using the word in that context and find another way of stating your disagreement with the motion.

Ms. Moorcroft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be guided by your ruling.

As election slogans go, the Yukon Party could do worse, but they seem to have missed that it's already taken. Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Iowa and an Ontario Progressive Conservative candidate have all said that their jurisdictions are the best place to live, work and raise a family.

I want to debate substance, not the Yukon Party campaign lingo, which is appearing more and more often in government press releases, as well as the members' opposite comments in the House on a daily basis.

At the outset, I want to thank the residents of Copperbelt South for the honour and privilege of representing them in this

Legislative Assembly. Copperbelt South is a large and diverse riding. I enjoy speaking with constituents and hearing their views so I can better represent their needs and interests. I want to thank them for their time and for their conversations, whether they are supporters or not, and in fact whether or not they choose to vote.

One common resource through Copperbelt South is the Alaska Highway, which runs through that riding. The government's proposal to twin the Alaska Highway from the Carcross Cut-off to the Mayo Road Cut-off has finally been released publicly and it is generating a lot of comment. I will have more to say about that in a few minutes.

The flagship project for the Yukon Party in this budget is the 300-bed seniors megaplex in Whistle Bend at a cost of over \$300 million. That's not what Yukon seniors or their families want to see. The real priority is for home care and people aging in place. That's what the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, the Registered Nurses Association, and the Canadian Medical Association among others support. For this project, for this new 300-bed facility, local contractors are concerned that they will not be able to bid. We'd like to know how the government will evaluate whether using B.C. Bid will represent value for money.

My colleague, the Member for Riverdale South, spoke yesterday about the Sarah Steele proposed replacement building for alcohol and drug treatment, which is budgeted at \$1.2 million for this year. There have been eight addenda to the tender package since it was issued. This is not a sign of good advanced planning, but we don't expect to see good advanced planning from the Yukon Party.

The most obvious difference between the Yukon Party and the Official Opposition NDP is in our respective approaches to budgeting. The Yukon NDP do needs assessments first, consult the community and interested parties first about needs and problems, listen to what the public has to say and then invest in services and infrastructure. That's a good project management approach — contrast the Yukon Party that fails to consider evidence prior to decision-making, ignores public comment when they do consult, and mismanage the capital projects they undertake.

Let me give a few examples: Whitehorse Correctional Centre — overbudget, a slew of change orders throughout the entire construction period; building a floorplan for an arrest processing unit that, oops, was too big and they had to cut it back because they couldn't afford to build the larger one; there are the Watson Lake and Dawson City hospitals, overbudget and constructed with borrowed money that mortgages our future generations; F.H. Collins, shovels in the ground for a photo opportunity for the 2011 election campaign before they threw out the plans and purchased a design from Alberta; and the Dawson City waste-water treatment plant that still doesn't work. Here's a more recent example: the new LNG plant facility is running at \$6.4 million above the estimate provided to the Yukon Utilities Board confirmed by Yukon Energy Corporation president Andrew Hall in February. The new LNG plant has gone from \$36.5 million to

now \$42.9 million. I guess we'll just have to wait and see what the total cost is.

The NDP believe it's important to make the Yukon more self-sufficient because economic self-sufficiency is the best path to economic strength. Now let's look at what Yukon Party budgets will show us. The reliance on Ottawa has increased. The transfer payments from Ottawa to the Yukon are now over \$1 billion per year. It's easy to spend money when you have that kind of money to spend. But the budgets have been going up and the management of those budgets is not sound.

What about the Yukon Party approach to legislation? In the last sitting, we passed amendments to the *Marriage Act*, but a recently appointed marriage commissioner said the act posted on the Department of Justice web page is still the 2002 act, which says a marriage commissioner can charge \$5. So I wonder: Will the new 2014 *Marriage Act* be proclaimed before the 12 weekends of summer that are the prime wedding dates under the midnight sun are behind us?

Mr. Speaker, I do want to acknowledge the hard work of government officials in completing the consolidated statutes on the legislative website, which is maintained by legislative council office and the Queen's Printer. It's good to see that there. However, the Yukon Party government is not as diligent. It took the Yukon Party 10 years to finally bring forward a whistle-blower act and again, the new *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* has not yet been proclaimed. The new *Landlord and Tenant Act* still has not come into effect, leaving tenants without any protections or recourse.

On off-road vehicle safety, the Yukon Party government has responded to some of the recommendations from the select committee, but the government appears to be against safety. They weren't willing to require ATV owners to wear a helmet except on public roads.

The Yukon Party Cabinet seems reluctant to set aside protected areas. Each year, we see extensive areas of sensitive habitat destroyed and the Minister of Environment fails to act as he's legally obligated to do.

The Yukon Party refused to call a public inquiry into the carbon monoxide poisoning deaths of five citizens in a Porter Creek rental home. The *Oil-Fired Appliance Safety Statutory Amendment Act* amends three other acts: the *Building Standards Act*, the *Electrical Protection Act*, and the *Fire Prevention Act*. These amendments don't go far enough to address the problems and there are still no regulations. Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't call that "the best place to live".

The Yukon Party likes to boast about its successive largest capital budgets in history. Of course it's easy to spend money when the transfer payments are now over \$1 billion, but this government doesn't spend its money wisely. I will use the Alaska Highway corridor twinning project for an example here. This morning in Question Period, I asked the minister whether the government would look at other options than a \$202-million expenditure. We don't yet have the future growth needed. The population living in the Whitehorse area is nowhere near approaching 50,000 people. Commodity

prices are down and the resource extraction industry is again in decline. So that doesn't support the magnitude of that project at this time.

The business owners along the Alaska Highway corridor have also expressed their concern about the size of this project. In front of the airport, it would include turning lanes, bypass roads, shoulders and meridians — and the business owners are opposed to this plan, saying it's too complicated and too costly. I think the government needs to look at addressing those concerns and consider more affordable scenarios.

There are other problems, like rerouting neighbourhoods away from the hospital, concerns about access to pedestrian and bicycle trails. I wonder how many properties will be appropriated under this plan and what the anticipated cost of that is. Have businesses located within the right-of-way been told to move? Is the airport maintenance shed going to be moved and, if so, what will that cost and when will that be done? How will construction be managed to limit disruptions to businesses and the driving public? Is the 2011 highway survey document the basis for the plan, or are there other studies of high-collision areas that are less than four years old?

I asked the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works to table in this House the safety work that was done by an engineering firm to look at the Alaska Highway corridor for the last three and a half years, and the minister steadfastly refused to provide that information to the House. It was only released last month, at the same time they released their consultation plan for 60 days. It's a very complex plan; there's a lot of detail; there are a lot of documents. I don't understand why they now want to rush so quickly. I have asked the minister if they have plans to proceed with a tender, no matter what the public says. That would be consistent with the approach that has been taken to consultation in other areas.

