



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 251

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33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, April 11, 2016 — 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

CABINET MINISTERS

| NAME | CONSTITUENCY | PORTFOLIO |
|------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Hon. Darrell Pasloski | Mountainview | Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office |
| 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 |

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party

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| Darius Elias | Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin |
| Hon. David Laxton | Porter Creek Centre |
| Patti McLeod | Watson Lake |

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

New Democratic Party

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| Elizabeth Hanson | Leader of the Official Opposition Whitehorse Centre |
| Jan Stick | Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South |
| Kevin Barr | Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes |
| Lois Moorcroft | Copperbelt South |
| Jim Tredger | Mayo-Tatchun |
| Kate White | Takhini-Kopper King |

Liberal Party

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| Sandy Silver | Leader of the Third Party Klondike |
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, April 11, 2016 — 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 now proceed with the Order Paper. Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Canada's victory at Vimy Ridge. The Battle of Vimy Ridge took place on April 9 to 12, 1917. Today, across our great country, flags are at half-mast to honour the 99th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Today is a day to recognize all of Canada's First World War veterans for their significant contribution, their courage and their sacrifice.

Although Canada came together as a Confederation in 1867, many look to the battle for Vimy Ridge — some 50 years later, and an ocean-removed from our country — as the moment when Canada truly became a country.

The battle for Vimy Ridge, which began on April 9, is the moment where Canadian bravery and valour led to the tremendous victory for the entire Allied force and is considered by many as the turning point to World War I. By succeeding where the British and the French had failed and by succeeding despite terrible, terrible losses, Canadian troops established themselves in this battle as principled, innovative and professional warriors in their own right. Because of their sacrifice, Canada was recognized as a legitimate country in our own right. Canada's successes were due to a combination of factors like dedication, leadership, preparation, innovation, determination and individual valour. Together they demonstrate that Canada was a fully capable, competent country.

Men from all regions of Canada, including Yukon, were present for this battle. It's amazing to think that more than 600 Yukoners from such a small population rallied to the cause — left their families, their homes here in the territory, many to never return again. More than 100 Yukoners lie buried in the graveyards of France. They volunteered and they faced death because of their dedication to the fundamental rights and freedoms that Canadians hold dear.

Due to the leadership of the Canadian Corps commander, Sir Julian Byng, and Sir Arthur Currie, the commander of the First Canadian Division, Vimy marked the first time all four Canadian divisions attacked together. Canada was prepared. We had access to over 1,000 artillery pieces and a seemingly limitless supply of reliable ammunition. Trusting that the artillery shells wouldn't fall short, the commanders were able to plan on the infantry following them. Canada demonstrated our innovation by the use of a new technology like exploding-

on-contact fuses for their artillery shells and through new tactics like coordinating and infantry tack with creeping artillery barrage. Individual Canadians distinguished themselves through acts of gallantry and bravery. The stories of Canadians singlehandedly, with bayonets fixed, charging machine gun nests like the one on Hill 145 where the Vimy monument now stands, resonated across the world.

By reading the individual stories, we can appreciate the heavy cost — 3,598 Canadians killed and another 7,004 wounded. When Joe Boyle's efforts to enlist were rejected because he was too old, he personally financed and outfitted a machine gun company of volunteers — the Yukon Motor Machine Gun Battery, First Motor Machine Gun Brigade. Although he left the Yukon by 1917, former Yukoner Sam Steele was there. As Michael Gates reminded us last year, Yukoners were there at Vimy. There are stories of individuals like Howard Grestock, the first Yukon man to enlist when the war broke out. He died in the prelude to the battle for Vimy Ridge. From Mr. Gates' article we learn about Neil McCuish, Felix Boutin, Bert Lawless and Morris Anthony.

It's encouraging to think that individual valour and bravery is still remembered a century later. Vimy became a symbol for the sacrifice of the young Dominion. In 1922, the French government ceded to Canada in perpetuity Vimy Ridge and the land surrounding it.

Unless we stop and reflect, it is easy to miss the significance of this event. As we reflect on what it was about the battle for Vimy Ridge that made Canada a nation, I think it is more than just individual valour or preparation. Vimy is an excellent example of a nation coming of age through brilliant leadership, preparation, innovative use of emerging technology and personal bravery. But the Battle of Vimy Ridge represents more than that.

As I prepared for this tribute, I thought about the fact that Vimy Ridge is in France. I thought about the young men who left their homes. I thought about their wives and their families who remained. How does anyone explain a decision like that to a young family? What would make so many young men from Yukon leave to fight in a faraway continent for a nation many had never even visited to defend people many had never met? The people of Canada were given a choice of confronting evil or ignoring it. Even though the cost was exceedingly high, Vimy represents a moment where the professional use of force in the principled defence of liberty combined to secure freedom for the world and accord great honour to our nation.

I am proud that our nation has always stood for those who love freedom and who love peace. Canada's commitment to our fundamental rights and freedoms includes coming to the aid of those around the world who also cherish these values. Our soldiers fought then and fight today because of these principles. We also recognize all of those who have served and given their lives on our behalf in Canada's Armed Forces since then.

As Canadians, we are indebted to our Armed Forces. As we stand before you in this Chamber today, Mr. Speaker, men and women are fighting on our behalf in the name of freedom

and democracy. We all owe our precious freedom to those brave men and women. I ask all Yukoners to join us today in reflecting on their contribution.

In recognition of Daffodil Month (Cancer Awareness Month)

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the individuals in our society working in the field of cancer research and, more importantly, tribute those individuals who raise money that goes toward research and support services for those living with or affected by cancer.

The Canadian Cancer Society has chosen April as Daffodil Month. During Daffodil Month, the Canadian Cancer Society puts on an extra effort to raise money to fund research, promote the prevention of cancer and provide support services. For the first time in several years, Yukon once again participated in the daffodil campaign and volunteers were out selling bright daffodils and daffodil pins. In fact, our very own Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and Highways and Public Works and our Minister of Community Services were out delivering daffodils just a couple of weeks ago. I would like to thank them for that.

All of those proceeds go directly to the Jean C. Barber Lodge in Vancouver where many Yukoners stay during treatment. I thank everyone who bought either flowers or a pin to show their support for Canadians living with cancer. I understand the campaign raised about \$26,000 in sales.

Here in Yukon, in addition to the Canadian Cancer Society, there are many groups and organizations that raise money for cancer prevention, education and research initiatives. Next month, Run for Mom will host its 18th annual fundraiser — a Mother's Day run — an event that raises money for local initiatives to do with breast cancer. Funds raised this year will go toward the purchase of a new digital mammography machine and a breast ultrasound machine. I understand the Minister of Tourism and Culture and the Minister of Education will join me for the run this year.

Another local fundraiser initiative is Mardi Bras, which raises money for Karen's Fund. It was established in 2000 in memory of 37-year-old Karen Wiederkehr who died of breast cancer after months of treatment in and out of Yukon. Her two wishes were for patients to have access to a quiet, comfortable place for their chemo treatments and financial assistance to women undergoing treatment for breast cancer.

Other local events include Ride for Dad — and I have ridden my bike in that rally for the last several years. Ride for Dad is held each June to raise money toward prostate cancer; also of course the Terry Fox Run in September, which supports cancer research. The Yukoners cancer care fund also hosts events to fundraise money that stays locally to support Yukoners and their families facing cancer challenges.

While Daffodil Days are now over, I encourage all during this month and indeed other times of the year to support the fundraising efforts of the many organizations that raise money toward cancer research, prevention and support. I would ask the indulgence of all members in the Legislature today to join

me in welcoming to the gallery Ms. Geraldine Van Bibber from the Yukoners cancer care fund.

Applause

Ms. Stick: I too rise to pay tribute to Cancer Awareness Month. It's my privilege to stand and speak to Cancer Awareness Month, or Daffodil Month. As was mentioned, we are all impacted by cancer and it just seems as we get older maybe more and more. I don't think I know a single person who hasn't been touched by it, whether it's a family member, a friend or themselves personally. The numbers are growing and it seems the likelihood of any of us having some form of cancer in our lifetime is rising, so I would like to acknowledge the professionals who work with individuals with cancer: the researchers, the physicians, the nurses and, most importantly, the volunteers. We need to recognize the work they do to continue to advocate for funding to raise funds for research and to provide real support to individuals and their families when facing cancer here in the Yukon. These funds are also important because they raise cancer awareness and remind us of what we need to do.

When we wear our daffodils, we need to remember that it is the symbol of strength and courage and, when we buy this pin or the daffodils that were on sale recently, we are showing our support for Canadians who are living with cancer today.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I stand also to pay tribute to Cancer Awareness Month, known as Daffodil Month. This is when Canadians show their support for cancer research and prevention and those currently fighting cancer by wearing a daffodil on their collar. The bright, happy daffodil represents hope for those who are on a cancer journey.

Cancer affects us all. It is the leading cause of death in Canada, accounting for 30 percent and the Canadian Cancer Society is working hard to eradicate it and prevent further cases. By purchasing a daffodil or contributing your time, you are helping the Canadian Cancer Society to fund cancer research, prevent cancer, educate and inform Canadians and advocate for a healthy lifestyle for all Canadians.

The Canadian Cancer Society is supported by door-to-door campaigning and fundraising events like the Daffodil Dash. Their goal is to eradicate cancer while enhancing quality of life for those fighting the big fight. I would like to thank all those who work to fight against cancer, both nationally and locally, for their support and volunteer time — donors and volunteers putting in tireless hours, giving all they can for this journey and giving empowerment to people to make sure they know they're not alone. If we work to support community members fighting cancer and promote healthy living, together we can help to eradicate cancer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?

In recognition of the Bridge Building Competition

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the 23rd annual bridge building competition, which

was held last Saturday at the Porter Creek Secondary School. This popular annual competition is hosted by Science Adventures at the Yukon Research Centre at Yukon College and the Association of Professional Engineers of Yukon.

Each year, the event challenges students to try their hand at applying structural engineering principles. Using only wooden stir-sticks, glue and dental floss, competitors construct model bridges that span a distance of some 700 millimetres. For those of us still on the old system, Mr. Speaker, that's roughly 28 inches.

The objective of the students is to build the lightest bridge that can support the most weight. This test pushes the bridges to their breaking point, to the great dismay of the builders and to the glee of the assembled competitors. Students from grades 3 to 12 form teams of up to four participants in their grade categories. An open category is also available for teams of up to four students in kindergarten to grade 12, with minimal assistance from adults.

This year, the organizers introduced an exciting change: more flexible rules to encourage even more activity. The ALL-CAN category is open to both adults and teams. ALL-CAN teams can use power tools; their bridges can be anchored to the testing station with up to 1,000 millimetres of masking tape — I worked that out myself, Mr. Speaker: that's one metre, which is just slightly less than 40 inches — and there are fewer height restrictions.

Although all the teams begin with the same materials and rules, they approach the challenge in many different ways. Building a winning bridge requires creativity, collaboration, communication and critical thinking, four areas of skill that today's learners need to succeed beyond school.

This year, more than 343 bridge builders registered, with a total of 165 bridges. Mr. Speaker, part of that — or a great deal of that — is due in large part to Heather Dundas, who is here with us today. We appreciate all the work that you have done over the years.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Graham: Also with us, Mr. Speaker, is John Streicker, who has emceed the bridge building competition for a while, and I understand he made excuses or apologized on my behalf yesterday, knowing full well that, after my encounters with a hockey puck on Friday night, I was unable to attend. I appreciate that, John, and I appreciate all of the work that is done, not only by these two, but by many people involved in the program.

Special thanks — I think Heather wanted — were to go out to Ben Malone, who has been helping out for more than 20 years with the bridge building competition. We would like to indicate or pass on those congratulations as well.

This, as I said, is the highest number of competitors in the last decade. I would also like to pass out my thanks to Science Adventures and the Association of Professional Engineers of Yukon for providing this very exciting opportunity for Yukon students. I congratulate all of the participants on their teamwork, their fair play, and the effort they expend in creating beautiful, well-crafted and sturdy bridges.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of the competitors, the organizers, the volunteers and, as well, the teachers for their commitment to the competition and their hard work in making this event so successful in the territory year after year. Thank you very much, and please pass on our congratulations to all the others.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Yukon Liberals and also the Official Opposition, I also would like to tribute the bridge building competition and thank the minister for his tribute.

I am going to specifically make a special recognition to Robert Service School's Clive Betts. This is the 17th year that Clive has sent grade-4 bridges to the competition. It is the 23rd annual this year, so that means that there have only been six years in which Robert Service School and Clive Betts haven't participated.

Students enjoy the hands-on activity, as it makes science — physics — and math — measurement and geometry — real for the students. Now, Mr. Betts has been teaching drafting as part of the lesson as well, since blueprints are made before they start building. In his life before teaching, Mr. Speaker, Clive was also a draftsman, so that definitely helps.

Innovators had the most grade-3-to-5 entries ever at 57 bridges this year. This year, Robert Service School registered 14 bridges in that competition. All students who made a bridge received some cool entry prizes, which change every year. We have also had lots of winners over the years of second place and fourth place, but Aaron Woods has been the only student from Dawson to ever get a first prize and to have his name on that trophy and, of course, the \$100 that comes with it.

I would like to do a shout-out please, Mr. Speaker, to Dawson bridges that did not win any of the big prizes but they did place: 11th place, Seth MacDonald Bell; 13th place, Teagan Ewing; 14th place, Jesse Amos; 15th place, Tess Morin; 16th place, Sasha Popadenic; 17th place, Magen Bundt; 18th place, Calvin Cibert; 20th place, Nico Soliguen; 24th place, Darnel Taylor; 31st place, Orion Fage; 51st place, Nathan Van Every. There were also bridges that were not tested that were given by Aeon Perucho, Liam Henry and Beezy Duncan. Congratulations to all those students.

Mr. Speaker, those who know Clive know that he's a master of puns. In the spirit of puns, I hope this competition was friendly and did not create any arch enemies. Congratulations to all who participated and thank you to Clive Betts and to all the volunteers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Elias: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask your indulgence and all members of the Assembly to help me in welcoming a famous Yellowknife radio broadcaster and

personality across the north. Mr. William Greenland is in the Assembly today.

Applause

Mr. Barr: William Greenland — also a colleague in the entertainment business — is visiting us.

Welcome, William.

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Silver: I have for tabling a document outlining Statistics Canada's communication with the territorial government with regard to the federal transfer, dating back to October 1, 2012.

Speaker: Are there any further returns or documents 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. 95: Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016 — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Graham: I move that Bill No. 95, entitled *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 95, entitled *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 95 agreed to

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Elias: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to recognize the importance of encouraging families to adopt healthy lifestyles by fully reinstating the children's fitness and art tax credit.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America to recognize the 141st meridian as the offshore northern maritime boundary between Canada and the United States of America.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to explain why monthly tourism visitation numbers have not been released since July 2015.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: First Nations/government relations

Ms. Hanson: On Friday, representatives of the Government of Canada, Yukon First Nation governments and the Yukon government met and signed two memoranda of understanding to address concerns raised by Yukon First Nation governments. Of particular interest: the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs committed to removing four unilateral amendments to YESAA contained in Bill S-6, two of which this Yukon Party government suggested in the first place.

This marks an opportunity to reset the relationships that were upset by actions taken by this government — in particular, by this Premier. Will the Premier now acknowledge the damage that his unilateral attempts to undermine the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* caused, and apologize to Yukon First Nation governments, Yukon businesses and Yukon citizens?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, Friday was, indeed, a very good day, where we held both a Yukon Forum and an intergovernmental forum — the first intergovernmental forum, I believe, since back in 2010. There was a very good discussion on a myriad of issues such as housing and infrastructure, a real acknowledgement by the federal minister of the leadership that exists when it comes to murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, the leadership that Yukon has taken within this country — the same when it comes to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, where we went forward with a joint proposal for the federal government, laying out the work that has been done and, again, how Yukon continues to be a leader.

When it comes to the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*, as I have said in this House many times, that is federal legislation for which the Yukon government has provided its comments and recommendations. The federal government now chooses to make further amendments to that legislation and, as we have also said in this House, we will not be a barrier to those amendments.

Ms. Hanson: You know, Mr. Speaker, the Premier refused to accept any responsibility for his government's role in pushing through amendments that violated the spirit and intent of the First Nation final agreements. Despite the fact that both the federal minister and the Yukon MP of the day contradicted him, he continued to say it was Ottawa's fault, but the responsibility is his and his alone. Now the Premier has been given an opportunity not often afforded to people in his position — a chance to sit down with First Nation governments and repair the damage his government has done. For 13 years the government has refused to fulfill its obligations to develop the successor resource legislation contemplated in the devolution transfer agreement.