On the Alaska Highway near the airport, the road is falling apart. The paint is wearing off. I've heard a lot of people saying that windshields are getting busted. I would like to know if the government is going to ensure the contractor repairs the damage on this section of the Alaska Highway and how much it will cost to repair the damage.

Whether or not the government does have a tender ready to go on May 16, no matter what the public says, I think people are concerned that they shouldn't trust this government when it comes to consultation. Nevertheless, I would urge the government to consider extending that consultation period on the Alaska Highway corridor. I would appreciate too if they could table additional information. Even the 2011 report was based on traffic data that ended in 2009. I'm wondering to what extent the Hamilton Boulevard extension has been included in those information packages.

Again, the flagship project is the 300-bed seniors megaplex at over \$300 million. That is a lot of money that could build a lot of housing options for people.

This spring, the Official Opposition visited 17 communities to hear from Yukon residents about their priorities. We heard many times about the need to diversify

the economy. We heard about the need for food security. There is a premium on access to fresh and healthy food because it has to be shipped. Support for local agriculture improves our food sovereignty and improves good health.

We also heard about the need for land-based treatment programs to help community members who struggle with addictions and who don't necessarily do well in a Whitehorse residential facility. The government has only budgeted \$1 million over four years for land-based treatment. That is obviously not a priority for them, and it fails to meet the need that we heard the public tell us about.

We heard that Yukon government should not be spending its money hiring Bay Street lawyers to fight the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* in court. Rather, the government should respect the land claims agreements and the land use planning process as set out in the agreements. Over and over again, the Yukon Party is making decisions that violate the land claims agreements and force First Nations to take them to court.

A better approach would be to work with First Nation development corporations and recognize them as an integral part of the Yukon economy. A better approach is to have an economic strategy that is linked to a strong community and social strategy, one that that strengthens our local economies and creates opportunities for Yukon businesses seeking out opportunities for diversification.

The government finally has come out with some projects to use up the northern housing trust money that has sat dormant for many years, but they are not investing enough in affordable housing options to meet the needs of our citizens.

I want to turn to the issue of hydraulic fracturing and oil and gas development. The all-party select committee travelled to many communities to hear from the public about their assessment on the risks and benefits of hydraulic fracturing. There was overwhelming concern. There were many people who supported a ban on this controversial and destructive method of extracting oil and gas resources. This budget boasts of the strategic industries development fund project to consider the possibility of building and operating an oil refinery in the Eagle Plains area. That would mean hydraulic fracturing.

One of the most moving experiences that I had as the vice-chair of the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing was to travel to the community of Old Crow and to meet with its citizens on the Vuntut Gwitchin traditional territory.

I want to read into the record just a few highlights from the speakers at that public hearing in Old Crow. One of the first speakers noted that: "Our people still rely heavily on the land for physical and spiritual sustenance, but if it is not healthy, it can no longer help make us as a Gwitch'in people healthy." The land "...gives me a place to be proud of. Seeing it intact and healthy is priceless to me. Just knowing it is healthy is priceless." On hydraulic fracturing: "I don't want to see it anywhere on Vuntut Gwitchin traditional territory or anywhere else in the territory."

Another speaker said that they took the time as a community and the initiative to learn about hydraulic fracturing: “There’s a lot of risk within it, especially with our headwaters. I am not one to be really in favour with it — I mean, not only for our generation, but the next generation and the generations to come.”

“...we go every fall and every spring to hunt and fish and drink water.” With hydraulic fracturing, the chemicals that go into the water are a concern. “I don’t want nothing in our water, but the pureness of itself — what comes from the headwaters.”

“I would like to keep the water fresh for the future, for myself and for all the animals that are out there that we eat also.”

The next speaker said, “I’ve done quite a bit of research on hydraulic fracturing, and I don’t believe it’s safe.” “...we learned...that fracking creates a demand for something called frac sand mining, which is also very destructive to the environment. That’s for the sand that goes into the chemical water mixture to crack open the rock or the shale. As well, that’s very environmentally destructive.”

This speaker travelled to the Horn River Basin and met with the Fort Nelson First Nation and went on to say, “They are losing their hunting grounds. All the traplines in the Horn River Basin are now ruined due to the equipment being used, the seismic, the mulchers, just the general noise and activity going on over there. A lot of those trappers have lost their traplines, as well as their hunting territory. The community has one last spot, which is in the Liard Basin, and they are really trying to protect that, but already seismic is going through there.”

Mr. Speaker, the Liard Basin is where the Yukon Party would like to promote more oil and gas development and potentially hydraulic fracturing.

We have another speaker from chief and council, saying, “Northern Cross has some operations in our traditional territory right now and they say that they are not going to frack, but they have also said a lot of things since 2008, I think it was, when they first came up here. What a lot of us here have had the benefit of seeing is that we’ve been able to see this situation with Northern Cross evolve since the beginning. Their plans were extremely different when they first came here, and now they are different today and their plans are going to be different five to 10 years from now.” “With that type of uncertainty, it is going to be extremely difficult for us to accept something as controversial as fracking in an environment that we hold so dear to our hearts.” “It’s about how all life is connected to water, from the insects to the humans to the animals to trees and plants and vegetation. For that reason, we hold water very dear to our hearts. That’s why it’s something that we’re reluctant to risk.”

“Right now we’re left with one of the most majestic parcels of land in the world. I’m talking about the entire Yukon here, with the mountain ranges and the Yukon River, the wetlands, all the beautiful basins. One of them you’re sitting right at the bottom of right now. It’s gorgeous here. The environment we have is a commodity that we just can’t

afford to risk. At this point, I think oil and natural gas in general is a commodity that’s a lot less important in the grand scheme of things.”

“I think the time is now for us to start looking to other sources of energy. I think that with the advancement of our collective knowledge moving so quickly, it’s not too far-fetched to say that we can start looking in that direction. But for the time being, anyway, the point is that we really need to be careful. This is one of the few majestic pieces of land left. We need to tread softly; we need to make sure we’re making good decisions here.”

Another member of council thanked us for coming to hear their voices and has an extensive background in oil and gas development, working on the oil rigs in Alberta. She concludes that they do not want to see hydraulic fracturing, because “...our biggest concern as Vuntut is the quality and quantity of water. The amount of water used for a single hydraulic fracturing job is enormous. Working on the rigs, I can tell you it would take me a whole day of constant hauling water just for one frack job. That water is contaminated and unusable afterward. That’s a big concern.”