When will the Premier commit to meeting with Yukon First Nation governments to begin a real process of living up

to this commitment to create successor Yukon resource legislation as set out in the DTA?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, as I have said as well numerous times in this House, the Yukon government is looking for an assessment process that is consistent with other jurisdictions allowing this jurisdiction to remain competitive when it comes to the opportunity for resource dollar investment to create good paying jobs in this territory. When it comes to mining, we know that the NDP is very supportive of mining so long as it does not occur in Yukon territory.

Ms. Hanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister did not listen to the question. Well, let's go back to reconciliation. He speaks often about it. It appears reconciliation, to the Premier, is a box to be checked or a duty that can be met through seeking increased federal funding, but reconciliation is not solely about money. It is an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships.

Last week, a Yukon First Nation government stated that Yukon has failed to live up to the commitment made in the DTA. It outlined key areas where the Yukon government, contrary to signed protocols has pushed through — and I quote — pushed through: "... an unscientific wetland policy designed by people with a vested interest in mining wetlands and a policy to provide residential title to placer miners." Further, the statement said: "... that Yukon government is not acting in good faith."

When will the Premier take action and work with Yukon First Nation governments and stakeholders to develop successor resource legislation designed for Yukon in the 21st century?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the NDP talks about truth and reconciliation and, as I stated at the beginning of this Question Period, Yukon and Yukon First Nations are showing leadership, not just in this territory, but indeed across this country, which was reaffirmed by the federal minister during her meeting here on Friday.

There has been much work done by the public government and we have shared that with First Nations. We have said that our vision is to have First Nations lead the path when it comes to the calls to action on truth and reconciliation, and indeed there are many paths to reconciliation. I will give an example of one that occurred very recently. That was the 39th annual Native Hockey Tournament that the Minister of Education and I — I think we refereed 12 or 13 games each. We have for many, many years. It's an important part of this territory and it's certainly a celebration of sport that we look forward to every year.

My point is, Mr. Speaker, there are many paths and pathways toward reconciliation and we will continue to work together with the First Nations as we move forward in that continued journey.

Question re: Stewart-Keno transmission line

Mr. Tredger: Late last year, this government announced plans to spend \$5.3 million in the planning phase to upgrade the Stewart-to-Keno electrical transmission line. In a recent submission to the federal government that laid out the

Yukon Party's capital project priorities, they estimate that it will cost \$86 million to build this line.

Mr. Speaker, fewer than 15 people live year-round in Keno. There is no doubt that this project is not intended for them. Mr. Speaker, why is this government proposing to spend \$86 million to upgrade the Stewart-to-Keno transmission line?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: In fact, the Yukon government, through Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation, provided money for planning the infrastructure between Stewart and Keno City. In doing that, this area of line is one that is in fact past its anticipated lifespan. As part of that project, a look was taken at whether, through enhancing the capacity of that line, there could be opportunity for hooking up to current and future mines within the area and potentially providing the basis for growing those needs.

One of the things that has come in is that the cost of the line is more than originally anticipated and various options are being looked at, including focusing on more critical needs, but, as part of what we've been doing, we have also been looking at seeking federal investment in energy infrastructure, just as we've done successfully with previous projects such as the Mayo B expansion and connecting what was previously the Mayo-Dawson grid and the Whitehorse-Aishihik-Faro grid together to provide one connected Yukon electrical grid.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, if this was about Keno residents, the money would be better spent providing Keno with a clean and reliable community well.

In its submission to the federal government, Yukon government says that the return on investment will come from mines in the area. Mr. Speaker, the Keno mine is closed and Victoria Gold has not raised the capital to open. When the Carmacks-to-Stewart transmission line was constructed, Minto mine had a signed power purchase agreement and paid to build the spur line. It was a good example of how good infrastructure projects can help Yukon residents as well as Yukon industry, but where are the guarantees in this case that Yukon Energy will have customers and get a return on its investment?

Has this government signed any power purchase agreements with these mines or are they merely upgrading the transmission line on speculation?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I think the member is misunderstanding the stage that this is at. I would point out that as part of replacing this line — which is in fact, I believe, the oldest line within the Yukon energy system — there are parts of it that are more than 60 years old and need to be replaced. There are sections where there have been significant issues around power outages and there is a need to replace that line.

As part of doing that, one of the things that Yukon Energy did was look forward to the future and the opportunity for potential economic activity in the area. There was a look taken at the option of building a line with a higher capacity to a 138-kilovolt capacity instead of 69 kilovolt, and looking at whether that incremental increase cost would be worth doing

at this point versus putting in a 69-kilovolt line now and potentially then replacing it at some point in the future.

Again, at this point, a final decision on what option to do has not been taken. We have looked at whether there is an opportunity to seek federal investment in this area, but again there is a need to invest in this electrical line, not just community wells in the area as the member has referred to. In fact, we will be doing our due diligence and there will be an effort made to choose the best path, being mindful of both opportunities and the cost to Yukoners.

Mr. Tredger: Upgrading infrastructure for industrial development is important, but Yukoners deserve assurances that such development will in fact go ahead and benefit Yukon. The power purchase agreement with Minto mine is a good example of return on investment. The proposed \$86-million upgrade is not. Far too often this government has invested public time and money without conducting any business case analysis to ensure that there will be a return for Yukoners. This Yukon Party government has ignored repeated requests from Yukon communities for local infrastructure projects. This money could be better spent on identified needs.

How can this government justify speculating with \$86 million in public money on this transmission line without any firm assurances or agreements from potential customers?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I just want to again reiterate to the member that the decision on whether to simply replace the existing assets as well as rerouting a section of line that is problematic or whether to upgrade it to 138 kilovolts from the existing 69 kilovolts has not been made. We're looking at a range of options. The cost of going to the higher option that would allow more capacity in future years for economic growth was looked at, but recognizing the costs, there are also other options that are being considered by Yukon Energy and the government. I would note to the member that, in fact, while a final decision hasn't been made, it's unlikely that without federal investment the more expensive choice of upgrading the transmission would be taken instead of simply replacing more critical assets.

I am pleased to see the member supporting the model that we used in the case of the Minto mine of a power purchase agreement and capital being provided by the mining company toward upgrading the line extension north. I would again note to the member that what we're doing now is simply looking at options and doing our due diligence. Without doing that planning work and doing a detailed study of options, we're not in a position to make an informed choice, so that is the work that is ongoing right now. Again, I would note that planning for the future and planning for future energy growth is an important part of what government needs to do.

Question re: Economic growth

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, we know that one of the defining accomplishments of this government has been to ratchet up uncertainty for investors, particularly in the resource sector. The uncertainty was reflected in the rankings of the latest Fraser Institute mining report. It was also reflected in mining exploration in the territory, which is down

again this year by 18 percent. It has actually dropped almost every year that the Yukon Party 2.0 has been in office.

Now ongoing court battles with First Nations and regulatory uncertainty have tarnished our reputation as a good place to do business. A perfect example of this is the Yukon Party's botched attempt to amend Bill S-6, or YESAA.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier now take responsibility for the regulatory uncertainty raised by this government's failed YESAA review?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I'm happy that the Leader of the Liberal Party wants to talk a little bit about money, because I want to talk about the fact of how Yukoners were really disappointed that, on the first day of this Sitting, the first opportunity that the Liberal leader had to ask a question of the government, what he did, Mr. Speaker, was stand up and defend cuts to expected funding to this Yukon government, Mr. Speaker. He stood up and defended the federal Liberal Party. Mr. Speaker, that says a lot about the Liberal leader and, in fact, the Liberal Party, because Yukoners know that the Yukon Party is not affiliated with any federal political party and that we will continue to stand up for the interests and the priorities of Yukoners every day.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I don't think I heard one iota of an answer in that response. Regulatory uncertainty is a huge problem right now in our resource sector. It comes up when I meet with mining companies and with oil and gas companies that want to do business here. This is one of the reasons that our economy has shrunk for three years in a row. It is one of the reasons why we continue to drop in the Fraser Institute's mining rankings. It is one of the reasons exploration has dropped off every single year that this government has been in office, and it wasn't that long ago that the Premier was singing the praises of YESAA. This is him in 2013 — and I quote: "Frameworks like YESAA enable us to harness the momentum of the past decade and turn it into sustainable economic growth..."

Why has this government been unable to deliver on economic growth that it promised just three years ago?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the regulatory side of things with resource industries, our government is leading a cooperative effort with assessors, regulators, First Nations and industry to improve the timeliness, clarity, transparency and effectiveness of the mine licensing process. This work is designed to establish common standards, simplify the processes and clarify the roles of regulatory agencies to provide certainty for companies that want to do business in the Yukon.

We are proud of the fact that our government stands up as a pro-resource and pro-business government. All members on this side of the House recognize the value of the mining industry and the oil and gas industry, not only to the social fabric of the Yukon but to our economy moving forward.

We will continue to do the hard work when it comes to improving our regulatory regime, investing in infrastructure and investment attraction as done by the Minister of Economic Development and his department. There is a lot of work that needs to be done and we will continue, as I

mentioned, to do that hard work in these down commodity times so that when the commodity prices come back, as they always do, we will be in a better position coming out of this current slide than we were going in. We will be able to attract those Outside investment dollars that will help to drive the economy of the Yukon and our resource industries.

Mr. Silver: I actually appreciate an answer from the minister, which is different from the Premier who is ducking his responsibility for the role that he has played in creating the only economy in Canada that has shrunk three years in a row. They were singing the praises of YESAA to anybody who would listen back just three years ago.

With regard to the government blaming low mineral prices, here is a quote from Yukon Party 1.0 — and I quote: “Yukon’s climb to the top of the rankings has absolutely nothing to do with world mineral prices; it has everything to do with us — this government — making the changes necessary to restore investor confidence in the Yukon.” Mr. Speaker, when things are good, the Yukon Party wants to take credit and when they are bad, they blame world mineral prices; or in this case, YESAA.

Last week, the new federal minister was here to start cleaning up the mess left by this government after the YESAA review. Mr. Speaker, what role, if any, will this government play in fixing this mess — one which it created?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I mentioned in my earlier response to the member opposite, we’re excited about the work that is underway to address some of the regulatory inefficiencies that we have and it is work that is being led by our government but has full participation from assessors and regulators and First Nations as well as industry.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to certainty in the resource industry, there are a number of factors that the government does control. Obviously there are policy factors that are controlled by the government and this is a government that, as I mentioned, does believe in responsible resource development and our policies are very reflective of that. The work that we do on the ground with First Nations and industry and our other partners is also reflective of that.

Mr. Speaker, we can talk about a royalty regime. You need to have a competitive royalty regime in place. We saw the New Democrats in their last platform seek to raise royalties and establish some sort of a fund that they would use from additional royalties. We have to be competitive when it comes to royalties and taxation. That’s something that our government is very committed to.

As well, Mr. Speaker, infrastructure — the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, in a previous question here today, asked the Minister of Yukon Development Corporation about taking the transmission line from Stewart to Keno City to shovel-ready. Those are the types of things that we need to continue to invest in. That’s what Outside investors are telling us when we’re in Toronto and Vancouver and other places. We’ll continue to listen to those who have the dollars and resources to put into our industry.

Question re: Community nursing

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, in the last Sitting, I questioned the Minister responsible for Health and Social Services on the failure of this government to manage the operational needs in community nursing. By the government’s own admission, 11 of 32 community nursing positions were unstaffed at the time. Community nursing was experiencing prolonged position vacancies, chronic recruitment and retention problems and the departure of committed, long-term employees.

After pressure from the NDP, the Yukon Employees Union and media scrutiny, the government reached an agreement with the union to hire permanent, part-time rotational nurses to fill positions in Yukon’s community health centres.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us how many new community nurses have been hired and how many positions remain vacant?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly pleased to answer the member’s question. There are a number of good things and good work being done in the territory specifically around community nursing. It gives me a chance not only to highlight that good work, but to thank those who are willing to take on those roles in a number of Yukon communities.

As the member opposite is fully aware, Yukon is competing with all jurisdictions across Canada with regard to recruitment of nurses for an expanded-scope type of health centre. Community nursing has responded to the challenges through development of its advanced orientation and mentorship program. The department works continuously to be creative with its recruitment and retention strategies for staffing

To the member opposite’s question, we are pleased to continue our positive relationship working with a number of the nursing organizations in Yukon and certainly thank those who take on those roles in community nursing.

Ms. Stick: I didn’t hear any numbers mentioned there as to how many new and how many positions remain vacant.

I asked this question because, despite this government’s stated intention to address recruitment and retention in community nursing, we continue to hear of unsafe working conditions for the hard-working community nurses. We continue to hear of nurses who are leaving their positions. For some, it’s a choice and they are working in other territories — better pay, better working conditions and better treatment. Denial of vacation time, extended periods working alone and excessive amounts of on-call hours continue to make it difficult for nurses to remain in community nursing. Auxiliary-on-call nurses continue to be used to meet the basic requirements of staffing. This is not good, Mr. Speaker.

What concrete steps has the minister taken to address this shortage of personnel in community nursing since the agreement with the Yukon Employees Union was signed?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, I thank the member opposite for the question. Certainly community nursing is something that is very important to this government and through the Department of Health and Social Services we continue to work with those individuals around the territory, providing

that expanded scope practice for people that are living in the communities.

In my first response, I had talked a little bit about the recruitment and the member opposite has brought that up. Health and Social Services attended recruitment fairs in Edmonton and Vancouver in September 2015. We posted a full-page ad in *Canadian Nursing Magazine*, running monthly from January 2016 to June 2016. We have: implemented part-time rotation agreements inclusive of paid flights in November 2015; attended a recruitment fair in Ottawa in January of this year; and attended a recruitment fair in Toronto also this year.

Mr. Speaker, as I talk to individuals who are working in this field, they continue to reiterate to me that the word-of-mouth advertising is probably one of our strongest advertising models and certainly the nurses and medical professionals in the territory continue to reach out to their colleagues and fellow students across our country.

Again, I thank the member opposite for this question. It gives me an opportunity to highlight some of the good work that is being done in the territory.

Ms. Stick: Still no numbers on how many vacancies remain in the communities. When we talk about word-of-mouth advertising, unfortunately it works both ways. Community nurses are unhappy and are leaving the community nursing centres in the Yukon and it's serious. When we do not ensure that our community health centres have sufficient nursing staff, we put our nurses and our communities at risk. Nurses work hard in their communities, treating the ill, doing preventive work, monitoring our elders and seniors, meeting emergencies, but still these hard-working nurses are being asked to do more and more with less support.

Mr. Speaker, what is being done today to ensure the safety of our nurses and the patients in our communities?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, I thank the member opposite for giving me the chance to highlight some of the good work that is being done in the territory.

As I mentioned in my previous responses, the challenges for recruitment in Yukon is certainly amplified by the required rural and northern rural skillset that we certainly seek for our Yukon nurses.

To the numbers that the member opposite had asked for, I can report that the 11 primary health care centres currently have 2.5 out of 24 community-based positions vacant. There are an additional 2.45 out of the 4.45 float positions that are currently vacant — these positions typically provide coverage for scheduled leave — and 36 auxiliary on-call nurses provide the coverage throughout rural Yukon for current vacancies and leave. We expect to be fully staffed for the summer.

I certainly thank the member opposite for bringing this issue to the floor of the Legislature. It gives me an opportunity to highlight some of the good work that is being done in the department.

Question re: Waste management strategy

Mr. Barr: In 2015 this government missed its promised 50-percent waste-diversion target and it still has not given clear direction for Yukon's waste-management plan.

This January the Association of Yukon Communities came together, recognized the need for leadership and released their own solid-waste management plan. In the absence of the Yukon government taking a lead on a waste management strategy, the AYC has taken action of their own.

If this government will not show leadership when it comes to waste management in Yukon, will they at least provide support to those who are?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the record we have when it comes to solid-waste management and when it comes to the development and encouragement of recycling in this territory.

Of the levers available to Yukon government — I believe we are pulling all of them. First of all we are investing in infrastructure. We are working with Yukon municipalities, both through the AYC and directly bilaterally with municipal governments, to improve their own sites. We're also improving our sites that are operated by Yukon government by making diversion more of an option both in our municipal sites and Yukon government-run sites.