We have an elder who spoke about the Berger inquiry coming through north Yukon in the 1950s and 1960s —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Elias: It seems that the member opposite is reading from the actual hearings from Hansard with regard to the community hearing in Old Crow. I request that she either recognize the people she is quoting or table the document so that members of the public and the Assembly can recognize those people who were speaking there, because the vast majority of them are my constituents.

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

Ms. Moorcroft: On the point of order, yes, I would be happy to read into the record the names of the people who made the remarks. This is an excerpt that I have been quoting from. I did want to make a note — which I hadn’t yet — that the oral hearings for the hydraulic fracturing committee are on the Legislative Assembly web page, under the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing tab, and that does have both the transcripts and the oral testimony.

I will, however, for the three people whose comments I’ve quoted, put those on the record. I did intend to provide this highlighted document to Hansard. Perhaps they could clean it up, with putting the names to the comments.

The first section was from the remarks of Mr. Peter, then of Mr. Josie, then of Ms. Josie, and then of Ms. Bingham, who was at that time a member of council and said that she had worked in Alberta on the oil rigs. I’m now quoting from Mr. Bruce, the elder who first spoke in Gwich’in and then went on to speak in English, and I thank the member opposite for his point of order.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I think you have corrected it so please carry on — but if you could, please put the person's name ahead of the quote. The document is already a public record.

Ms. Moorcroft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Bruce said, "For a long time now, we've had an oil company being involved in this north Yukon since the 1950s and 1960s, until the Berger inquiry came through. A lot of people in Old Crow fought against development for oil and gas, so they talked to the Berger inquiry and they put a moratorium on oil and gas for 10 to 20 years. Now that moratorium is lifted. So now that it's lifted, now we got Northern Cross south of us doing drilling. Like the younger person who talked before — Brandon said oil companies make a decision, say they're going to follow their decision and that's happening, but it's always changing. They come in with a new plan; they don't stick to the plan that they preached to the community about.

"These are the kind of things young people are afraid of for their future generation. Therefore, I call upon the Committee to look toward putting a moratorium on fracking for at least 25 to 30 years so our younger generation that's growing up can deal with this issue for their next generation."

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Schafer spoke to the community about the fact that he was born out on the land at the headwaters of Whistone and that he really cherishes that he was born out on the land — "I was born in a toboggan out on the dog team trail with my parents. So that I cherish very much, and I cherish that land where I was born very much.

"I was born there clean and I'm still healthy and I still want to continue to teach the young generation that's going through transition to a different culture. That is hard to do..."

"We need a strong mandate to kind of monitor development within our area. Like I say, we depend on the land and we depend strongly on the Porcupine caribou herd. That's one of the dangers I always fear — what might happen with the Porcupine caribou herd and the fish habitat also, because of running water from the headwaters."

Mr. Kassi spoke about looking at the developments down south and all the animals and the contamination down there. He said, "...we're really fortunate. We've got migrating animals; we've got migrating fish and birds. They used to have that down in southern Yukon; they don't even have that anymore because of minor developments..."

Mr. Bruce spoke at the end and one of the things that he did was to translate the words of Elder Fanny Charlie who spoke in Gwitchin, and she said — reading the translation: "She doesn't want any involvement with development and fracking and stuff like that. This is for the future generations, for the younger people. She's happy with what she heard mostly young people talking, and that's for their future. She just wishes if this Committee could take in what the young people are talking about, that there be no fracking, no development and oil and gas. That was her comment".

Mr. Speaker, it was deeply moving to hear the youth — the Vuntut Gwitchin youth and the Vuntut Gwitchin elders —

speak about the land that they lived on and their concern for protecting that environment for future generations. I believe we owe that, not just to the Vuntut Gwitchin people, and not just to the Yukon, but to all of humanity and to the earth itself. The trees are alive; the waters are alive; the fish and animals and birds are alive. We as a human species do not have the right to destroy that in the name of a short-lived fossil-fuel economy.

Mr. Speaker, I think that leaves it clear that we in this caucus will not be voting for a budget that boasts of examining the possibility of building and operating an oil refinery in the Eagle Plains area.

The other thing that the select committee heard time and time again is that Yukon people are losing trust in this government. The Yukon Party government just doesn't listen. The Peel fiasco and the government's determination to proceed with hydraulic fracturing, as evidenced in the leaked documents from Energy, Mines and Resources recommending that government proceed with multi-stage hydraulic fracturing, cements the lack of trust in this government.

The Premier's favourite response to being called to account for his failure to adhere to the land claims agreements is to say, "Well, we have bilateral accords." Mr. Premier, there are accords with First Nations and they are called self-government agreements.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. Moorcroft: Sorry — Mr. Speaker, that was a message to Mr. Premier.

Bilateral accords are not the vision that Yukon First Nations and the non-aboriginal population of the Yukon had when we reached those agreements after years and years of negotiations. The vision that many of us shared is one where the non-aboriginal peoples and the First Nations of the Yukon work cooperatively on the management regime for how we develop the Yukon into the future. That's a vision that we share.

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken about some of this government's initiatives using federal transfer dollars, using the public funds of Canadian citizens who pay taxes and support the Yukon. I don't think that that's a good approach. I think that this government's approach is faulty in just looking to spend as much as they can as quickly as they can.

I think that the government's approach is faulty in rushing out and boasting, time after time each year, of the capital budgets that they now have the largest capital budget in history. Good for us, take a look and let's rush in with project after project after project, some unplanned, some ill-considered, some in defiance of the evidence, and see if we can bribe the Yukon public with their money before we call an election —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Elias: The member opposite's characterization of the government bribing Yukoners is clearly in contravention

of the Standing Orders. It is 19(g): imputes false or unavowed motives to another member. Like, seriously?

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: When the Clerks and I review the Blues every morning, we often look at the wordings strictly in how they are presented and there are times when we have had interesting debates on the use of the words, the context, and the implied intent. Often the notion of a motive is missed. In this particular context, I have to say that the use of the word "bribe" is implying that there is a false motive of the government. I am sure that the member can find some other words to use to express her feelings in that direction. I would ask you to rephrase your statement. I will give you a chance to correct it.

Ms. Moorcroft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will conclude then by saying that I believe that it would make the Yukon a better place to live if the government were to choose the approach of consulting with the public, with the community and interested parties about their needs and priorities. If they were to listen to what the public has to say and then act on it and then to invest in services and infrastructure in a way that does respect what they have heard from the public.

Our approach is to reach out to the public and to listen to what they have to say. We're disappointed that this Yukon Party has ceased conducting annual tours of Yukon communities for pre-budget hearings. That was something that was started by the New Democrat government in the past, which this government has gone away from. We've seen time and again that this government does not respect what the public has to say, and I hope that they will, in fact, listen.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing this motion forward. I speak with my constituents often about issues that are important to them, issues such as a healthy economy, including resource extraction, tourism, private sector businesses, the knowledge sector and trades. I consider myself very fortunate to live in a place where the level of care is truly second to none. We are fortunate to have that, not entitled.

I recognize, just for one example, how fortunate seniors are in Yukon. Mr. Speaker, over the last 10 years, your Yukon Party government has increased the budget for home care across the territory by over 350 percent because we on this side of the Legislature believe it is important to keep seniors in their homes and in their communities as long as possible.

Since 2002, your Yukon Party government has increased budgets in mental health services, in services to people with disabilities. We see before us a record-breaking capital budget. We see before us a healthy \$23.2-million surplus. That is an investment in Yukoners.

The budget tabled before us speaks to a healthy economy, and I commend our Premier for this budget and for his remarks last Thursday. The budget speaks to investments in the resource sector. It speaks to investments in the tourism

economy. It speaks to investments in the knowledge sector and trades. Your Yukon Party government continues to make Yukoners its priority.

My constituents and I are pleased to see the investments and the vision in education. The Premier spoke at great length about education in his budget speech. I believe Yukoners appreciate the investment in our young people. This Yukon Party government is committing to Yukoners. We are committing to the youth of today and tomorrow because we believe in them and we believe in their future. I thank the Premier and the Minister of Education for their vision and for their leadership on this file, and I thank the good men and women who work so hard each and every day to deliver our education programs to our children throughout the territory.

The budget tabled before us speaks to the needs of Yukoners, the need to safely travel from one community to another, through investments in road and airport infrastructure, the need for predictability and stability in environmental stewardship, and the need for economic stability and diversity throughout the territory.

We're on the right track, Mr. Speaker. In previous mandates, we have worked to restore the economy. I've talked at great length before on how the economic situation was dire in 2002 when we took office. Yukon was in trouble. People were leaving the territory. The Liberal and NDP governments of the day had collapsed and hope was fading.

Through hard work and deliberate strategic investments, we were able to restore the confidence and investment in the territory. By working together, we were able to do better. We committed to building Yukon's future.

As Minister of Health and Social Services, I was pleased to listen in on the Premier's Budget Address and how we see highlighted a number of departmental initiatives, including the new Sixth Avenue continuing care facility, the new 150-bed Whistle Bend continuing care facility, McDonald Lodge building replacement, the new Salvation Army Centre of Hope facility, transitional housing six-plex for mental health individuals, St. Elias replacement, Sarah Steele Building replacement, the new territorial health investment fund, the MRI and emergency department expansion at the Whitehorse General Hospital, and e-health, just to name a few.

The decision to proceed with infrastructure projects like the Whistle Bend continuing care facility, Sarah Steele, McDonald Lodge and St. Elias building replacements and the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion are all based on the territory's current and projected needs. While they are all significant investments into the future, Mr. Speaker, they will be managed in a fiscally responsible way. The department's mission is to promote, protect and enhance the well-being of Yukon people through a continuum of quality, accessible and appropriate health care and social services, and we are delivering.

We saw our territory continue to grow, even through a difficult global economic crisis that affected millions around the world. That is a testament to solid leadership.

My point is this: We recognize that strong leadership has very tangible, very important consequences. Our government

has made a point of working to rebuild Yukon. Yukoners trust this government to manage the finances in the good times and in the lean times — something the other parties simply cannot say.

Our government is working to make Yukon the best place to live, work, play and raise a family — to make Yukon the best place to live. The Premier noted that this government believes and has a desire to make Yukon a net contributor to Canada. The more revenue we generate locally, the greater flexibility we have in responding to emerging pressures and needs.

As the Minister of Health and Social Services, I am reminded on a daily basis of the demands on government to provide services and programs. If we are ever going to have any realistic hope of providing the kinds of services that so many of us look for, then we are going to need steady, reliable, own-source revenue streams to fund those particular programs.

To do that, we are investing new money in Yukon and reducing our tax burden. The new money is the \$1.367-billion budget before us, of which \$312 million is capital. We are investing \$1.4 million for the enhanced Yukon mineral exploration program. We are allocating \$3.5 million to extend the interim electrical rebate that provides residents with an annual saving of \$319 per year. We are spending \$531,000 this year of the total \$2 million from Canada's Northern Wellness Approach. In fact, I joined our MP just yesterday to make this announcement, on behalf of the Minister of Community Services, at Golden Horn Elementary with the grade 3 class and representatives from RPAY. These funds will build capacity at the local level and promote healthy, active living across our territory.

People will always need medical attention for reasons beyond their control. Some people are going to have broken bones, experience illness or develop conditions, regardless of their lifestyle choices. While I realize all that, I am convinced that many Yukoners would feel better, would be healthier, and would delay or avoid altogether some of their medical situations if we made better lifestyle choices. Whether it's smoking, excessive drinking or a sedentary lifestyle, Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe that we need to do more than to tell people it's simply a bad choice. I think that we have a role to play in providing healthy, positive alternatives.

It is because I believe that we need healthier, positive options for people that I support our government's efforts to build a new sports complex. We announced this project a year ago and we're continuing to work on it. I believe investing in facilities that support healthy lifestyle choices is both the right thing and the responsible thing to do.

Jumping from health care to infrastructure, I'm pleased to see that we have \$200,000 per year for three years to enhance our palaeontology program in Dawson. I can't imagine how the MLA for Klondike could possibly vote against this program. It was disappointing to see that the only Liberal member in this Legislative Assembly chose not to speak to the budget, chose not to voice his support or his thoughts on O&M and capital projects, particularly in his own region of

Klondike. I have a question for the member opposite. I would like to know how the Liberal leader feels this is a good representation of his constituents.

Mr. Speaker, having industry and government work cooperatively makes all kinds of sense. This to me is the way the system should work. Having a good working relationship between the miners and the scientists is truly in everyone's best interest.

I'm also pleased to see \$775,000 to design and begin construction of a paleo facility in Dawson. I can't imagine how the MLA for Klondike could possibly vote against this program, let alone pass up the opportunity to speak to projects like this that will employ his constituents.

As the Premier has said on a number of occasions, government can provide the foundation of infrastructure that businesses and corporations need in order to grow the economy. This is just one reason I support the \$1.3 million for the planning study of the Whitehorse corridor section of the Alaska Highway. I would like to extend my thanks to the current and previous minister and the officials in the Department of Highways and Public Works for the incredible amount of work done on that project to date.