We're making regulatory changes as well. Those are coming forthwith and they will be in place soon with changes to the designated material regulation as well as the beverage container regulation to improve the opportunities for recycling a number of new products in the territory.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we're making significant investments in solid-waste management and recycling in the territory. Yukon government has taken a lead role in providing diversion credits to the processors here in Whitehorse. That's something that we do in partnership with the City of Whitehorse, but the Yukon government contributes significantly more financially to that project.

You will also see in the budget this time around a significant increase to the amount available for diversion credits and other recycling initiatives. That was tabled on Thursday in our budget.

I look forward to working with the AYC, Yukon municipalities and other community groups as well as the processors and handlers in this territory to see enhancements to those programs as well.

Mr. Barr: The government's lack of leadership on this issue is being felt throughout the Yukon. The Marsh Lake transfer station is filling up fast and it is quickly running out of room, as is the much larger Whitehorse waste management facility. The City of Dawson is under so much pressure that they have to reconsider the way they do business. Action needs to be taken and quickly to support Yukon's transfer stations and landfills.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister acknowledge the pressure faced by Yukon's transfer stations and landfills and explain how his government plans to support them?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I have explained the number of ways the Yukon government is working with

municipalities and other groups to improve our solid-waste practices in the territory. All of the problems addressed by the member opposite are issues that we are aware of and each has a different solution, so it's impossible for me to outline all three of those particular scenarios in one short answer today. What I will say is that we are working very closely with Yukon municipalities, with community groups and with processors and recyclers through the territory to provide infrastructure, to improve the regulations and to make significant investments in recycling and solid-waste management in the territory.

Of course this is not something we can do alone. We rely, of course, on municipal governments to operate their own sites, but in sites that are run by Yukon government, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the changes that have been made. You only need to look around at some of the sites that we have improved in the last year or so to see the significant improvement, whether it be in Marsh Lake, in Mount Lorne or out on the north Alaska Highway. We've closed some old sites and we've improved the operations of a number of other ones, so we're making infrastructure improvements and we're making regulatory changes and significant investments that will benefit not only Yukon's recycling processors, but all Yukoners who want to play a role in recycling and improving our own solid-waste management, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Barr: Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Yukon Party's leadership, leaders of Yukon communities have filled the void. They have seen AYC release their own proposed solid-waste management plan; we have seen the Mount Lorne transfer station exceed its 50-percent waste-diversion target. The operator himself applied for funding to share this expertise with other Yukon communities who had been requesting support, only to be denied.

Mr. Speaker, now that the government has missed its 50-percent waste-diversion target, what is the next move? Is there a new target and, if not, how will the government measure if their actions have any impact at all?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: As members know, we have a *Yukon Solid Waste Action Plan* in place that we're working with our partners in the communities to implement. I'm glad the member opposite noted the site that's owned by Yukon government, which is achieving some great things in Mount Lorne. Other sites like that — that are owned by Yukon government — throughout the communities play an important role for rural citizens in improving their own solid-waste management practices.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with regard to our plan, we have been very clear. We have a *Yukon Solid Waste Action Plan*. I've outlined some of the highlights of it in my responses here today, but what continues to be apparent is that the members opposite have no plan at all. They continue to criticize; they like to take shots and say that they could do better or that they would do something different, but not once have they ever explained an alternative, not once have they ever explained what they would do differently. All that they've done, Mr. Speaker, is sit and criticize and never present any other

options for Yukoners, which is disappointing to anybody, I think, who is listening to this.

Mr. Speaker, I've been very clear about our priorities, about the actions we've taken, and I'll leave it to members opposite to come up with their own ideas.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 23: *First Appropriation Act, 2016-17* — Second Reading — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Second Reading, Bill No. 23, standing in name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski; adjourned debate, Ms. Hanson.

Ms. Hanson: I would like to say at the outset that I am pleased to be able to stand in the Legislative Assembly today to speak in response to the Budget Address from the Minister of Finance last Thursday.

I also would like to say at the outset just a few words about the responsibilities and the pleasure and privilege that I have to serve the riding of Whitehorse Centre — a riding that I have talked about a lot in the past because of my pride in this riding and my recognition of how diverse and complex Whitehorse Centre is. We know that it's complex, not just in terms of the geographic span. It's a small riding in many ways because it only encompasses — relative to many of the ridings of the members opposite and on this side — a relatively small geographic riding; however, it certainly covers a broad range of interests and goes from the south access road out to Marwell. As we know, as we traverse that terrain, we see the light-industrial area in Marwell, which is a mix of businesses and as I said, light industrial and some commercial/residential.

It's really a riding with a very dynamic mix of social, commercial, residential, government — the seat of the territorial government, the Ta'an Kwäch'an government, the municipality of Whitehorse — many recreational organizations, cultural organizations, and many, many small businesses that are based throughout this riding. It's a riding that's probably going through more rapid change than any other riding in the territory in terms of its evolution from an historic sort of sleepy downtown area — “sleepy” as in “moribund” if we looked at it 30, 40 years ago — to the very vibrant core of a modern capital city. That evolution is also bearing witness to the growing inequality gap that Yukon faces.

So as the Official Opposition caucus and myself as the leader of that Official Opposition review and debate this fifth budget presented by this Finance minister — the 14th by a Yukon Party government — we do so through the lens of how it serves to create a fair, more equal Yukon — a Yukon that is for all Yukon citizens. We'll be looking at how this proposed budget and the budget initiatives that are set out in this budget will further the common hope of all Yukon citizens for a robust, durable and local economy — an economy that

because of its diversified nature, would be resilient to the impact of commodity price swings of the boom-and-bust cycle that has been a feature of the Yukon's economy since contact.

Mr. Speaker, the 2016-17 budget does not speak to these aspirations. I had hoped that perhaps, after finally realizing the benefits of the practice followed by the Official Opposition of going to communities and of opening doors to say to any and all Yukon citizens — to First Nation and local government representatives, small-business owners, industry, arts and cultural groups — when talking with them about their hopes and aspirations for Yukon, that the Yukon Party's much-vaunted and advertised community consultation would have netted some results.

I guess the difference is the objective. On this side, the opportunity to engage with Yukon citizens is not a photo opportunity nor is it a tick on a long list. It is an opportunity to actively engage with and listen to Yukon citizens. After 13, almost 14, years as government, it is clear that the Yukon Party does not get the notion of governance. The irony is that this government was handed an amazing toolbox for good governance when it was first elected back in 2002. It is important to look into that toolbox to pull out the tools and to ask why the government has refused to use them. I am speaking of course about the First Nation final and self-government agreements and the devolution transfer agreement. By entering into these agreements, the Yukon government entered into a new era of governance; an era limited only by imagination and political will or, as we have seen, lack thereof.

The tools in the First Nation final and self-government agreements enable both Yukon and First Nation governments to shed over 100 years of colonialism and to jointly develop a new, mature relationship founded on a shared vision. The opportunities include the ability to redesign and rework how government best serves all Yukoners, First Nations and non-First Nations alike. It was never intended that the negotiated agreements were to be interpreted in terms of winners and losers. It was not a zero-sum game. Yet, at times the public statements of members opposite appear to reflect that base view.

Another key tool in that box is the devolution transfer agreement. The territorial formula financing agreement just didn't grow like Topsy because the federal government of the day was run by a bunch of nice guys. The devolution transfer agreement saw a significant transfer of both human and financial resources to the Yukon government; financial resources that, when indexed over time, have provided the Yukon government with a level of financial certainty not afforded to any of the Premier's provincial counterparts at the federal-provincial-territorial table. With the assumption of provincial-like responsibilities, one would assume that a government would also put in place measures to ensure that the fiscal resources that the Legislative Assembly is charged with stewarding on behalf of all Yukon citizens are expended in the most effective, economic and efficient manner.

Public accounts committees in other jurisdictions meet on an ongoing basis to ensure that the decisions voted on by the

Assembly are in fact carried out as intended. As chair of Yukon's Public Accounts Committee, I can attest to the fact that this has not been the practice in Yukon. My experience suggests that until and unless the Premier — a premier, a future premier — recognizes the importance of the work of the Public Accounts Committee for more than the occasional review of the occasional Auditor General report on a Yukon department or agency, that will remain the case.

When we were first elected back in 2011, I assumed that a new premier would want to engage in the business of making sure that citizens had the best information possible about the expenditure of their resources and that he would be interested in best practices gleaned from other Canadian jurisdictions. After all, we are relatively new at the full gamut of provincial-like responsibilities.

I was and remain disappointed at the Finance minister's rejection of the discussion of ideas that emanate from the Parliamentary Budget Officer or the Canadian Council of Legislative Auditors regarding means of ensuring that all members of the Legislative Assembly have a thorough understanding of their role vis-à-vis Public Accounts. After all, it's one of the key parts of the job description of a member of a parliamentary democracy.

So we were pleased to see that this budget finally recognizes that results-based budgeting is actually a function of government. Citizens can be forgiven for wondering why it took the Yukon Party 13 years to figure it out, and they can also be forgiven for being a bit suspicious that this sudden discovery of innovative budgeting was really a desperate reaction to the fact that the Finance minister has all but disappeared a healthy budget surplus he started his mandate with. Mr. Speaker, I'll come back to that.

Over time, we expect the Yukon government — even the Yukon Party — to fully grasp the potential of actually acting as if the Yukon is a real government, rather than an extension of the federal government. Part of the process is letting go of the past. As it so often seems to happen, just when things were getting really rough, we have an intervention from Outside, another opportunity to take the long view — the long view, retrospectively, in terms of a history that informs so much of what we now know as Canada, as Yukon, and the people here and the long view of what it could be if only we have the heart and the courage to embrace the opportunities and the challenges presented by the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Imagine that, Mr. Speaker — challenges and opportunities that are identified in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 recommendations or calls for action. They echo in so many profound ways what has already been negotiated between the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nation governments.

So when it looked like we were sort of losing sight — and clearly that's what has happened over the last 13 years; we've lost sight of the objectives of what those agreements were — along comes the TRC last year, which says, "Here's another addition to your toolbox." It's not going to be enough, Mr. Speaker, to simply check off that we read those 94.

The calls to action are profound and they will force us ultimately, as citizens and as members of this Legislature, to rethink in fundamental ways of unlearning what has been identified as a skewed sense of history, and help us build a base for a new relationship based on trust and respect.

Mr. Speaker, despite my hope that this is what we have said and endorsed in this Legislative Assembly through discussions and debate, and the words that have been expressed in this Legislative Assembly as we have marked the various anniversaries — whether it was, in 2013, the 20th anniversary of the signing of the agreements, or 2015, the 20th anniversary of the coming into effect of those agreements in the legislation — and then last year, in 2015, there was the TRC recommendations to a set of agreements and recommendations. We've all said, yes, we admire, respect and endorse them and we will abide and live by them. That's the challenge we face.

However, rather than engaging in a sustained and often difficult work of building relationships, of listening to hear where the differences are and how they might be broached, how they might be reached across the table, it has become clear that the Yukon Party preference is governance by press release or a one-off announcement rather than the serious work of figuring out how together we realize the potential of the tools we jointly created.

By now the litany of opportunities denied and their consequences are becoming tired in the repetition and, quite frankly, I am tired of repeating them, but there is no opportunity to have engaged conversation so it becomes a statement for the record that in 2016 we're here and we have to say it again for the record. We have to bear witness to the fact that these opportunities are either being ignored or denied.

Unfortunately, until there is a government in power in Yukon willing to seize those opportunities and to rectify the damage done, all Yukon citizens and all Yukon economic prosperity are jeopardized. I don't say that lightly, Mr. Speaker. If the Yukon Party seriously believes that it can continue to undermine the solemn commitments that the Yukon, as a government — not as a political party — made, and if it thinks it can undermine those, it is seriously deluded and all Yukon is seriously harmed.

To cite a few examples going back, I looked at some of the budget addresses by this Finance minister. In 2013, the controversy of the day that emerged was the whole issue of land use planning because right after the election the government decided that it rejected the land use plan — the Peel watershed recommended plan.

Again, the record showed that it was not listening and reading the agreement. It took the zero-sum approach. We won. You guys, you gave up 90 percent of the land in exchange of 10 percent settlement land, and we're not going to agree to a plan — not something that's etched in stone, but a plan that is subject to review over time — and where did we end up? Court, no certainty, decline in investment.

Land use planning, when we look at what the understanding of the parties at the time was — it was intended to provide opportunities. It was intended to say, in exchange

for First Nations ceding 90 percent of this territory — in excess of 90 percent actually — a number of commitments were made. One of them was land use planning — that we would commit to completing eight land use plans — regional land use plans — throughout this territory that would give everybody — investors in this territory, residents in this territory — what common understanding there was for the uses of those lands, whether they are recreational, residential, commercial, industrial or cultural — you name it. But it was a planning process.

In 2009, 14 years after the Vuntut Gwitchin agreement was signed — 14 years after it came into effect, actually, and 16 years after it was signed — the first and only land use plan was completed. That was an intensity-of-use plan. The majority of the issues and discussion in most land use plans had already been settled in the Vuntut Gwitchin agreement because we had agreed — and I see the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin agree. It is true; he was there. He knows about the extensive withdrawal of oil and gas lands, the creation of Ivvavik, of Bear Cave Mountain, the other national park — Vuntut National Park — which left the intensity of use to be determined along the Dempster highway corridor.

Then we get the Peel watershed plan — seven years and countless hundreds of thousands of dollars of court cases, an irredeemable bad faith. The only good consequence of that is that it has ignited citizens who say that, "These are our agreements; they are not your agreements, they are ours." There are economic consequences to that when the minister opposite will say — creating the uncertainty that it does when you say to investors that we are not really sure what is a go or what is not a go, because we can't tell you whether you are going to be challenged or not challenged because we cannot get land use planning done because we have actually put a hold on that. At the same time, the member opposite will say, "Well, we don't care about the opinions of tourists from Düsseldorf or Pasadena." That is a great message for tourism marketing. Do not think that those kinds of messages won't get out.

We have made that commitment as governments and we have one done. Until regional land use planning is completed, there will be economic uncertainty in this territory. As the Member for Klondike said earlier today, after the Premier extolled the virtues and benefits of YESAA in the previous Budget Address, after he quoted at length from the Chamber of Mines and their support for YESAA, he announced in 2014, without detail at the time, amendments to YESAA, the made-in-Yukon socio-economic environmental assessment legislation — amendments, it turned out, that he had sought using the excuse that, because the previous Conservative government in Ottawa had gutted environmental legislation across this country — CEEA, the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, *Fisheries Act*, and the list goes on through the various omnibus legislation — that we had to sink to the lowest common denominator, that we had to take our environmental legislation created in collaboration among First Nation governments, Yukon government, federal government and industry stakeholders to reflect the realities of the Yukon.

We had to take it down several notches so that we could have politically driven direction given to an independent board.

You know, Mr. Speaker, those kinds of decisions — and we heard this in the Senate committee and the parliamentary committee on aboriginal affairs when it appeared here. It came to Yukon to hear witnesses, and we heard witnesses from several mining companies say that if this went to court — one of them actually said it would kill mining in the Yukon. What about negotiated commitments does the Yukon Party not understand? If you will do that do your First Nation partners, industry wonders what you will do to them.

This year, we have money in both the Energy, Mines and Resources and the ECO budgets to not deal with the core commitments set out in the devolution transfer agreement — that is, to develop a modern resource legislation in partnership with Yukon First Nation governments — but rather to continue a process around talking about, collaboratively developing recommendations for improving the existing Yukon mining regime.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I've said this before many times: Yukon First Nations and their governments are incredibly patient, but I think they are coming to the end of the fuse on this one as well. I think that Yukon First Nation governments have had it with being asked to sit at the table and have talks without result. It's 2016. It is 13 years after the devolution transfer agreement came into effect and not having modern successor resource legislation. I will give the minister credit where credit is due. There is forestry legislation that is not Ottawa's legislation and that does reflect the Yukon and Yukon circumstances; but as I said at the outset, we are supposed to be acting like a province. You would think that we would take pride in developing resource legislation that reflects the reality of the Yukon in the 21st century going forward and reflects the reality of the social and political commitments that we have established. I believe, and the NDP Official Opposition believes, that the devolution transfer agreement provides the tools essential to creating a new Yukon, not simply a continuation of the central-Canada-directed view of the north, that has, as it became abundantly clear over the last 10 years — and I am really hopeful that it's going to change going forward — but the past 10 years, it has viewed the north primarily as having value for the amount of resources that could be extracted from it. There is more to the north than simply mineral extraction. It is important, Mr. Speaker, but it is not the sole reason why every Yukon citizen lives in the Yukon.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the devolution transfer agreement and the First Nation final agreements speak to where we live. They speak to the importance and the ability for us as governments to engage in local decision-making, to create local benefits for our economy. I think until and unless Yukon has the government that recognizes the unique opportunities that it has on behalf of all Yukon citizens, along with Yukon First Nation governments — and that we share — our social and economic future will continue to falter. We can do better.