Mr. Speaker, we're investing \$9.73 million to reconstruct the remaining unimproved sections of the Campbell Highway. We're investing three-quarters of a million dollars to restore and rehabilitate the Dempster Highway.

As I looked at this budget, I thought of people in my riding of Porter Creek South who would be working because of the \$13.5 million for maintenance and upgrading of government buildings. We're investing \$11 million in technology infrastructure, of which \$4.8 million is for e-health. These investments are significant and will have long-term benefits for Yukoners.

When I was the Minister of Tourism and Culture, one of my priorities was to do my part to help explore, establish new or expand existing markets. The competition for the tourism dollar is fierce. Many of us have seen the efforts that other jurisdictions put into marketing. The Yukon has been very successful at maximizing our limited marketing resources by providing focused messages to targeted audiences. We are funding the Yukon Now program that will reach a much broader audience.

We already know how the Member for Klondike ineffectively addresses his concerns about tourism. I had to smile when I read media reports of the Member for Klondike's comments about the Whistle Bend contracts. I am glad he wants to see the work go to local firms. I have this hope that one day his voting record will match his rhetoric. The member likes to say he doesn't support the budget because of what is not in there. You know what? That new care facility that he is all excited about is in the budget, the one that he is worried that is going to go to Outside companies. I challenge the member opposite to back up his words and vote in favour of putting Yukoners to work.

We are increasing the community recreation assistance grants by \$400,000. This will support community recreation, wellness and active living. We are investing \$400,000 for

geotechnical work and detail design for the new sports complex at Whistle Bend. Again, if the members opposite care as much about putting Yukoners to work as we do, I would expect them to support this budget.

We are investing \$500,000 for the development of a new campground at Conrad. We are investing \$76,000 to allow 10 campgrounds to open earlier and close later. I think this is a great move. By linking it to our visitor information centres, I think we will be able to offer Yukoners and our guests a better vacation experience.

Every year more and more Canadians and other visitors discover that Yukon is the best place to play. We market our territory from a position of strength.

As a father of a child with autism, I am very aware of the many benefits we as Canadians and Yukoners enjoy. I am so grateful for the assistance that the Yukon Party government has provided to my family and to so many other families with similar needs over the last decade. Other parents of children with medical needs reach out and share with me the challenges that they face. We talk about the challenges and the triumphs of raising our children and we talk about the additional complications of raising a child with special needs.

When I was first elected, a number of families connected with me. Some were single parents trying to raise a child with special needs. Some were couples, and some, in fact, had more than one child with special needs. For me, a budget that focuses on putting Yukoners to work, a budget based on confidence, is a budget that enables the government to help families that have children with special needs. This is a budget that makes Yukon the best place to raise a family, especially if they have specific medical needs.

This budget has \$22.316 million for the emergency room expansion at the Whitehorse General Hospital. Speaking about the hospital, I would like to note that, with the new MRI, not only did it open on time and on budget, but since the program started to provide patient care less than three months ago, it has operated as planned and conducted nearly 400 scans. This has improved access to care, ensured quicker diagnosis, reduced medical travel and any related costs and patient stress.

We also know that some patients have received an MRI exam in Yukon up to seven months ahead of a scheduled appointment down south. I would like to thank the chair and the CEO of the Hospital Corporation, as well as the Hospital Foundation, and the women and men who work so hard each and every day.

This budget has almost \$9 million from the new territorial health investment fund that will resource chronic disease management, mental wellness, e-mental health supports and Yukon tele-psychiatry programs. This budget continues to provide funds for long-term care, including converting the Oblate Centre into a small continuing care facility as an interim solution. It includes \$26 million for the new continuing care facility at Whistle Bend. We have \$7.8 million for the 15-bed McDonald Lodge continuing care facility in Dawson City.

This budget has money to help shelter and house people with mental health needs: \$13 million for the new Salvation

Army centre; \$659,000 in O&M funding for the transitional housing for persons with mental health conditions; \$4.2 million to rebuild the St. Elias group home — this supports Yukoners with cognitive disabilities; and we have \$21 million for the new Sarah Steele Building.

The Member for Klondike talks a good game about mental health. We're doing more than talking about it. We are investing in services for people with mental health challenges, shelter, housing, treatment and wellness. We're fulfilling our commitments to Yukoners.

In conclusion, I look forward to working with an incredible Yukon Party team, the Premier, my caucus colleagues and our amazing staff, which can deliver on its commitments to Yukoners time and time again. I will be supporting this motion, and again I thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing it forward today.

Ms. White: You know, we all make decisions each and every day and the decision by this Yukon Party debate, a possible tagline for a future election, seems like a curious use of a Wednesday debate day. All one needs to do is type "best place to live, work and raise a family" in your computer search engine and you'll just see how many other jurisdictions have used that very same line. So maybe the Yukon Party isn't moving forward together any longer. But I digress. I seem to have worked up the crowd a bit.

I'm incredibly lucky that I was encouraged to follow a less beaten path when I attended culinary school, and that decision led me to a life of travelling. I've lived in really, really beautiful places. I've lived in great, big cities like Paris, France, or Melbourne, Australia, or London, England. I've even lived in Vancouver, which is a little bit closer to home. At the other end of the spectrum, I've lived in itty bitty towns through rural England and rural Australia, where the nearest laundromat was seven miles away. I've lived in ski towns across western Canada, I followed the snow and I've been really lucky in all those adventures.

My point in all of this is that I've been, I've seen and I've lived in amazing places and, after all of that, all of what I've seen and all the places I have been, I chose to come home. That decision to come back would have surprised my 18-year old self, who could not wait to leave, but being away and seeing and experiencing the world was what showed me how amazing the Yukon truly is and how lucky I am to be able to call it home.

Mr. Speaker, every day since I made that decision to come back, I marvel at the wonders of this beautiful place and the people who have chosen to make it home. In walks around my neighbourhood, in going door to door in our recent territory-wide community tour, Yukon citizens have raised many suggestions that they believe will make Yukon a better place to live. They want their government to complete regulations on what they, as citizens, believe to be important legislation that we've already passed in this House.

On March 27, 2013, the Yukon Party issued a press release that said with the legislation that they had tabled to make changes to the *Building Standards Act*, the *Fire*

Prevention Act, and the *Electrical Protection Act*, the Yukon would be the first jurisdiction in Canada to require carbon monoxide detectors to be installed in all residences, including rental suites, that have a fuel-burning appliance or an attached garage. That same press release said that the required regulatory amendments would be developed that very same summer. We passed those amendments during the Spring Sitting of 2013 — two years ago. Since this grand promise of being the first jurisdiction in Canada to implement these important measures, we've been passed by at least one province.