There's no doubt that times are tough, Mr. Speaker. I doubt that even the Premier was able to fully believe the positive spin he tried to deliver last Wednesday and Thursday. The Conference Board of Canada statistics have again confirmed that Yukon's gross domestic product has declined for a third straight year. The Yukon Party recession seems to be gaining steam.

Minto, Yukon's last open mine, is slated to begin winding down operations this summer and close early next year. Those are real jobs, Mr. Speaker. It employs many Yukoners — a declining number. We know that exploration spending is projected to be less yet again in 2016. Yukon's population, alone among the rest of Canada, has declined. I'm sure that the Premier has seen the U-Hauls heading south.

The Premier emphasizes being a net contributor to Canada, but he's not taking action to walk the talk. Proportionally, transfers from Canada have become a bigger and bigger part of the budget since 2011, when the Premier started his mandate. Think about it: after over 13 years, this government has failed to move our revenue dependency on Ottawa of over 85 percent.

The Premier is quick to say that it's due to factors beyond his control, while at the same time, deriding the government in Alberta, which saw its real revenues fall by \$10 billion when the world oil and gas markets collapsed. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, if this government suddenly faced a 30-percent reduction in transfer payments from Ottawa — imagine. Some people in this Legislative Assembly will recall the mid-1990s when the Yukon formula financing agreement did face a real cut under a Liberal government of five percent. That five percent, going forward, had a serious impact on the governments of the day.

That's why, as New Democrats, we believe there's an absolute imperative to have a strategic approach to our economy that is open to moving beyond the status quo, beyond what has been done to what could be accomplished.

Mr. Speaker, I think I'm not alone. The Auditor General has pointed out — time and again, but I'll just say it — that the current five-year mandate of this government has been characterized by a lack of strategic planning for the future of our territory. Decisions have been continually made on an ad hoc basis, reacting, rather than planning for and addressing issues.

One doesn't need to go far for examples, and I'm not sure that I'll spend too much time on those, because I know that as we debate the various measures that are outlined in this budget, they will become apparent. I know that my colleagues will want to go in-depth as we get into various departments on specific examples.

The one area that I just have to make comment on is the Yukon approach to health care. Since 2004, federal, provincial and territorial governments set out on a journey to address the issue of health care costs in this country. Despite that, the Yukon Party government seems to be running contrary to everybody else across the country. The Premier boasts about the massive increases in health care expenditures — the doubling — the doubling, Mr. Speaker — within 10 years of

physician care costs. Again, when you're not a resilient economy and when you are wholly dependent on somebody else, that's a dangerous trajectory to be on. I use that language carefully, because it's the language used by a previous Yukon Party premier when he called for a review of health care in this territory because he said we could not afford the trajectory of expenditures for health care and that we needed to find a more appropriate blend of services — appropriate to the kind of communities that we are throughout this territory; desperate small communities. By their own measure, the Yukon Party has not lived up to that challenge.

Under this government, it appears that extractive industries have long been the centrepiece of the Yukon Party's economic planning. Government decision-making has supported these industries over all other elements of the economy. As a result, in recent years our territory has not been focused on developing resiliency to periodic commodity shifts — as the Premier has so famously stated: "So goes mining, so goes Yukon."

Mr. Speaker, that narrow view of what this territory and its people have to offer has resulted in the recession we are experiencing today. This government cut funding to the Economic Development budget in 2012 when commodity prices were high and extractive industry in Yukon seemed promising. It spent years resisting calls to increase funds for tourism, a growing industry that has helped to mitigate the recent effects of low commodity prices in our economy.

What did this government learn about anticipating the inevitable boom-and-bust cycle of the extractive industry? What did they learn about investing in those activities that would sustain us through periods of low commodity prices, such as we're experiencing today? I would suggest it is very little.

Just speaking about tourism, I would remind us that several years ago the Tourism Industry Association — probably about January, three or so years ago — asked the Yukon government for \$2.5 million a year over two years to focus on domestic marketing because there is a significant growth in that area — potential.

They asked that the government build into that two-year commitment of funding criteria to evaluate the success and the continued provision of funding to continue on domestic marketing. What they got was \$1.8 million a year and the focus of the program was not solely domestic, which was a surprise to many, and there did not appear to be any evaluation criteria. What we see is the same tourism information about the number of airport landings — nothing about the economic multiplier effect of the tourism dollar, so we have to rely upon those kinds of scant details. Now this budget says the tourism industry's marketing programs will get \$900,000 a year — not even the \$1.8 million — and it's not domestic and focused. So now we're going to say less money and we're going to target our marketing globally. Again, without planning, without focus, we do this sort of limp-along approach. That is not a way to build an industry. We have heard it time and again and the ministers who have served in Tourism and Culture over the last four or five years

know of the significant opportunities that exist in the tourism area.

We've heard many times in terms of the great opportunities for diversifying our economy about support for the knowledge and innovation sector, Mr. Speaker. We've also heard that one of the great impediments to that is the lack of reliable broadband and the importance of expanding and diversifying into our fibre optic system. What have we got so far? We have four studies and a commitment to more studies. That is not terribly helpful for those small niche innovators who are looking to base their companies in the Yukon and rely upon reliable and resilient connections globally. So this budget again has another \$500,000 for studies and development. At what point will Yukoners be presented with the criteria upon which to assess which option is being studied and which option should be going forward — the recommendations?

When will there be a deliverable? What analysis is going on as we're planning in these studies? Are we analyzing the effects of discontinuous permafrost on the proposed Dempster route? What lessons have we learned from the Northwest Territories? What implications are there? What commitments have been made when we read an Alaska newspaper that in fact there is an agreement of some sort — according to them — for the Skagway route? That would be news to me and hopefully it's news to the people across the way.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard loud and clear in our community consultations and in our discussions with Yukoners across this territory that Yukoners not only want a diversified economy, they recognize the imperative of it — one that balances the non-renewable resource extraction industry potential with the many other industries that can or could contribute to the prosperity of our territory.

I'm reminded again of the challenge posed by Dr. Norman Fraser, a strong proponent of the power of entrepreneurship to transform communities. You will perhaps recall that he asked. He said that, knowing that the mineral extraction industry is the biggest Yukon success story, what if — and this is without, as he said, any intent to disparage the mining sector — its success is a problem? His question that he posed was: Given a choice, would you prefer to live in a diversified economy or a non-diversified economy? If your economy isn't very diversified, would you choose, as your single industry, which you are so heavily exposed to, to be one that is historically boom and bust?

It's an interesting question, Mr. Speaker. We need only to look again at our neighbour Alberta to see the dramatic consequences of a 60-year focus on a singular non-renewable resource extraction industry. The opportunity is here for Yukon to reframe the potential of this territory so it is not so singularly focused.

We could seriously pursue the second question posed, which was: Without reducing the size of the mineral industry — without reducing it, Mr. Speaker — what would it take to make it no more than 10 percent of Yukon's economy? What other opportunities are there?

From the many conversations with Yukoners, from the informed debate and presentations at countless public meetings over the years, Yukon New Democrats have listened and heard how boundless our opportunities for a diversified economy really are. This is the economy that we, as the NDP, would work with Yukon citizens to deliver.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's not just the unwillingness to get in and work to create the environment for a diversified economy; it's just emphasis, year after year, in the Premier's Budget Address on record capital spending. Yet again we see this government equate the size of the budget with its effectiveness. I could be cheeky and say I'm reminded of the Maria Muldaur song, but I won't get into the lyrics of that one.

After seeing this government persist in the building of acute care hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City without a demonstrated need — and that's not my assessment, Mr. Speaker. That is the assessment of the Auditor General of Canada. As the Auditor General said in 2013, those were built without a complete health care needs assessment and analysis of the options available to meet identified health care needs, including the costs of those options. He said that the corporation is unable to demonstrate that the hospitals have been designed to meet the community's health care needs, or that they will provide services as cost-effectively as possible.

In a rare move in an after-the-fact situation, the government commissioned a needs assessment. Surprise — they found that they were not designed to meet community needs and that the needs of community addictions, community mental health issues were not provided for, Mr. Speaker.

A 2014 report on government spending by the C.D. Howe Institute gave the Yukon government a failing grade for its ongoing mismanagement of Yukon's finances, naming Yukon one of the worst jurisdictions in Canada for meeting its budgeting targets. We can do better, Mr. Speaker.

Several budget addresses ago, the Finance minister spoke about the importance of home care and the importance of making investments. For two years in a row, we saw investments in home care and then, lo and behold, out of the blue in 2014, he discovered the continuing care facility and said, "Whoops. We're not going into home care. We would really like to build a great, big facility in downtown Whistle Bend."

The problem with that, Mr. Speaker, is that it's a repeat of an internal process — no community consultation and, as yet, unknown costs and sources of the financing for this. I know that my colleagues will have many questions for the minister. The ones that come to mind off the top of my head when I read the various internal reports that cautioned against the location chosen by this government — one that strikes me as the most interesting is the notion that they chose a site where they were warned that there would be, because of the geotechnical instability of the ground, additional costs — unable to be predicted at the time because they hadn't done the detailed work and they hadn't seen the full design for this facility. It was quite amazing to know the kind of soil conditions that this facility is supposed to be located on —

that the design contemplates a two-floor underground parkade. That will be most interesting to see as it fills with water.

We will be interested to see what the additional costs will be to build that kind of design. We will be interested to see whether or not the facts with respect to the design of a framed structure — a three-storey framed structure for mobility-challenged people — meet the National Building Code and what the costs are when they're all in.

We will be interested to see what the actual operation and maintenance costs will be and how they will rob future territorial governments of the ability to provide a more cost-effective community care that people need as they attempt to age in place — a concern that we've heard throughout this territory from seniors in every single community and from those who plan to age in the Yukon as opposed to leaving as people did in the past.

That is just one small example. If we go back far enough — and some of us were directly involved and recall the about turns by the Yukon Party on matters as diverse as the athletes' village during the Canada Winter Games, the toing and froing of the design and the building of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and the cost overruns that it cost all Yukon citizens.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas — and why it makes it difficult to support the approach by the Yukon Party to stewarding our fiscal resources and the policy decisions to support them — is the unwillingness — or perhaps the inability of this government to address the whole issue of the growing inequality gap in this territory.

Many of us in this room — at least on this side — attended a day-long session in — I think it was January 2010 when the Yukon Party announced its poverty reduction and social inclusion strategy with panelists as diverse as Hugh Segal, a Conservative senator who had written, along with Liberal Senator Art Eggleton, one of the best researched reports on poverty and homelessness and poverty reduction initiatives that were going on across this country — who challenged the Yukon government of the day, the current Yukon government, to take seriously the issues of poverty and inequality because, as he said, they have economic consequences and, if nothing else, governments need to understand that failure to address them will cost us all. You can pay for it through moderate means and adjustments to existing systems, or you can pay for it in acute care facilities, increased visits to emergency rooms, or, as this government — one of the comments made by the former Minister of Justice — that's fine. Our jails are built for more people, so we'll just fill the jails.

That's one way to deal with poverty — one way to deal with mental health problems — but since the announcement of that poverty reduction and social inclusion strategy, what outcomes have there been? What measurable reductions have been noted? Why, in the face of a concerted effort, as we're told by the Yukon Party government, to develop the strategy, is there increased dependence on food banks?

Mr. Speaker, it's important, when dealing with poverty and inequality, to pay attention to the root causes. We urge the Yukon Party government to pay attention to a report issued by

the Canadian Medical Association in 2013 called, *What makes us sick?*. It turns out that poverty can make kids sick their whole lives. Poverty in childhood puts a person at greater risk for diabetes than so-called lifestyle choices and behaviours.

There is a raft of these studies about how if we wanted to, we could address the root causes of poverty. I can tell you that the Yukon government has within its cadre, within its ranks, some very skilled public servants who are experts in various aspects of public policy, but when the Yukon Party makes politically motivated expenditures that dismiss the recommendations of our skilled civil service it will make for a long-term drain on our territory financially and actually socially, and it does not produce the results that Yukoners deserve.

Mr. Speaker, when we speak and when we listen to Yukoners, we hear that they want a government that works for them, is honest with them, provides leadership, responds positively to creative ideas and solutions and bold action, and they are expressing to us time and again that they don't feel this is happening under this government's watch. They feel the government has been content to sit out from the hard decisions and become a passenger when it comes to Yukon's future.

We as elected officials have a unique opportunity to bring together the diverse groups of governments, organizations, businesses and individuals to actively engage to solve problems that face our people in our territory. When we foster an environment where these groups can work together, can trust each other and treat each other with mutual respect because they know that the government is also doing that with them, we believe that it's not just the right thing to do but that it produces tangible benefits.

We think that part of that is making sure that we listen to all levels of government. We think and we know that when other levels of government, for example municipal governments, make recommendations as they did during the *Municipal Act* review, when they suggest as governments that there are ways of sharing the financial burden by allowing them to find means for revenue-generating opportunities, and when we dismiss their ideas in the review of the *Municipal Act*, it sends a message. When we largely ignore the requests made after much review and discussion internally and much prioritizing by the Association of Yukon Communities, when their infrastructure requests are largely ignored, then it reinforces that actually their voice is not being heard. When decisions are made by government in Whitehorse about what the priority is in Carmacks or Teslin, or if they're not even on the list, that delivers a message.

We would urge the Yukon Party to publish what the Association of Yukon Communities asked for with respect to the infrastructure priorities this year, and what the Yukon Party's response has been. We know the government has the right attitude and right intent. It has the ability to reach out to Yukoners and find creative solutions to our problem because we know Yukoners are resourceful people. The best solution to challenges facing Yukon will come from Yukoners themselves.

We believe that Yukon solutions work, but what we've seen is a government that, over the last few years, has chosen to ignore those solutions and go Outside to pay for Outside experts. We have seen contracts running the gamut from environmental cleanup to tourism advertising to employee assistance programs when there are local solutions that are not only qualified to do the job, but can bring a Yukon perspective.

Mr. Speaker, there are many examples of that. The two that really come to mind are the decision last year to — and I notice it's in the budget again this year, so the contract is obviously continued — grant the employee assistance program contract to Morneau Shepell. Our current Minister of Finance in Ottawa was also the head of a large multinational human resource company.

Over the last 20 or so years, the competent Yukon-based cadre of experts in employee assistance and professional counsellors — very well-qualified — have developed a skillset to be able to respond to Yukon employees. Mr. Speaker, when an employee is in distress, such as when an employee is told on Friday afternoon — because it's the practice, unfortunately, of many departments in this government, which is unfathomable, to fire people on a Friday — that they have been let go, it can be a trigger. So when that happens, Mr. Speaker, it would be really good to be able to think you can actually talk to somebody now in your community, not call somebody in Vancouver and then get referred to somebody in Whitehorse. Why choose to dehumanize employee assistance?

Mr. Speaker, the other example I wanted to raise is one that resonates in terms of lost opportunities, and goes back to what I had said when talking about the opportunities that were embedded or come to us as a result of the agreements that we negotiated with Yukon First Nation governments. One of the results of those First Nation agreements was that First Nations established independent, arm's-length development corporations to engage in economic development to help diversify Yukon's economy.

We heard again — when the First Nations appeared before the Senate committee in Ottawa, the representative of the Dakwakada Development Corporation talked about the over \$500 million it has contributed to Yukon's economy. He talked about the number of employees, First Nations and non-First Nations, income tax-paying Yukoners who are employed by First Nation development corporations. He also talked about the challenges of not having certainty about opportunities in the Yukon, uncertainty that is created by a government that creates bad relationships between First Nations and government. It creates a climate where nobody wants to invest as a result. He said we are investing Outside. We say, "What can we do to create the environment to bring that money back?" It was a double whammy when one of the few areas related to the mining sector that is actually an ongoing activity in this territory is the remediation of the contaminated sites left over from the federal watch in this territory — seven type 2 mine sites, the largest of which is Faro.

Since 2003, the Yukon government has been engaged with affected First Nations and the federal government developing and designing a closure plan for Faro, a closure plan that will see remediation activity going forward for another 150 years at minimum. It is a long-term project. My understanding and my expectation from my previous professional background is that closure plan would have been done before 13 years, but so be it. The fact is that earlier this year the contract was let to remediate the Faro mine site. When the announcement was made that the Faro mine site remediation had been granted, the press release said that it was being granted to an Alberta-based company. Being curious, I went and checked it out, and I thought, "That doesn't sound right." It turns out that the company, Parsons, is actually based in Pasadena. They may not want to come here given the minister opposite's comments about how they don't care about the opinions of the people in Pasadena.

The contract was let to a multinational corporation that is 15,000 persons strong with some three-point-some billion dollars of annual revenues. On their website they were happy to announce that they had successfully been granted this contract and it opened the doors for them, as they said, to aggressively pursue other northern mining cleanup projects. What wasn't so well-known, except for some of us including the ministers opposite, I am sure, who had been talking with local First Nation and Non-First Nation private sector companies that had also bid on that. It begs the question: At what point do we allow a massive, multinational to come in here and underbid by a few million dollars to give them what is effectively a loss-leader? We know that big box stores and other big businesses will underbid all of the time in order to get in the door. We have allowed this multinational in here and what we have done — I will read a little bit from a letter from the president of the Yukon First Nations Chamber of Commerce, because when we talk about how we create a vibrant local economy, we need to think about how it's not just simply one number in terms of the bottom line.

There are significant multiplier effects. Every dollar spent locally multiplies. When you send that dollar Outside, it has nothing more to do with this economy. What she said in her letter to her members — this is a letter that I was later told by her that was constructed not just by her, but by tax lawyers — was that we need and we should be hearing this as government — that it's a message of value, not just cost. While the Faro contract was awarded to a corporation in California for \$4 million less, it appears there was a lack of understanding when it comes to the value of a locally based bid of \$18.4 million and what a local contract could do to bolster the territory as a whole. They began with a corporate tax rate for one of the four First Nation companies that bid on the contract. If that company billed all contracts through their Yukon-based corporation and paid 15 percent of their net profit — let's presume at 20-percent margin, she said — this would amount to \$1.03 million — \$495,000 being Yukon's portion. She also gave a low estimate of 50 percent of the \$18.4 million as salaries through Yukoners and Yukon companies. The personal income tax amount would be an

additional \$3.49 million — \$1 million directly to Yukon. That's \$1.495 million supporting Yukon and not California.

We can focus on taxes but is that really the most important piece? We understand and we've been told time and time again from government members opposite that these big companies that come from Outside will employ some Yukoners, but how long do we just accept some employment as opposed to supporting our Yukon companies that raise their families here and support the territory's tax base? Of the \$18.4 million bid by a Yukon company, one can safely assume that 60 percent of those dollars would circulate in the territory. That means that \$11.4 million would be spent on personal items, big-ticket cars, snowmobiles, kids' education, after-school projects as well as small businesses, all in Yukon. How can we afford to give away that kind of money? What does it do? What message does it send — that, after 13 years, we're not prepared to invest in our own?

Mr. Speaker, what we see is a real unwillingness to take bold action. I have just used the example of the Parsons contract. You know, it's telling that the only time our Premier was taking a bold stance on something was when he organized the other northern premiers to go to Vancouver and state emphatically that the Yukon wouldn't accept a carbon tax. He didn't say, "I don't really know if we really explored all the ideas about how we address the pricing of carbon emissions." He didn't say, "Is there any way else to do something that will help drive Canada's transition to a stronger, more resilient low carbon economy?" He simply jumped to the conclusion that is what it was and it provided that kind of a grandstand.

You know, Mr. Speaker, he didn't see fit to rally these premiers against the announced cuts several years ago to the health transfers or the *Agreement on Internal Trade* that disproportionately affects the north, or when the federal government was amended YESAA against the wishes. What we hear from Yukoners is they want bold action when it comes to fighting climate change and shifting to an economy that focuses on a green energy economy and the knowledge sector. They want a government that aims high and does their best to hit that target.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it was interesting that the Minister of Finance spoke in his Budget Address to the issue of the fact that they were able to lobby the federal government and got support again for the flow-through shares. What he left out, which is really telling, are the opportunities — and we raised it in the Legislative Assembly before Christmas. You may recall the motion that was put forward by the members opposite to double the flow-through shares and we said, "You know, that's fine." That's something that the federal government has done going back for many, many years, but we said, "Why not also support the federal government to continue and increase the same tax treatment for investments in the clean energy innovation sector?" Hands off; not interested.

Well, guess what — there is an opportunity for this government or future governments because the federal government actually has ensured, through this latest federal budget, to expand tax support for the clean energy sector and

has done so just by the very means that we and the NDP had suggested in the motion debate last fall. They are talking about providing accelerated capital cost allowance support for equipment that generates energy by using renewable energy sources or fuel from waste or conserves energy by using fuel more efficiently. They want to expand the eligibility for proposed capital cost allowance in two important emerging areas — electrical vehicle charging and electrical energy storage, one of the biggest challenges that we face in this territory. We have an opportunity. I don't see that reflected in this budget.

We see a reference in here to biomass — but a stop. It doesn't go the next step. If we're serious about moving and making the transition to green energy — and as the Premier has noted many times, one of the biggest demands for energy in this territory is for fuel for vehicles. The federal government has just announced as well that it's prepared to invest in biomass gasification, and I use the example of the investment they make in Nova Scotia. They will have biomass gasification that will be diesel-ready for vehicles. We have the people with the expertise and the interest in this territory. We are early adopters. In addition to Yukon Energy Corporation, at least one private — I think two private citizens — have already confirmed orders for the new Tesla car.

Bold action also means sticking to your guns when the going gets hard or when you're faced with some adversity. As my colleague for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes said, when this government was elected, they set a goal of 50 percent waste diversion by 2015. It would have qualified as a bold action if they had stuck to it. However, 2015 came and went and they're nowhere near the goal.

What reevaluation has been done — what attempts to modernize?

Mr. Speaker, the current budget is also a demonstration of the Minister of Finance losing his grasp on his portfolio. In his first budget, he tabled a forecasted surplus of \$80 million. The forecast surplus for 2015-16 is now \$1.25 million. That's a lot of money to drop — five years, \$79 million; not bad; wore it right down. It's called spending. It's not called planning. It's not called thoughtfulness, and it does call desperation when we finally realize that, maybe after 13 years, we should be using the tools of results-based management. Results-based budgeting management would be the next step.

The potential is here. We can tap that potential but it's going to take a lot more creativity than we see demonstrated in this budget.

My colleagues and I will look forward to the opportunity when we get into various departments to engage with various ministers about specifics that they're proposing, the evidence that backs them. One of the important things that we have said over and over again is the importance of evidence-based decision-making and not making decisions as we saw with the 300-bed facility and then seeking evidence to support it. We'll be looking for evidence-based decision-making as a hallmark of good government in every aspect of what the government puts forward for its 2016-17 budget.

I will leave it to my colleagues and members opposite to continue with the discussion.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: It's a great privilege to be able to stand here in the Assembly today to speak to this particular budget, a budget of which I am very proud and a budget that I would argue, contrary to what members opposite have alluded to here today, in fact is very respectful — very responsive to the many discussions and the many conversations that this government has had not only over the past year but over the past number of years since this government was re-elected in 2011.

I want to just start off by thanking my constituency of Whitehorse West and my constituents who have really afforded me the opportunity over the many years to really work on their behalf and to be able to listen to their perspectives, their suggestions for improvement as to how we can govern and how we can respond to their priorities. I want to thank all those individuals who have provided their feedback and their suggestions over the years at the doorstep or on the phone or by e-mail, or through the many different social media outlets. What a privilege it is and has been over the past many years to be able to work on their behalf and to be able to deliver progress on a number of different fronts.

When I look back over the years, it's very interesting to see the amount of growth. I have spoken to this area, but to be able to look back to 2002 when I was first elected and to take a retrospective look at where we were and where we are today — it is night and day, I can say — and for the better. Our territory has grown significantly; the population has very much grown. I see it in my own constituency of Whitehorse West. We've seen new subdivisions — of Ingram, for example — come into full bloom. We have seen other areas within the riding that have filled in over the years with many different residents and many different forms of housing and many different populations.

As a result of that growth, in my particular area we have gone to work over a number of pieces of key infrastructure to accommodate that growth. The Hamilton Boulevard extension is one of them, and the new emergency response centre that came into being not long ago. I was pleased to be able to go to that particular facility just recently with our Minister of Justice. The emergency response centre houses Whitehorse's main ambulance station as well as Yukon's Emergency Medical Services corporate offices and the team itself. It has that added capacity to accommodate those additional vehicles as well as to offer training and conference space for each of our staff and the respective volunteers within Whitehorse and outside of Whitehorse.

It was also designed, however, to facilitate the 911 — the call-taking and the dispatch. I was very honoured to be able to take part in the official opening of that particular facility within the emergency response centre. It has enabled the RCMP to be able to take over that particular service and to relocate to the purpose-built communications suite that's housed over at the emergency response centre.

I know that, in last year's budget alone, we had about \$1 million identified within the budget to support the move, including the hiring and training of additional 911 operators to handle that planned expansion of 911 services to rural Yukon, which I know the Minister of Community Services and many others have been working diligently to fulfill.

I know that particular facility has responded to well over 3,500 calls from that new station and I know that number continues to grow by the moment and, of course, it will be expected to increase even further as we see the city continue to grow. It has been an initiative that has been a priority for the area to be able to enhance and improve our response times to the individuals who live along that particular corridor, but really, throughout the whole city and beyond the peripheral areas of the city. That particular facility, coupled with the new ambulance station that was just opened at the Whitehorse General Hospital, again, just reaffirms our commitment to enhancing emergency response times throughout the territory.

I just wanted to add initiatives such as that as well as the extension of Hamilton Boulevard. When we look at enhancing the delivery of our neighbourhoods and ensuring that they are welcoming, attractive and safe, again I just wanted to say thank you to our local neighbourhood association, the Copper Ridge Neighbourhood Association, for their ongoing work to improve access to our neighbourhood parks and other matters that are really important to the particular area. They are working with area residents and ourselves as MLAs up in that area to deliver further improvements for Lazulite park, for example, or firesmarting in the area — again being able to enhance the safety within our neighbourhoods and making them more attractive. I just wanted to say thank you so very much to all of those individuals who have volunteered their time.

This week marks National Volunteer Week, of course. I can't say enough about the thousands of individuals throughout this territory who donate their time and their energy and their efforts on our behalf each and every day. I spent the entire weekend at the Canada Games Centre and I'm very proud to say that at least our division of hockey came to an end yesterday. One only has to spend a little bit of time at the rinks — and certainly we all do that, but I had the opportunity to be able to spend a lot of time at the arenas in support of my own son's hockey team — and it's amazing what we're able to learn and see first-hand, seeing the passion and the diligence of our coaches and officials and those people who donate their time to our hockey associations and the many individuals who really support our sports organizations and really contribute to the further development of our young athletes. They all contribute to the really healthy and fantastic territory that we call home.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make note that just earlier last week, I had the opportunity to take in the celebration of the 30th anniversary of our territory's French first language program, but also the 30th anniversary of École Émilie Tremblay. It was un grand moment pour l'École Émilie Tremblay at the Arts Centre, and it was a fantastic celebration — a really great overview of 30 years of growth of the

francophonie in our territory in full recognition of Canada's bilingual/bicultural heritage. It certainly was a great recognition of the French first language program delivered at the school itself and also of course of the evolution of the program and, I also have to say, of the evolution of the French language programs to all the various degrees that are being delivered throughout the territory.

I have to say, as an individual — the MLA where École Émilie Tremblay finds itself — it has been a tremendous opportunity to be able to attend many functions over the years and to be able to work alongside the community and the Minister of Education in undertaking the planning for a new French secondary school in Whitehorse.

Housed within this budget that we are currently debating, of course, is \$400,000 in support of this very important planned initiative for a new school, working alongside with la Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, and really working toward responding to the specific needs of this particular population — a population that we have seen significant growth in over the years. The francophonie, as I have referenced on many occasions in our territory, have seen significant growth. The francophonie has been part of our territory for over 150 years. French-speaking Yukoners have contributed to the history, the economy and the culture of our territory, and they have supported the development of our territory as we know it today. They are an integral part of its identity.

Of course, today Yukon has a French school, a French childcare centre, a French newspaper and le Centre de la francophonie, where entrepreneurs, immigrants, adult learners, youth or women can access a wide array of community services. It's really this work of our community and the efforts of our government, working alongside AFY to enhance the delivery of French-language services — to which this budget also speaks — that is really helping attract and enhance our territory as really the best place to live, work, do business and play, of course.

In really looking forward at this particular budget — and I do know that I do have a limited amount of time, unlike the Leader of the Official Opposition, which is unfortunate, because I could spend a few days — I certainly do look forward to speaking at greater length to my specific departments.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to take a look at this budget and the very fact — I want to commend the Minister of Finance and our Premier for being able to table a surplus of just over \$9 million. This is an historic time for our territory, because unlike other jurisdictions in our country, we are able to actually talk about the fact that we do have net financial resources. We actually have dollars in our bank. Not only are we introducing a budget with a surplus, but we're also able to, as a result, enhance our spending on very important services to the people who need them most.

So when we look at this, we look at the major boost to health care funding. I know the Leader of the Official Opposition referred to back in the day, when we were talking to the renewal of the Canada health transfer agreement with

Canada — I believe it was back in 2003 — I recall the federal government of the day and actually we were looking at a substantial reduction in funding for our health transfer. It was at that time that the premiers from the three northern territories did stand up and speak on behalf of the north. It was a changing point for our territorial governments, not just on the health side, but on all spectrums. It really introduced and opened up a conversation about the importance of having the base funding — so having that transfer agreement — but also having the base-plus funding formula applied. Unlike other jurisdictions in the country that have the population to support enhanced or are able to have a formula that reflects the population, that just does not work for the territories. It was at that time that our premier of the day had walked out — alongside the other premiers, walked outside and walked out on the Prime Minister of the day — to make the point about how important that health agreement was.

We have been able to benefit from consecutive health agreements over the years that reflect a population-based formula, but also the plus side, in recognition of our unique realities of living in the north and all that goes along with that. As a result, that formula and that approach to doing business has been carried over into many different fronts.

I just want to say that, when we look at our budget, even from back in 2003-04, which was one of the first budgets that I was part of, when we delivered it, our budget was about half of what we are talking about today. As a result of due diligence and practising good fiscal management — it's about growing our revenues, it's about growing the private sector, it's about growing our sectors — they have contributed so much to the livelihood of business to the territory, which creates jobs and grow families, and to all that makes us really proud to call Yukon our home.

I know that the Minister of Health and Social Services will certainly speak to the individual, specific expenditures in that particular department, but I do want to say that we find ourselves in a very fortunate circumstance that we do not have any debt in this territory.

I was reviewing the Budget Address that the Premier provided last week, and when I peruse the amount of debt that Canada's provinces and territories are carrying here today — almost \$600 billion in net debt — the Premier put that into context that it's enough to fund our entire total budget in our territory for more 400 years. That doesn't even take into account the interest on that debt that continues to accumulate. We are so very fortunate to not have that debt. I know we did have that debt back in the days of the previous NDP governments, but to be able to have a territory that is debt-free enables us to continue to make those strategic investments in infrastructure, in education, in training and health care and to support those programs that are so critical to the development and the growth of our business community. It also enables us to continue to be a very attractive place here in the territory and, as a result, we've seen a consequential growth in our population.

When we talk about key infrastructure, one of the best ways in terms of growing our economy is dedicating resources

and investing in the people who live here on the ground, making sure that we train Yukoners to take advantage of those economic opportunities. While they may not be here today, we know that, for example when mining continues to rebound — and it will — we will be ready to take advantage of those opportunities.

The Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining is one of those strategic investments made by the Government of Yukon in collaboration with Canada. I know that the work of, for example, our Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — he continues to be very responsible and very strategic in ensuring that CNIM was a strategic investment.

The piece of legislation that was just tabled here earlier today speaks to enhanced student financial assistance available for the student population. I can say that, as an individual who has subscribed to the student grant over the years, this is great news for all Yukon students, bringing parity to the way that we deliver financial assistance and really enhancing the delivery of assistance available for our students in order for them to be able to take advantage of the great quality education that is delivered here at Yukon College or outside of the territory as well, enhancing those many options.