Now, I don't take issue with not being first, Mr. Speaker; that's not the deal. I take issue with the fact that those regulations haven't yet been completed and these legislation changes designed to save lives still haven't been enacted. That's my problem with that.

We can go even further back. We can go to November 2, 2012 and another press release talking about the tabling of a new residential landlord and tenant bill. You know this is one I'm passionate about because I speak about it all the time. The press release has a long list of attributes, including the creation of a Residential Tenancies Office that will — and I'm quoting from the press release, so if the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin would like to look, it's November 2, under Community Services, and it's the press release. So I'm quoting — this is what the Residential Tenancies Office will do: "...administer the legislation, provide public information and support to clients, hear and settle disputes outside of the courts, and have the ability to make binding decisions on those disputes.

"The new office will also lead the development of minimum rental standards, such as the requirement for carbon monoxide and smoke detectors in all rental units. These regulations will be developed with input from Yukoners in the coming months.

"Pending approval, the new act will come into force in 2013, once the associated regulations have been developed and approved".

That was the summer of 2013 that I was really hopeful we would have enacted the new *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. Here again, we have important legislation that affects people in their day-to-day lives and it hasn't yet been enacted. Today we have a Residential Tenancies Office that is unable to help people in the way it was designed and we're still waiting for regulations. If someone comes in right now to the office and they're desperately trying to navigate through an issue with their landlord or a landlord is trying to navigate an issue with a tenant, we send them to the office and at the office they get handed a stack of paper and in that stack of paper, it has things like how to file a claim in Small Claims Court. That's exactly what we are trying to avoid. We are trying to avoid the courts and we're trying to avoid the stress that that causes on people. I'm looking forward to the time when we have those regulations, because I believe that the Residential Tenancies Office and the idea behind it are critically important for the relationship between landlords and tenants. I look forward to when I send someone to that office

and, instead of them coming back with a stack of paperwork, trying to figure out what the next step is, they actually get the help that the office was designed to do. I'm sure they're looking forward to that as well.

I have some other ideas that would make Yukon a better place to live and so do the people who have suggested it. What about fairness for mobile homeowners? What about legislation that views them as homeowners and not merely as renters?

Last fall, I tabled a petition on behalf of mobile homeowners that speaks to the unfairness of the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* by asserting that mobile homeowners have only the same rights as other renters, like those who rent apartments. I am sure we have talked about this, but a mobile homeowner owns the asset. They own the home. It can be a converted travel trailer from the 1970s that is now permanently affixed to a spot, but the point is that that is that person's kingdom. That is their home. It is no different from my 1958 duplex or other people's homes. You know, home is where the heart is.

So the concern that these homeowners have is that they have no security. They can't plan for the future because they don't know about pad rent increases. Under the new legislation, when it is finally enacted — because it's not yet — every 12 months they can have a pad rent increase. But the problem is they can't plan because they don't know if it's going to be a five-percent increase, or maybe it's going to be a 50-percent increase, and they can't act with that. Mobile homeowners would like to have a conversation with government.

When I was going through with that petition process, Mr. Speaker, I went door to door in every mobile home park in Whitehorse and I spoke to the owners. It is an interesting point right now — I am going to mark my spot so I don't lose it — but I represent three out of six mobile home parks in Whitehorse and two Cabinet ministers represent the other three. I wonder what kinds of conversations they have had with the constituents. These Yukon homeowners want to be treated fairly by government. They want to be able to plan into the future with knowledge of how their pad rent may increase and they want the security of knowing that they won't face unfair evictions.

We go back to my problems with the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* that is not enacted yet, and one is that we have eviction without cause. If you own your asset and it is your home and it is on a piece of land that you rent, you can be told that you have to move. We have heard points made by the previous Minister of Community Services, saying that an existing mobile home won't meet new building codes and he is absolutely right. Then we're telling people that the asset — possibly the biggest asset that they own — is worthless because there is nowhere that it can move, and if it could move there, it wouldn't meet today's standards, so therefore it couldn't be moved there. It is a catch-22. Mobile homeowners are looking for some kind of leadership from government. They want to have a conversation; they want to talk about their reality.

There are other things, Mr. Speaker, that I think would make the Yukon a much better place to live. In reaction to Yukon Party action — or in some cases, inaction — Yukoners have become incredibly involved in environmental advocacy in the last number of years. Since the 2011 election, I have been told time and time again that Yukoners want a government that shows strong environmental stewardship. We all know on opening days, when we have drummers outside and people are making noise, how distracting it is to talk over top of them. Those are Yukoners who are talking about issues that are important to them and they want to be heard by government.

Those hundreds of Yukoners have rallied outside this Chamber. They have done it often in defence of the environment. We have seen them rally behind the Na Cho Nyäk Dun, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Yukon Conservation Society and the Yukon chapter of CPAWS, as they took this very Yukon Party government to court over their unilateral changes to the Peel land use plan — a court case, Mr. Speaker, that they won.

Yukoners will rally again as these same First Nation governments and environmental organizations defend that ruling during the appeal of that win this summer. They will come out in droves again because, despite the fact that they've been coming out for years, they are not exhausted because they still believe passionately in the Peel land use plan that was put forward by the commission.

It has been said by many Yukoners that not forcing First Nation governments into courts to defend their rights would make Yukon a better place to live, and I think I would agree with that statement. We have seen this government make decisions that have affected First Nation governments so strongly that they have taken those decisions to court. I am sure the members across the way know what that record is, but right now First Nation governments are doing really well in the courts. It has been said that if we want to talk about building new relationships, maybe we should stop antagonizing the other governments that we have to work with. I think we have an example right now of Bill S-6. It has been pointed out that it's a federal government issue and we agree with that, but the actions by some have been challenged by others as not being that noble. First Nation governments have said that they again will not only take the Yukon government to court, but also the federal government if those changes are passed without their support.

There are other things that Yukoners have said would make the Yukon an even better place to live. One of those things that they have suggested would be an accountable government. They say that if they had a government that listened to them during consultation processes, they would be even happier to live here than they are already.

We can take that back to the land use planning commission process. We could talk about the seven years of the commission going out to the territory and having conversations with people and coming back with multiple plans, and then finally submitting their final recommended plan. Yukoners will tell you that they believed in the land use

planning process. They believed in the process because they were asked what they thought and they felt like they were being listened to. Then there are people who didn't support the final recommended plan by the Peel Watershed Planning Commission, but what they did support was the democratic process in how it was done. So even if they didn't support the plan itself, they supported the process. They said, "Okay, well, this isn't what I wanted, but I respect the way it done so, all right, I'm in." Then we have the example of a government that didn't like the outcome and rewrote the game rules at the end. We talked about the court case and that win, and I guess we are going to have to wait to see what happens in the appeal, but so far I am going to count it as a win.