In terms of also growing our economy, there is a lot of important work. We spoke about this within Question Period here today — but even modernizing our mining regulations, again creating that greater certainty, that regulatory streamlining, a more integrated approach to permitting, improving mine licensing, engaging with First Nations, arranging or setting up the creation of a new strategic industries unit within EMR to do just that. Within this year's budget, of course, we're talking to providing support to Yukon Mining Alliance for \$1 million in mining attraction initiative — again, to be undertaken over the next number of years, getting ready to really take advantage of the economic opportunities that we will indeed see growth in.

Tourism, I want to say — I have a lot to say on the tourism file. It continues to be a very key strategic economic generator for this territory. I'm very proud to be the Minister of Tourism and Culture, very proud to work with a dedicated group of passionate, very well-informed set of individuals in this territory who have really helped see our revenues grow, who have helped see numbers grow and who have really helped set the stage in terms of delivering — certainly upping the ante, so to speak, in terms of how we deliver ourselves or certainly set the stage as a destination of choice for the rest of the world.

We were very pleased, based on the momentum and the success of the Yukon Now funding campaign. It was the single largest investment in tourism marketing in Yukon's history. We're very pleased to be able to build on that success over the past two years. I will give credit to industry — the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon and the Yukon Chamber of Commerce — for their vision in encouraging us to really raise the bar in terms of delivering tourism marketing to a new degree, by way of television marketing. Now we can be very proud to be able to see ourselves literally within a

suite of six television commercials that build upon the winter in tourism opportunities, promoting and staging that Yukon is a destination of choice year-round.

We are really pleased to be able to continue those efforts. Now that we have six beautiful television commercials, we need to ensure that they continue to be in play, that they continue to be advertised on those national and speciality networks. A significant chunk of those dollars will ensure that those stay in the marketplace. As we know, within any marketing campaign, sustenance and to sustain those efforts you need to ensure that those continue to roll. That is in fact, where those dollars will be going.

Likewise, continuation — I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition had perhaps questioned with bewilderment that in fact now we're taking a turn, that we're setting our eyes to the world market. I have to say that we have actually been setting our stage, or setting our eyes to the world market, for many years.

In fact, we have seen tremendous growth in our international markets. Twenty percent of the Yukon Now marketing program dollars have been dedicated and were dedicated over the past two years to the international markets — including the United States, the Asian markets where we have seen tremendous growth, and German-speaking Europe as well. Those efforts will again continue to grow — not to mention marrying up with those increased resources that this government has made toward international, overseas marketing we well. These dollars will supplement those expenditures as well.

I do not want to go on at great length, but I would also be remiss if I didn't mention additional funding for the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association. I am really proud of the work that this group, this very progressive association, has been working on for many years. We have seen such a resurgence of cultural revitalization among First Nation communities over the years. These extra dollars — \$100,000 increase in annual funding to this particular organization — will indeed enhance their ability and sustain their efforts to be able to work with the communities, to work with individual tour operations, to help develop those further tourism experiences in our communities and to help market and bring our products and experiences to become tourism-ready, export-ready.

It is a tremendous opportunity for all of us. We know that there is a significant demand for aboriginal tourism throughout this country, and I think in the Yukon it really sets us apart. It is a very unique part of our heritage and our culture. It is certainly something that adds significant value to all that we promote and is reflected within those television commercials and each of those various products that have been borne out of the Yukon Now initiative.

There is \$1.4 million for museums and First Nation cultural centres. I look forward to debating this a little bit further. Back in the day, I remember when I first became the Minister of Tourism and Culture in 2002, our budget was far less than half of this. I think it was sitting around \$500,000 — not even that. It has literally grown by about 300 percent over

the years in terms of seeing the number of museums and cultural centres expand and very much identifying the much-needed funding to be able to help sustain their continued operations, but also to grow in terms of capital infrastructure and to help grown their products and the delivery of their experiences working hand in hand with organizations such as Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association.

We are very pleased, as I mentioned, to be able to continue our efforts — I spoke a bit about education. Again, I know that we'll probably be speaking at greater length about preserving tax credits in our territory — tax credits that speak to the importance of sport and arts in our territory. The budget, of course, includes dollars that carries our end and we certainly hope that Canada will continue on with these particular tax credits. We know that's not the case currently, but we have seen such great success with these particular tax credits in our territory and we are committed to continuing to pay those particular parents and families our portion of that particular grant.

We are also very pleased to be able to include \$520,000 toward the cost of school supplies for every child, every student in the Yukon. I have to say that, as the Premier mentioned the other day, it is perhaps a small investment but a very important investment. At the start of every year — I know this to be true — we as parents, family members and caregivers are provided a list of school supplies that we're required to retrieve for our students and for our children. I think that this is a very important expenditure and it's going to help defray those costs of school supplies. It's a necessity to have those school supplies in our schools and it's going to help offset that added cost for families in the territory. As the Premier said, I think that's \$100 for parents that they don't have to spend every September or August or whenever that school season starts. I want to say thank you to the Minister of Education for enabling that expenditure to be allotted within the department.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Yes, and as the Minister of Finance just reminded me, that is per student, so not per family. That's \$100 per student — so again, a very significant expenditure alone.

Mr. Speaker, I know that I could go on at great length about education but I would be very remiss if I didn't mention the ongoing work of Yukon College and the \$1.5 million over three years for the college to help them develop the transition into the Yukon university. A tremendous amount of work has been done in support of transitioning to the Yukon university. We have found a path that is realistic and I know that Yukon College has been working very diligently over the last year and a half on producing two first-ever made-in-Yukon university degree programs to be delivered for the first time ever in Yukon's history at Yukon College. I believe those are still on track and will be launched next year, speaking to areas of importance to our territory, including climate change and First Nation indigenous governance.

We are also very pleased to be able to again continue to provide assistance and support those integral agreements with

many of our First Nation governments throughout the territory, through MOUs or intergovernmental signed accords to ensure that education is relevant and focused on First Nation culture and is responsive to the needs of those we serve. I just want to say thank you and congratulate Yukon First Nations — whether it's Kwanlin Dün or Carcross/Tagish, Selkirk First Nation — for their ongoing work in support of delivering education.

We have spoken at great length about having those remedial assistants within our classrooms — education assistants, remedial tutors and the like. I know the Premier has spoken to this already as well, but we have seen an incredible increase in the number of individuals who provide this invaluable service to our children each and every day in our schools, and how we have been able to enhance the funding by just over \$3 million over the past four years, and we're very much committed to ensuring that, where needed, we will continue to deliver.

We were also able to just open the brand new F.H. Collins Secondary School in Riverdale. Now we see we have 639 students, I believe it is — maybe give or take a student or two. It's an incredible moment in Yukon's history to be able to see a beautiful new school that makes it very attractive for us to continue to engage with families and attract families to make Yukon their home.

I just want to again congratulate the Department of Education for bringing this very important piece of infrastructure to fruition, and we look forward to the first graduating class making great use of that particular facility. I know a couple of those personally, as we speak.

Mr. Speaker, in the health area, we have seen new hospitals in Dawson City and Watson Lake in recent years, and we are very proud to be able to continue on by being able to build the Sarah Steele facility for addictions, addressing addictions with not only concurrent sessions for women and men, but also a new youth component. This year's budget will see just over \$2 million in operational funding — a significant turn for our territory in being able to deliver new programming and being able to respond to the needs of our populations.

The mental wellness strategy that the ministry of Health and Social Services has been working on diligently and identifying new dollars in support of the strategy in addition to the services that are already provided in the territory as well — I'm very proud to say that we were the first to open Canada's MRI north of 60. We have been working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to enhance the emergency room at the hospital campus. We have been working, again, to deliver more doctors and train more nurses — thanks in part to the licensed practical nurse program at the Yukon College — increasing the number of hours of home care available for Yukoners throughout the territory.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to invest in infrastructure. IT is one area that I haven't spoken to, but again, it was only a number of years ago that we didn't have a dedicated envelope. Our government was able to identify a dedicated envelope of \$6.5 million. That now — thanks to this budget — has grown

by \$3 million and it is growing; another specific strategic sector that we heard loud and clear through all of our budget consultations that in fact this will contribute to Yukon's GDP; will contribute to jobs and will help diversify Yukon's economy. That is in fact what we are just seeing right now — investments in highways, roads, bridges and airports; again totalling almost \$56 million.

I could go on at greater length and it's unfortunate that I am just about out of time, but I did also want to say that the ongoing work with First Nations and partnering with First Nations through intergovernmental accords — whether it's land development, education, capacity development, community safety, justice, tourism or economic development, benefits each and every one of us. Again, we have many examples to be able to refer to in each of our budgets that speak to how we work with First Nations day in and day out, either at the political level or at the official level, and how we are now working to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report recommendations. These are just but a number of different examples.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of this budget and I look forward to hearing the support from the members of the opposition and looking forward to debating each and every particular item within this budget. Thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: It is a privilege for me to stand up in this House today and speak to this bill. It is one more step in moving Yukon forward. Before I go into why I will be supporting this budget, I would like to thank my family for their continued support. My wife and my two children are very important to me. A big part of why I am here is because I wanted to build a better life for them. I was raised in a family that believed it was better to contribute than to complain, and if you don't like something, go change it and make it better. I would also like to thank all of those who volunteer in our communities — a big thank you. You help make our communities a better place to work, live and play.

When I gave my maiden address, I spoke about my grandmother, Hilda Watson, being the first woman to lead a political party in Canada. All those years ago, she made a choice to go and make it better. She showed us that the best way to change a situation is to get involved. I would like to thank my constituents in Kluane for the privilege to represent them here in the Assembly and I'm committed to work hard on behalf of everyone in my riding. I'm sincerely appreciative of their continued support.

I would also like to thank the staff in our office, especially my senior policy advisor and administrative assistant who are like oil in a machine. Things just run a lot smoother, actually, when they're around.

This budget is part of a larger package of budgets. I would like to talk about the context for this budget. Like the budgets before, it reflects the commitment that moving forward together so that we can make Yukon the best place to work, live and raise a family.

I speak with my constituents often about issues that are important to them — issues such as a healthy economy,

including resource extraction, manufacturing, tourism, private sector business, the knowledge sector and trades. As I have stated previously, we are lucky; we're not entitled. My siblings and I were raised to be hard-working, contributing members of society. My family ran a small business and each one of us kids appreciated the realities of being a small business owner, especially in a smaller community. We didn't want freebies and handouts. What we wanted were opportunities for jobs, and Yukon Party has always said the best cure for poverty and homelessness is a job.

The Yukon Party has always been the party of opportunity for people who work hard. My grandmother was willing to work hard. People saw that hard work and respected it. Rather than saying women can't be political party leaders, it was the Yukon Party all those years ago that said yes, and my grandmother was able to be the first woman to lead a political party.

My point is that I want to see opportunities for people so that people who are willing to invest their initiative and hard work can do well. The government doesn't owe anyone a job. It doesn't owe anyone a freebie. My vision for the government is where we establish the ground rules so that they are fair, balanced and just let the private sector do what they do best.

I want to talk a bit about what this budget means for my constituents. Late summer and early fall, I held some successful barbecues in the community of Haines Junction, a dinner in Beaver Creek and one in Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay. Early in the new year, I was in each one of my smaller communities in the riding to hear from my constituents. It was great to connect to hear their concerns. When I talk to my constituents, what I hear is that people are concerned about jobs and the economy, so for me it was really important that this budget focus on jobs and economy.

Some of the projects in my riding are very large and will offer employment opportunities to many of my constituents — enough that they can take care of their families for the whole year. Others are much smaller, and maybe they are not going to pay for a month's stay at some fancy place on the French Riviera, but they will pay for a couple of months' light bill or fuel for a pickup. Given many of these businesses in my riding tend to be mom-and-pop operations, just like the one my family ran, these smaller contracts mean a lot for the local economy.

In Haines Junction we have budgeted \$30,000 to replace the roof to the district office and field operations building. We have \$25,000 for a complete exterior painting of the health centre. I'm also pleased to see that in the grader station — which I worked in for years — shop lighting has been given the \$28,000 to fix that up. There is over \$80,000 worth of work on smaller projects. Hopefully a big chunk of that stays in the community and becomes the money that one of my constituents uses to pay for their kid's minor hockey registration or maybe gas money to drive over to Kluane Lake. My point is that these contracts help to keep people in my riding.

I'm supporting this budget because of what it means for the jobs and the economy in my riding. This budget authorizes

\$1.673 million for a comprehensive municipal grant for the Village of Haines Junction. That is over \$100,000 a month to run our municipality. This money goes to things like: plowing the streets, keeping the lights on in the recreation complex, having safe drinking water, operating the local dump and treating our waste water. It may not be fancy stuff, but it sure is important to our community.

Through the small communities fund, our government is budgeting \$1.5 million for solid-waste upgrades in Haines Junction, Faro and Watson Lake. The Haines Junction work includes construction of a new hazardous waste depot, installation of a permanently mounted tub grinder, a compactor, a baler and a new scale and gatehouse. Through the rural land development program, Haines Junction has \$600,000 in capital for urban residential lots and planning. The Rural Land Development unit does the developing, plans and designs, and constructs and delivers Yukon government land development projects throughout the Yukon.

To help communities provide better recreational programming for their citizens, we released a Yukon community recreational planning tool kit in January of this year. The tool kit, which is easy to use and adaptable for all rural communities, outlines the five-step process to help create a community recreational plan. To me it makes sense to access the economies of scale when it comes to these kinds of planning tools. I think the Premier spoke about being smarter with our money, and this is just one example of that.

I mentioned earlier about this budget being good for the local economy. The budget includes \$365,000 in O&M for the enhancement of social worker program services in rural communities. This means an increase of 2.3 FTEs for regional social worker trainer/mentor, one of whom is for Haines Junction, and an increase of a regional supervisor position.

I would like to thank my colleagues for coming to my communities and hearing from my constituents. As you know, we hosted Association of Yukon Communities meetings last year and many of my colleagues and staff made the trip out. We had good meetings with several community groups. I know the seniors were impressed by the strong representation that we had. I know that the Minister of Health and Social Services met with the local nurses in Haines Junction to hear their concerns. I think the regional social worker money is in part a result of that meeting. I am proud to say that Haines Junction has a new community addiction worker. Our government has put this program in place to address gaps identified by the First Nations and highlighted in the clinical services plan. This will better serve the community by providing a more diverse range of services.

The other big thing that came out of the conversation around health care and seniors housing is that our government has committed \$50,000 in the spring budget for the planning and consultation with the Village of Haines Junction, the seniors society and the First Nation on phase 2 of our seniors housing in Haines Junction.

We held a tourism and economic development event on November 27. I invited folks from the departments of Tourism and Culture and Economic Development out to Haines

Junction so that they could discuss funding opportunities that they have for the local business community. The meeting began with the viewing of the very popular Yukon Now commercials. The other goal was to get the date set for the establishment of a chamber of commerce. I am proud to see the support of so many interested businesses from around the Kluane region and to see that the chamber is up and running again. I am also glad to see that the work they do and have done in making Kluane a great place to visit.

Yukon will be hosting the Council of the Federation meetings here this summer. In addition to the meetings held here in Whitehorse, premiers will meet with the five national aboriginal organizations leaders in Haines Junction the day before the Council of the Federation begins.

An MOU has been entered into with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations on local area planning for recreational, commercial, industrial and residential land opportunities.

For Burwash Landing, we have set aside \$500,000 for upgrading and an air terminal schematic design at the Burwash airport. The Yukon government has signed an MOU with the Kluane First Nation regarding local area planning, recreational and residential land opportunities, cottage lots at Dutch Harbour on Kluane Lake and wind power. I believe we are on track for 11 recreational lots at Dutch Harbour that will be sold by lottery in summer of 2016.

Our government's commitment to education is evident in an educated MOU with Kluane First Nation on an education agreement to support successive students. A few years back in 2013, we signed an intergovernmental accord. This MOU will enable the Yukon government to meet its commitments under the shared interests and priorities section of this intergovernmental accord between Kluane First Nation and Yukon to engage in discussions regarding long-term educational planning and to establish a long-term partnership with the goal of improving educational experiences and effective outcomes for all students within the Kluane First Nation traditional territory. We have money in the budget to make those words on paper mean something in the community for our children.

We have also been cooperating with Kluane First Nation on their wind turbines. I would like to thank my colleagues, and especially the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, for providing \$1 million over the next two and a half years for the Kluane community development corporation to install the three turbines. The electricity generated will be supplied to the communities of Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay via the existing diesel micro grid — less reliance on diesel, and that's a good thing, Mr. Speaker.

In Beaver Creek, we have \$93,000 for the Nelna Bessie John school for barrier-free access. In our 2016-17 budget, we have \$11,820,000 for Shakwak Highway restoration. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Shakwak agreement, originally signed in 1977, planned for the roads rebuilt under the program to be paved. Funding for the Shakwak agreement has not been included in the US transportation bill. What money we have left, we are using to rehabilitate sections of the road that are impacted by permafrost thawing, rather than paving. I've

worked hard lobbying our federal government, Alaska state legislators and their federal government on this file. Grade restoration and BST patching and other work to alleviate the permafrost distress will take place in various locations, from kilometre 1700 to kilometre 1902. In other words, we're going to do our best to take care of the heaves and drops in the road, for all the people who are listening.

While I'm thinking about Beaver Creek, I would like to mention that, in December 2014, our Yukon government initiated preliminary reconciliation agreement discussions with the White River First Nation. Substantive negotiations began in March 2015 and they are progressing.

In the early spring, we had budget tours across the Yukon. In the Kluane riding, we heard from residents regarding priorities they wished to see. Some of their priorities included: brushing and signage within the communities of Beaver Creek, Destruction Bay and Haines Junction; some marine maintenance and upgrades in Destruction Bay, with the opening of our new cottage lots; some road resurfacing and upgrades in the subdivisions and in the Glacier Acres subdivision; and road upgrades, resurfacing and ditching at Mendenhall subdivision and the turning lane at the Takhini subdivision. These are just a few, but rest assured that those priorities have been passed on to the appropriate departments for action.

I want to talk a few minutes about some of the initiatives that are very important to my riding. This budget has money for practical nurse programming. In response to clear demand for locally trained professionals, the Yukon government extended the fund for an additional four years by allocating \$593,000 to it. For a riding that is a bit farther away from hospitals, nurses are often the front-line people we see when it comes to health matters, especially urgent ones. This is a good move and it's one I support.

I also appreciate our government's focus on mental health. In my riding we work hard to get kids engaged in different group activities — get them into hockey or playing ball, or something outdoors. That is why I have been so engaged in the Junior Ranger program and actually all youth activities in our community. Mr. Speaker, as adults, we have ways that we can contribute. That said, some of these young people are dealing with issues that are beyond the skillset for your average adult, so earlier this year our government announced the introduction of the FRIENDS cognitive behaviour group-based intervention program for youth, in partnership with Bell Let's Talk and Northwestel. It provides mental health prevention and treatment services in the Yukon for adolescents at social or emotional risk. While this is based in Whitehorse, I'm pleased to see that our departments are working together to improve coordination of support for students and exploring school council models for the other regions.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is all about the economy and jobs. I spoke earlier about what my vision for governing Yukon was — and the government set the ground rules and let the private sector work their magic. We have lots of examples of that, especially in the resource sector. I would like to talk a

little bit about our work on setting a long-term vision for the biomass sector. Our government adopted a biomass strategy and that will guide the development of a biomass energy sector in the territory. Using biomass is a cost-effective and environmentally sustainable solution for heating in the territory. The Yukon biomass energy strategy will also create good opportunities for investment in the Yukon in general and my riding in particular. The strategy provides opportunities for generating new energy for heating from local renewable energy sources.

When I look at my riding, I think about all the beetle-killed forest we have and that could and should be converted in biomass fuel — but I would be remiss if I didn't mention the work that I've done with regard to the forestry file. I'm sure glad to see that the forestry act is up for review and I'll be encouraging all those in the industry to be engaged and provide comments. Rather than watching it burn up during a forest fire, Mr. Speaker, where we may end up spending millions of dollars to contain the forest fire, it makes sense to this cowboy to let the private sector access the resource to access the resource and use it in a user-friendly way. Think about it for a moment — people in my riding getting jobs, Yukoners getting to heat their homes and businesses and the government reducing the risk when it comes to a large fire in my neck of the woods.

I would also like to talk a little bit about some of the programs that are territory-wide and how they impact my riding. The community development fund continues to play a huge role in providing jobs and economic development in my riding. From April 1, 2015 to March 1, 2016 of this year the Government of the Yukon approved over \$3.7 million in funding toward 82 projects throughout the territory. These include a variety of place-making projects in areas of activity related to tourism, community economic development, sport and recreation, social inclusion, health and wellness, as well as support for First Nation cultural initiatives.

Since 2003-04, the government has provided over \$30 million toward 1,190 community-related projects. That's pretty incredible.

Recently I heard from constituents in Takhini that they're looking to start a community group so that they can access CDF money for projects in their area. I think that's a great thing.

Since 2011, the communities in my riding have definitely benefited from the funding provided through CDF. During that time, Beaver Creek has received over \$131,000; Haines Junction has received over \$870,000; Burwash Landing over \$203,000. Just to highlight a few: the St. Elias ski society — they now have a new snowmobile and trail groomer; Kluane First Nation has done some great improvements to their hockey arena; there is a new playground at Canyon Creek; the new Zamboni for the Village of Haines Junction; or the St. Elias Lions Club — of which I'm a proud member — with their new barbecues and trailer.

I would also like to mention three funds that help build Yukon's economy. The regional economic development fund from April 1, 2015 to January 28, 2016 — 38 projects from

Yukon communities were approved for the regional economic development fund for a total of \$580,852. Since inception, the fund has invested over \$4.6 million in 287 Yukon projects.

The strategic industry development fund from April 1, 2015 to January 28, 2016 — 22 strategic industry development fund projects have been approved, representing over \$1.5 million in funding. Since 2003-04, the fund has invested over \$10.3 million in funding toward 181 projects.

Let me just mention a little bit about the film and sound fund. From April 1, 2015 to January 28, 2016, 36 film and sound fund projects have been approved, representing over \$1 million in funding. Since 2003-04, the fund has invested over \$8.3 million in funding toward 428 projects. As the MLA for Kluane, I often hear about the local TV show *Dr. Oakley, Yukon Vet* — as I'm sure everyone here knows Dr. Michelle Oakley. She is a vet, and she sees pretty much everything that moves in the Yukon. She helps animals big and small, wild and domestic. I have tourists who tell me that this TV show introduced them to the idea of coming to the Yukon because of the beautiful scenery that they saw.

While those tourists are in my riding, I know that they like to have access to their cell phones and, frankly, so do I. That is one more reason why I support this budget. The budget has money for 4G expansion to the rural communities. Our government wants to ensure that Yukoners in all communities have access to the same economic and social benefits. A total of \$760,000 in funding will be provided to Bell Mobility between 2014 and 2018 to assist with the expansion of the 4G services, \$46,000 in 2016-17. As a result of this initiative, 4G mobile service is now currently available in 17 Yukon communities. It's a lot different from when I first got elected.

I want to talk about how we're helping keep Yukoners safe. This budget has \$144,000 for adopting an automatic vehicle location system, which is phase 2 of the Yukon Emergency Medical Services communications systems upgrade. You didn't know about it, Mr. Speaker, did you? I'm going to tell you about it.

This phase includes the purchase and installation of automatic vehicle location devices. These devices integrate within an updated system — ensure the location of our first responders. This ensures both patients and volunteers safely in the communities. These devices do not just assist in call-taking and dispatching ambulances; they also help reduce response times by ensuring that the closest available unit is sent out. They help us make sure our fleet is back in a safe time frame and help us know when to send another team out to ensure safety.

We continue to fund the domestic water well program. The budget is \$1.2 million. If you live in a community that has piped water, you probably do not realize how important that expense is when it goes to getting potable water. Many people use water tanks on the back of their vehicles; others use wells. In 2014, amendments to the *Municipal Act* and the *Assessment and Taxation Act* were passed to extend the rural well-drilling program to property owners in participating municipalities. After regulations to support the new program were passed, the

legislative changes proved their value. Currently, 50 projects are underway, including 30 within the municipalities.

I do want to thank the Minister of Community Services for his department's work on basic 911 also. The government is working to expand basic 911 emergency call service. In February 2016, the 911 call-taking centre and police dispatch service moved from the RCMP headquarters to the emergency response centre communications suite in Whitehorse. This state-of-the-art centre is specifically designed for the Yukon-wide expansion of service. For those of us who grew up in rural communities, we have always just known the number that you dial, but if you are a tourist in a crisis, it is sure nice to be able to call the same number that everyone else does across North America. We are on schedule to complete the expansion of the basic 911 to rural Yukon by the end of the summer of 2016. This way all Yukoners and visitors will be able to dial the same easy-to-remember emergency number used across North America. As someone who is a volunteer in my community, I like to see everyone being able to contribute.

I would like to talk a little bit about the Ember Fire Academy. Our government introduced this program in August 2014. Our goal was to introduce women from the age of 16 and older to the fire service. The firefighting academy is a way of encouraging women to volunteer for the Yukon fire service and consider firefighting as a career. I understand that over the last two years, 25 participants have gone through the program and six have since joined a volunteer fire department. I hope to see more young women considering this academy. I think about how my grandmother stepped forward all those years ago to do something that was not typically a woman's job. I hope these women continue to explore new opportunities and contribute to their communities.

Let me talk a little bit about other ways this budget is helping Yukoners. We instituted the new Yukon caregiver tax credit to help all Yukoners who support family members with disabilities. In 2014, we doubled the Yukon child fitness tax credit from \$500 to \$1,000. We were proud to double the Yukon child fitness tax credit. It makes sense. I believe we have to do more than just tell kids to stay out of trouble. We have to give them healthy, positive, constructive alternatives. Those healthy, positive, constructive alternatives usually involve organized sports or activities, and that usually means money. To me, these tax credits are a whole lot better way to spend money than trying to patch kids up after they have gotten into trouble.

Each year, credits are claimed for approximately 2,800 children from 1,600 families enrolled in organizations' healthy activities.

I want to talk more about what we're doing in the Department of Environment during Committee of the Whole debate. What I would like to do here is mention a few items that may be of interest to my constituents.

Our government invested \$522,000 to add more campsites to three campgrounds and to repair or replace facilities at up to 12 others. I invite everyone interested in camping to tune in when we do Environment during Committee of the Whole. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised

with what we have in the budget. In our last platform, we committed to looking into expanding camping opportunities. We did this by looking at more campgrounds, more campsites in existing campgrounds and improved amenities.

This will not only help Yukon parks deliver a better, safer camping experience, but also provide economic and job opportunities for local businesses. We also expanded the camping opportunities by extending the seasons they are open. I do want to thank Rick Goodfellow and others for their advice on how to make our campgrounds more accessible for all Yukoners. I'm sure many of us in this Assembly recently received an e-mail letting us know how we can access things like campground permits and fishing licences online — again, more to say during Committee on that.

As someone who loves being out on the land, I'm very interested in making sure our environment is well-managed. To that end, we are investing more than \$1.5 million in 2016-17 as part of the expansion of the water monitoring network and baseline monitoring. My colleagues and I are committed to making fact-based water management decisions that sustain the quality, quantity and overall health of all Yukon waters. We have been working on this by implementing the *Yukon Water Strategy and Action Plan*, which was released in June 2014. We allocated \$3.35 million over three years.

In the first two years of this plan, the government upgraded 23 hydrometric stations, installed 15 new hydrometric stations and established or reactivated four new water quality stations. We hired a hydrologist, held two Yukon water forums, and funded the Yukon Water and Wastewater Operator training program at Yukon College. We've provided water-related presentations in Yukon schools as part of Canada Water Week, and invested in and enhanced flood forecasting.

The Yukon government is committed to promoting Yukon's unique way of life through participation in hunting and sustainable use of our wildlife resources. Mr. Speaker, last year we had 100 licences. We jacked that up to 125 this year. We have lots of information on our website so you can check that out. I'm sure we'll talk more about that in Committee of the Whole.

I'm also excited to say that new this year is the permitted use of motorized vehicles in order to retrieve and transport harvested bison in the three-kilometre bison management zone between Jarvis River and Silver City. This is a product of listening to the communities.

I'm proud as a minister to initiate the work with Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Asek Renewable Resources Council and trappers on a pilot project to improve moose populations in the Asek area. The Yukon government will provide \$50,000 in 2016-17 as part of a three-year \$174,000-funding agreement between the Yukon government and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations that began last year.

The Government of Yukon is committed to ensuring healthy wildlife populations across the territory and

continuing to work with all the key players on recovering this population. It's a priority for me and for our government.

In conclusion, I want to re-emphasize that this budget is all about jobs and the economy. This is a very good budget. It is good for Yukon. It is good for my riding of Kluane. We are very blessed to live in this magnificent territory and especially us in Kluane, which we all know is extra larger than life. I look forward to another five years of representing my community, working with the Village of Haines Junction, our three local First Nations — Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Kluane First Nation and White River First Nation — the local advisory councils in the smaller communities, the business community, Parks Canada, all our local volunteer organizations and my constituents, working hard for all of Yukon. So I look forward to rising later in debate to talk about some of the other investments in this current fiscal year. I again want to thank my fellow colleagues. I want to thank the Premier for this budget. My colleagues and I put a lot of time and effort into this budget and I really think it shows and I think Yukoners should be proud. I know that I'm proud of this budget.

Thank you and God bless, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Stick: As many of my colleagues in the House have done today, I want to start off by thanking my family — most important to ensuring that I get home and find a meal in the oven or don't have to worry about preparing meals. The type of support you get from family and friends keeps us going and without it, I know I personally would not be doing as well as I do.

It's a privilege to be a member of this Legislature and to represent Yukoners and I am proud to be here. I want to thank the citizens of Riverdale South and I've commented on this before about what a diverse group it is. We have individuals who still live in the original house they built back in the 1970s in the Yukon in Riverdale South. We have new families. I see more and more strollers and little bikes out now that the weather has turned nice. Just by looking at the traffic on the sidewalk in front of my house, I know we have more young families moving into the area. We also have seniors housing, we have apartment dwellers and we have condos, so it's quite a range.

I know I've mentioned before that I think I have the most schools in a riding — which is five — and I have yet to make it to every school council in one month. Sometimes I think it's a joke on me because I didn't go to them when I was a parent, so now I get to go to them all the time to make up for the ones I missed. I want to thank the staff, the administration and especially the elected school councils who put the time in to provide great programming and great support, not just to the children who attend their schools, but also to families. I've seen some wonderful outreach that schools have done to provide outreach to families to make sure they feel included in the community — in the community of school — and know that they are being listened to and have a chance to say something about their children's education. So a big shout out to those five schools.

This winter I had the opportunity and privilege of visiting some of our communities. I spent a lot of time talking to people at their jobs, in their homes and in their communities. Sometimes it would be at a rec centre, on the street or in the grocery store. Usually wherever you go in one of the small communities there are places where people gather or where people like to talk. I want to thank those individuals who took the time to speak to me or other caucus colleagues. There is just so much out there that people think about, have ideas about, agree with, disagree with, but most importantly, they are very willing to share — to share their ideas and make suggestions, because everybody wants the Yukon to be the best.

We have a diverse population. We have First Nation citizens born and raised here. We have a lot of citizens from Outside, from other provinces and territories, and now even other countries. We are no longer quite the same community we were when I moved here 36 years ago.

Everyone I spoke to, everyone who I listened to, spoke of their love for Yukon. They are here because this is where they want to be. It's about the place and it's about the people. I can identify with that. I too love this place and I can't think of anywhere in the world where I would rather live. I haven't seen every spot, but I know that feeling when you're driving up the highway and you come into the mountains or when you're flying up on Air North and looking out the window and you know you're back in the Yukon. There's just that sense of relief that this is our home and this is where I want to be.

I heard from Yukoners that they want to know that this going to stay — this beauty, clean air, clean water, the animals we see. I saw a video yesterday on Facebook of a moose wandering down Falcon Drive up in Copper Ridge. They want to know that this is going to exist long past their time and it will be here for future generations. They want to know that it's protected, that their children and their grandchildren, and on and on, will have the same opportunity as us to experience that part of the Yukon we love so much.

We know climate change is here. I mean, the spring has just been unbelievable. I talked to my mother yesterday and it was snowing in southern Ontario. Normally, by now, her flowers are out. I cheered; you know, it was like, ha-ha-ha. We are six weeks ahead, as far as I'm concerned. I heard my first robin this morning. I know that this is early; this is way early.

We need to do more to meet those challenges and we need to do more because we are a diverse people and we have diverse needs and we need to recognize that. We need to recognize and acknowledge that how an issue might be addressed in Whitehorse is not necessarily how it happens in the communities. Communities often have their own methods of dealing with crises and supporting individuals. It might not be the Whitehorse way, but it works for that community and we need to acknowledge that and support that.