The other thing they say when they talk about an accountable government and they talk about consultation and being listened to is — they talk about the process and their concerns around the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing. When the committee was hearing testimony from scientists and industry experts, the gallery was full of people. They came out because they were engaged in the process, and when that select committee ran around the territory, they didn't go to a single community where not a soul showed up. People came out in droves, and I would suggest that, in some communities — like Carcross, for example — the number was surprising because it was far more than 10 percent of the population. We say if that is how many people come out, it has been successful.

These people want to know — these Yukoners who think that consultation is important and actually having the government hear what they say is important. They want to know where the Yukon Party stands on the issue of hydraulic fracturing. So, you know, we've heard different things in Question Period, but it's not Question Period and I have the floor so this is pretty awesome.

So, we've been told different things. We've had the leaked document that talked about how government could proceed forward with — I will choose my words carefully here — the proposed advancement of hydraulic fracturing in the territory. I referenced an e-mail yesterday that talked about a test science project. So all through this, Yukoners are wondering where the Yukon Party is planning on going.

I think there was an indication of where we might end up the first time in a budget speech where the Premier talked about oil and gas as being a pillar of the economy. It was, I think, the first Yukon has ever heard that oil and gas was a pillar of the Yukon economy. Since then, we've seen other changes that are moving us toward this apparent end goal. So Yukoners have told me that if the Yukon Party is so confident in their stance that oil and gas development is where they've been given the mandate to go forward, maybe they should call an election sooner than later.

There are other things that I think would make the Yukon a much better place to live. You know, just prior to getting elected I worked in corrections. My job, my title, was life skills coach, but really what that broke down to was that I was a cooking instructor for the women who were in the correctional facility. I learned all sorts of things when I

worked in corrections and I also learned that any misconception I had before was just that, a misconception. I was really lucky to work with the women who I worked with, but what I got to see is that as they got closer to their leaving date, they became more and more anxious because when they were in this — and this is not the program that is running any more. This was a separate facility that's now the Takhini Haven group home on the old correctional — that's another issue. So women were given this opportunity and this was a program that I think was really effective because it was the women taking care of themselves and each other. They had to cook meals and they had to — they took care of the building, right? I got to hang out and it was really fantastic. But as they got closer to leaving, they got more and more anxious because, right now, we have Kaushee's Place, which is a fantastic asset in the community but it's for women fleeing violence. When women are leaving corrections, they're not fleeing violence at that point. They're not fleeing violence until they're back in a violent situation, which is often what happens. So as they got closer to the leave-by date, they got more and more nervous about what was going to happen to them once they were out.

I talked about this in 2011 in my very first budget response — that I would love to see a place for women leaving corrections, similar to the Adult Resource Centre that the men have an option to go to, because women need a safe place to go to transition to. In that same breath, women also need a safe shelter. Right now, we have a mixed shelter with the Salvation Army but it is not some — well, that's not many people's first choice.

I have I'm sure two and a half minutes to talk about affordable housing, and this is going to be really, really tough to get out. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, a household paying 30 percent or more of its pre-tax income for housing is considered to have an affordability problem.

So I have a question for government. I know we are not going to get an answer right now, but how many people in the territory pay more than 30 percent of their pre-tax income toward housing? I am not talking about social housing; I am talking about rental housing.

We have, I would suggest, an affordable housing crisis still in the territory. We had lots of solutions put forward. We had Lot 262 — remember, Lot 262 was going to change the way government did business. We were going to work together with private industry and we were going to build affordable rental housing, a minimum of 30 units on this piece of land. Well, the bids came in, the government didn't get what they wanted and they cancelled the project. It next came out as Lot 1547: Do whatever you want on this tract of land and we will see what happens. It has been purchased by a church group.

We have all sorts of announcements around northern housing trust money. It is interesting that, in October 2013, the title of the thing is “government calls for affordable housing solutions.” That is where they did a call-out to private industry and they said, “Okay, tell us what you got; let's see

what happens.” They had some uptake and they talked about how after the process, nine had made it through one section, and then they were going to keep going. Then, to the surprise of the three that had been approved, on June 25, 2014, a press release was announced, saying that Carcross and Carmacks were getting affordable housing trust money to build things, but the three in Whitehorse were not.

I think affordable housing is still an issue, and I think, to make the territory a better place, we need to look at affordable rental housing, because not everyone is in a position to own and not everybody needs to be in social housing. There should be choices.

There are so many more things I would like to talk about that would make Yukon a better place. I think electoral reform would be on the top of my list and the diversification of our renewable energy assets. Those are just two more.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I hope government members have taken mine and Yukoners' suggestions to heart and look at making Yukon a better place to live.

Mr. Barr: I am honoured to rise today to speak in this House. I would like to thank the member from Old Crow for bringing forward Motion No. 894.

Before I do, I would like to thank those people in my riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes for their support and the faith they put in me to bring concerns forward in this Legislative Assembly. In the nearly four years since the election, I have had the honour to meet so many of my constituents a number of times and discuss their concerns and the things that affect their families, their lives, their work and their enjoyment of our beautiful Yukon. I thank them for this opportunity.

Before I say anything else, I would like to thank those who have spoken in the House today, especially those who have spoken on this side of the House — I must be honest — my colleagues, who share a difference in our vision — and this vision does come from listening to the people of the Yukon — going out and consulting, spending time with First Nation people who are struggling day to day in their lives, who don't have a place to live, who are living in the communities and in Whitehorse.

I would like to say: Is it the 2014-15 budget or any Yukon Party budget that makes the Yukon the best place to live, work and raise a family? I would say no, Mr. Speaker. The budget, largely from southern taxpayers — sorry, this budget 2015-16 that I'm speaking about. I thank our fearless leader for correcting me.

The budget, largely from southern taxpayers, does have good things: Conrad campground, the visitor information centre, the learning centre in Carcross coming up, the Atlin partnership with CTFN, the new EMS building, new funding structure for rural community centres. What I would like to say about all of those specific ones — and there are more — is that the Conrad campground had to be fought for to be heard by this government, to honour the final agreement that was in place.

Those of us who remember — I notice that some across the way don't like to hear what I'm saying because the truth will set you free. This government's proposal on the Atlin campground was their vision, which, in my opinion, didn't honour CTFN's final agreement — Carcross-Tagish First Nation. It didn't honour the transboundary agreements that still are unsettled with Atlin — partnership. So, as a result there was a stronger relationship built with the Taku River Tlingit and the Carcross-Tagish First Nation, which now, after this government, which in many other cases seems to have to be dragged to — to pay attention to Yukoners and listen to agreements that are in place under the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the final agreements to honour them. We are going to have the Conrad campground happening this year — great — and the new EMS building in Carcross — great. It was an election promise by the prior Yukon Party government to start to build it as the first one, after the other ones, prior to this election.

After people bringing this forward — here we are. Announcement — it is coming forward this year — great. We are still waiting on the community centre in Carcross, which people have been advocating for since — well, I can't count the number of years. I can say this about that one: The elders who have been fighting for this — some have passed on. When will they see this infrastructure?

I know we have heard about all the new infrastructure that has been promised at this point in time by this budget announcement, but we're still missing out on infrastructure that isn't forthcoming. I can also add the Carmacks rink, which is now in disarray for lack of ongoing maintenance. We have another school that's only 10 years old and that kids can't go to in Ross River because of the lack of action by the Yukon Party government. I don't hear —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Barr: It's all good. It's all good.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Barr: Dawson City — I could go on, Mr. Speaker.

What I would like to do is say that there are a lot of Yukoners who have been advocating for these projects. They deserve the credit for their efforts. This motion, this slogan — this notion that it is the Yukon Party's spending that makes the Yukon a special place to this member is self-serving and lacking in humility.

I want to take a step back away from how much credit a government can take for spending the public's money and ask the question —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Order please. The Minister of Justice, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I believe I just heard the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes accuse the mover of the motion, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, of being self-serving and lacking in humility. In my opinion, that's contrary to Standing Order 19(i). I believe that he's using abusive or insulting language in a context likely to create disorder, not to

mention being patently unfair to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

Speaker: Member for Takhini-Kopper King, on the point of order.

Ms. White: I believe that the Member for Lake Laberge misheard what the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes said.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I believe the comment made by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes was directed at the government as a whole and not at the individual member, but I will have a look at the Blues and revise my ruling, if required.

Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, just a word of caution: Watch your words. Make sure they're pronounced clearly so they're understood on the other side.

Mr. Barr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We believe, on this side of the House, that what makes the Yukon a great place to live, work and raise a family is the people — a kind, compassionate society that takes care of its citizens. My riding is full of people who give so much to make the Yukon a better place to live. I want to say thank you to all the volunteers, the EMS firefighters, search and rescue volunteers, and all the local advisory councils, community centres and recreational volunteers who do so much to improve our lives, not only in my riding but all over the territory. It is in the relationships that come from sharing in these endeavours that we find common purpose and common goals that let us know that each other cares and that we want to take time for each other.

I think back to when my colleague for Takhini-Kopper King was talking and think back to LNG as a transitional fuel, remembering the people in Tagish when the Whitehorse Trough and fracking first became a hot topic and how they rose and how that has actually brought so many people together in this territory. We have had a select committee go around. There has been some true consultation, and people were engaged and still are engaged. Those people gathered close to 8,000 signatures in the territory. That's amazing, Mr. Speaker. Along with not wanting our tax dollars spent to further LNG endeavours or fracking, they've come up with many solutions, which include numerous amounts of renewable energy options that we, as the Yukon New Democratic Party, 16 years ago had a vision. It makes me think of where we would be today had those options been fostered here in the territory.

We would be leading. We would be leading and we wouldn't be spending all this time, money and energy on such conflict. We wouldn't be heading to court if we fostered our relationships and listened and worked with each other. We are back, threatening to go to court with Bill S-6.

When I think of the relationships with First Nations and how the government has been proceeding, money could have been put toward a women's transition home from WCC. Money would have been saved or put into Yukoners' pockets by renewable energy options to decrease their energy

bills, year after year after year after year; jobs would be created with training opportunities in our colleges, with skills that are transferrable from the fossil fuel industry.

I was speaking with a contractor just the other day — an electrical contractor — and he was sharing with me the opportunities in our economy if we fostered renewable energy options and started to retrofit solar panels on our homes.

I know that Mount Lorne is pursuing the idea of their community centre having solar panels. We know of the houses and people throughout these last few years who have adapted their homes with solar. They are now putting energy back into the grid. They are making money on what they have invested. I don't hear those things in this budget on a scale that would reduce our footprint here in the territory and lessen the conflict we continually have going to the courts. As I heard from some of the direct speaking from the Member for Copperbelt South — the elders' and youths' testimony is about our children to come; the generations to come, Mr. Speaker.

We have great educators in the Yukon who care about our children and their development. We have childcare workers too. We have a generous Yukon grant for post-secondary students. These things all help, but so does having wonderful neighbours. I think of my neighbours on Crag Lake and I think of the people I know in Dawson City, Watson Lake, Teslin, Mayo, Keno, Haines Junction, Beaver Creek, Teslin, Burwash — have I forgotten any?

I sure hope not — Faro, Ross River, Pelly Crossing, Carmacks — I think I might have got them all. Oh, I'm accused of even having a girlfriend in Ross River, because —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Barr: Yes, there are issues in Ross River that matter to me. There are a few of them and they've been receiving attention by people coming together and there are still more to come, so I'm sure people will still think I have a girlfriend in Ross River.

There are things like the bridge that we see — where was it; do I still have it? It's on one of the handouts from the government — that's now part of the heritage. That was going to be torn down. Now it's being held up. That's great. That's great news. It might not have gone that way.

I really can thank the Yukon Party for bringing people together in that way. I've heard it said you have to look for the good in things and that's the good in a lot of stuff that this Yukon Party has been doing. It has been uniting people against them. However, if that's what you want, then that's what you get. It could be done other ways, Mr. Speaker.

I know that I only have a few more minutes to go. I would like to say that there are so many areas with foster families that need support. I hope that this is recognized as we move forward because these are people who choose to take on issues or areas in people's lives — people in need — because of their compassion. That makes such a difference.

I myself, years ago, was involved in a group home here. I know that many of these foster parents end up adopting some of these children. It's not about the money. However, when we speak about "dues" or "fair exchange", it's not

unreasonable to expect, if you were a foster parent, to receive your money in a timely manner, not four months later or four months behind. Those kinds of things are reasons why our foster parents in this territory are dwindling.

I hope that what I've said today has made some sense. I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing this motion forward. I saw the motion and I began to think about what makes the Yukon such a good place to live, to work, to raise a family. It's not the money we spend or the money we have, but it's our relationships. It's the dignity and respect that we accord each other. It's part of being part of a team.

I remember, as a principal and a teacher, we would meet challenges.

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

Debate on Motion No. 894 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following document was filed April 8, 2015:

33-1-108

Yukon Outdoor Sports Complex, letter (dated March 9, 2015) from Hon. Currie Dixon, Minister of Community Services, to His Worship Dan Curtis, Mayor of Whitehorse (Dixon)