I want to talk a bit about child poverty, because I have been thinking a lot about this. By this government's own numbers, over 230 children in families are relying on social assistance provided by this government. That's just children in

the YG Health and Social Services. That does not include children who might be on social assistance through their First Nation government or through indigenous affairs. So 230 are what we provide funding for, but we know the number is bigger.

The food bank — the numbers continue to increase and it's not just single individuals. It is families coming to supplement their food. They don't have enough. Thank goodness for the food bank. They've worked hard and continue to work hard to find ways to keep the shelves stocked and to keep the freezer full. They're looking at a neighbourhood garden right next to the food bank this summer involving youth and seniors in caring for it and planting it.

The numbers of children receiving food through the food bank is huge. We are not — we are not — addressing child poverty — we're not. Children should not have to rely on food from a food bank. Why? Why is this happening? What happened to our poverty reduction strategy that came out? Groups and organizations and individuals and government workers spent a lot of time working on poverty reduction and social inclusion. They did studies. They looked at the numbers. They knew what was going on and they came up with — it's called the strategy. But nowhere did it say that we will reduce child poverty by 10 percent in one year and 10 percent every year thereafter. There was nothing measureable to tell us whether we are achieving our goals. As numbers continue to rise, that tells me we're not achieving those goals. We are not doing enough to reduce poverty in the Yukon, especially — especially — for children.

I heard the member opposite say, "You want to reduce poverty? Get a job." There are individuals who work more than one job, and sometimes more than two jobs. Exactly how many jobs are they supposed to have? They still live in poverty. You can go and look at the food bank stats — how many families have working parents, but their money goes to rent, their money goes to utilities? These aren't all families on social assistance. These are families who are working hard. What are they supposed to do? Go to school? Maybe get some training? How are they going to do that? It's not affordable for them — it's not. It's not easy. It's not enough to say, "Get a job."

We have people on social assistance who are seniors with fixed incomes and have a top-up and who are living in poverty. We have individuals with disabilities who are permanently excluded from the workforce. Where should they get a job? They are on social assistance with the Yukon supplementary allowance top-up. It's not much, Mr. Speaker. It's not indexed; it hasn't changed. These individuals live in poverty, not because they don't — I don't know. It's because they have a disability; it's because of their situation. They shouldn't be punished.

Social assistance is not a punishment. It is a safety net to help people be a part of our community, to be able to participate. I've talked to single moms about how they manage. They manage, but they don't do it very well. It is so stressful. It's the last thing they think of when they go to bed at night — how am I going to pay for this? Which budget line

is it coming out of? It's the first thing they think of in the morning — how am I going to make this food stretch? How am I going to pack a lunch for my kids to go to school?

One hundred dollars for school supplies — it's a nice sum. We don't give that to people on social assistance. We give them \$65 for school supplies. Are they going to be included in the \$100, or is that money going to be included as income and taken back? Is \$65 good enough for individuals on social assistance? Even \$100 is not going to provide much. School supplies these days — a pair of runners for a kid — that money will get eaten up by those living in poverty very quickly.

So \$100 — it's nice if you have money and can afford the rest of the things, but if you're living in poverty, it'll help, absolutely. So why don't we put that money into schools? Why don't we put it into school supplies in schools, so everybody benefits from it in a natural way?

I was married to a teacher. I know how much money he spent on school supplies for his students all the time — pens, paper. He would go at the end of the year through the lost and found and take out the old binders with blank paper still in them and the pens and would recycle them all, clean them up and get them ready for the next school year because he knew there would be kids coming to school without supplies. It was not for himself; it was for the kids. That is what he did. So \$100 — I don't know.

I am curious too about what is going to happen with the federal government's new child benefit to families. In the past under social assistance regulations, those monies from other tax benefits had to be claimed as income. I want to know: Is this same thing going to happen with this? Are these families who get cheques to help bring them out of poverty supposed to claim them as income and receive that much less on their social assistance? That is not going to help. It will help the government's money pocket, but it won't help these families.

I am very worried about child poverty. I worry about the families who must face such guilt that they cannot provide for their own families no matter how hard they might be working, or they have to live in poverty because they are considered not able to work due to a disability, or they are a senior who didn't have a private pension and is living on CPP and OAS. It doesn't provide them enough to live on, and I hear it. I hear more and more today: "Get a job." Look how many seniors are working now. Some of them, granted, are doing it because they want to. They like being out there and working. It's a social thing; it gives them self-worth. But I know other seniors who thought they had retired and are back working because they have to. They have to in order to keep paying their rent, to keep paying their utilities and to keep paying for their food. They are working, so don't tell me, "Get a job. That will bring you out of poverty." That is just too easy and it does not address the problem.

Mental health is one of my favourites. Waiting for a strategy and waiting for a strategy, getting reports and studies from universities, and still waiting for a strategy — we heard that there will be one during this Sitting. To get right on it, they have dedicated \$1 million to go to organizations

throughout the Yukon to start addressing mental wellness, mental health. I suggested that \$1 million isn't very much. When you look at the stipulations — and one of them being that it cannot pay for core funding — that makes it pretty hard.

There are so many organizations right now in Whitehorse and in the communities that are providing services to people with mental illness, and they are doing it off the side of their desk with very little funding and outside their mandate. It's not in their mandate, but they're doing it because they see the need and somebody has to do something, so they are stepping up. It's non-profit organizations and it's housing organizations and it's groups and individuals — and individuals in the Yukon — who are trying to help these people who are falling through the safety net and who are not getting the services they need.

If we started funding those organizations for the service they provide now, that \$1 million would be gone in no time because there are people doing it, but without a strategy that brings people together and service providers and individuals with mental health issues and communities and other governments. If we don't know what's happening, how are we going to have a strategy? And if we do have a strategy, I sure hope there are measurable goals and measurable outcomes. I want to know that we reduce wait times for children, for youth, for young adults and for seniors. I want to know that there is a timeline that says, "If you are having difficulties and need to see someone, we will work to do it this quickly and then we'll measure it." Every time a person calls, we'll record the day and when we see them so that we know when we are doing our job well, so that we know when we're doing the right thing, or that we're not and we need to find another way. Not meeting a goal is not a bad thing if you learn from it. If you find out that, if we kept this office in this location open for four more hours at night, we could pick off these people because they are not up first thing in the morning and they can barely function in the afternoon. If we made it accessible to them in the evening, we would have better success. That is what a strategy is about. It's not: this is it; we're going to do it; end of story. It is: this is what our goals are, these are the outcomes we want, this is working great and let's see if we can do even better. If this isn't working, how can we improve it?

There are organizations out there doing so much for individuals and it's not their job, but they're doing it. What about the individuals in the Correctional Centre with mental health issues who are being criminalized for their mental ill health? That's not right. We shouldn't see people up there in jail because they are not receiving the supports or the care they need. That is just so wrong, and we really shouldn't even see them in the secure medical unit because it's not set up to deal with people in severe psychiatric crisis. We send a lot of people out and that's good for those individuals because there are experts Outside, but we are spending millions and millions to send them out and they come back to Whitehorse or their communities and the services aren't there for them to keep working on their mental wellness.

Families aren't included. They don't know how to deal with this individual when they come back. They're not sure. We do see more services going into the communities — great, but two or three times a month, sometimes that's just not going to do it.

Are there better ways that we can spend that money and really work with individuals here and in their communities and with their families and with their support systems?

Mental health — you know there has been so much in the news lately on suicide and suicide prevention and a lot of what we see — well, it's across the country. I mentioned this to someone, just talking about what we need, and they said that it is First Nations, and I said that no, it's not. It's those first responders whose PTSD is not being recognized. It's individuals with addictions problems; it is First Nations; it's youth — but we need a strategy.

I was trying to find out the numbers for the Yukon because I think one of the first things you should know is some information. What are our numbers? I can't find it anywhere. I've looked through the coroner's reports and yet I know that many families are impacted by suicide in the Yukon. What are we doing to prevent that?

Some communities have been able step up and start working on their own strategies. Some First Nations have the resources and the capacity to be able to do that and to work with their citizens in coming up with a strategy because they can't wait any longer. There are too many. One is too many.

If we're not providing services through a mental health strategy to individuals, whoever they are, whatever the reason, we are doing a real disservice to Yukoners and to their families and to their communities.

Suicide just makes me angry. It's such a waste. It impacts everybody.

I have had family members who have committed suicide and you're left with guilt. Why didn't I see it? How come they didn't talk to me? What did I do? What didn't I do?

If we don't start addressing this soon, it's just going to carry on and continue on. We can stop it — maybe not everyone, but we can certainly provide better services to help people. Right now we rely on an emergency phone line run by volunteers from 9:00 to 1:00 or 2:00 — and thank you for those people and the time they put in, but it's a pretty small window if you're feeling suicidal. There has to be a way to stop it and to help these people and to come around them and support them and help them be well.

We're not going to prevent everyone, I know that. There are some people who just can't see themselves going on, and that's going to be their choice, but we can certainly be doing a lot more than we are now. Without a mental health strategy, we're not doing it. We are not doing it. We send them from the community to the hospital. A doctor sees them, does an assessment, maybe keeps them a day or two and sends them back, or sends them just out the door, not even back. That's not helping; it's not helping at all. We know the root causes: poverty, isolation, addictions, joblessness, for some it's just inherited — it just is.

I wanted to talk a bit about the TRC, because I think, from here on in, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action — I think everything we do now should be viewed through that. When we're creating policy or looking at programs, we need to look and see where it comes in. This one is around health, and we call upon the federal government, in consultation with aboriginal people, to establish measurable goals, to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities, publish annual progress reports and assess long-term trends. It should focus — the indicators should be infant mortality, with maternal health, suicide, mental health, addictions, life expectancy, birth rates, infant and child health issues, chronic diseases, illness and injury incidence and the availability of appropriate health services. That's where we come in.

We're in a unique situation here where First Nations have the same doctors you and I have. They go to the same hospital. They go to the same community health. The billing — different people pay for it. It's not always up to us, but what we do in health impacts the services those people receive. So even though this identifies the federal government, some of these things I think we should be keeping stats on.

One of the big ones would be diabetes. We know that diabetes is going up and up. I just heard on the news the other day — I think it's in the last 10 years, it has quadrupled — the number of people with diabetes. If it was — I don't want to say "just" diabetes. There are so many implications: kidney disease, kidney failure, the need for dialysis, poor circulation, blindness — on and on and on. We should know those numbers for the Yukon, because we should be prepared to provide those services and bill it back to the federal government, because that's what we do. If we don't have those stats, let's find a way to get them. There has to be a way. We can negotiate land claims, I'm sure we can negotiate some health stats. We're not asking for identifying information; we're just asking for health stats. That's an important one.

We see the numbers at the Emergency department continuing to rise. We hear that there are more doctors being hired, but the people who are going to Emergency still — the largest proportion — are those who have non-urgent needs: a prescription or a referral. They don't have access to a health care professional. I'm not even talking about a family doctor; I'm talking about health care professionals. We have the nurse practitioner legislation. We have nurse practitioners working in the women's sexual health program in two clinics. We have one position at the referred care clinic. That's it. Why should I have to take up my doctor's time to go to my clinic to get a prescription renewed that I've been on for 30 years? I don't. I don't need to see my doctor. Where are the nurse practitioners? What have we done to move this forward? I know that money was offered. If they're not willing to hire them, then let's create another clinic with nurse practitioners and a doctor on salary who will work collaboratively as a team to provide services that people need. There are a lot of people who still don't have family doctors. They call the

number of the website and they're told there are no doctors, so they come and see us. We don't have them.

Midwives — I think we've been advocating for this since 2011. When are we going to get on this? I know there is a working group and a symposium coming up, but the work has been done and the studies are there. We are the second-to-last jurisdiction to not have midwifery legislation that allows women and families to have choices. We have brand new community hospitals that this government likes to talk about, where a woman still can't have a baby. "Oh, you need an OB/GYN." No you don't.

In the Northwest Territories they have a community with a nursing station that has midwives working out of it. They work in conjunction and collaboration with doctors. All the safe ones, they are able to deliver. If there is an emergency, they can call on a doctor. They can medevac to a hospital. We still have women who have to come here two weeks before their due date and wander the streets. You see them, you know, just walking, walking, walking. You don't recognize them, but you see how pregnant they are and you know they are from a community. They are away from their family. If they have children, usually they have to leave them at home. Their partner has to stay home to take care — it's not a great situation. When are we going to have babies in these hospitals? When are we going to have midwives so women have a choice? The evidence is there. Women who receive care from a midwife have better outcomes. The babies have better outcomes and the moms have better outcomes and better follow-up. Why wouldn't we want that? Let's do it. It's sustainable and affordable. Let's do this. We've been talking about it for four and a half years.

Medical travel is an issue that I get a lot of. I'm sure the minister has read some of the letters I've sent to him from constituents who come in. It's a person on a fixed income, medevaced out to Vancouver, given \$35 a day. They have to stay in a hotel for two of those days. If you can find one for \$35 in Vancouver, I wouldn't be staying there. They are required, and that's it. It's like, "That's what you get, I'm sorry you went into debt, there is no other option".

We have had people go to Social Assistance and say, "This happened, and I don't have the money now, and how am I supposed to live?" It is like, "No, sorry, that is medical travel." We are not helping them. There is not even an appeal process. The only appeal process is that I write another letter and hope that somebody pays attention.

Dental care: this is one I talked about a lot, but mostly around children. The more I read and the more I understand, individuals on fixed incomes or social assistance — let's face it, families with three kids who are working two good jobs, but with no medical or dental insurance are in trouble because dental costs are astronomical. People don't go because they cannot afford it until there is an emergency. Yet dental care is so important. It impacts our life's health. Good dental health or bad dental health affects heart health, respiratory infections, diabetic complications and dementia. It is there, the information is there. Too many people are going without good dental care.

Then there is the 150-bed seniors complex. I am still hearing from seniors who are very concerned about this. They are concerned about the money it is going to cost. We heard the minister today say how hard it is to hire nurses and health care professionals. Well, we are going to need a lot. Where are we going to get them? Part of the research and information on care of seniors talks about continuity. When I get up in the morning, I see the same staff person. It does not change. Already they see staff changes two or sometimes three times a day. What if it is somebody different every day because we do not have enough and we are relying on auxiliaries on call. Where are we going to get these professionals? Where are we going to find physicians? Where are we going to find geriatric specialists? Where are we going to find nurses and nurse practitioners? What are the O&M costs for this place going to be? There is not a hint of that. There is going to be a lot, and it is not sustainable. There are groups of citizens getting together with friends and neighbours to talk about this and to talk about different ways of aging. They are talking about what is happening in other places across the country and what is happening in other countries. I understand that this will be going ahead. It is not going to stop, but boy, I just don't see it as being sustainable. It certainly is not going to make people happy, especially those from the communities. Some of them are fine with it, but others who are born and raised and living in their communities do not want to come to Whitehorse.

I guess the last part — and I know I only have two minutes — has to do with child welfare. In the last Sitting I heard the number of First Nation children in care.

I want to go back to the truth and reconciliation calls to action. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial and aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of aboriginal children in care by monitoring and assessing neglect investigations, providing adequate resources to enable aboriginal communities and child welfare organizations to keep aboriginal families together where it's safe to do so, and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside.

I'm going to skip a few and get the major ones — ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child welfare investigations are properly educated and trained. We call on all levels of government to implement Jordan's Principle, require all child welfare agencies and courts to take the residential school legacy into account in their decision-making, develop culturally appropriate parenting programs, to work in collaboration with provinces, territories and First Nation governments and keep stats, to prepare annual reports on numbers and where they've gone and who took care of them — measureable goals. You know, it's what I've been talking about in every area.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the privilege of standing here and being able to speak to this issue. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to extend my thanks to my family, to my friends and to the constituents of Porter Creek South for supporting me, believing in me and encouraging me in my endeavours as a

Yukon Party MLA. My family, my friends and the constituents of Porter Creek South continue to reinforce the importance of a stable, diverse economy, first-rate health care and high quality education.

The Yukon Party has done an incredible job at addressing each of these areas. The stronger the economy, the stronger our health care and education systems will. A couple of examples are the investments we've made for people with disabilities, but also the investments we've made — and as the Leader of the Official Opposition highlighted during her Budget Address reply — around the doctor recruitment and retention to ensure Yukoners have access to health care.

Now specifically to people with disabilities, the Yukon Party government stepped up to the plate to help kids like my son Jack with the issues they face having autism, but also many other families and children who are affected by disabilities.

As I've said before, the Yukon Party government doesn't give itself enough credit for the work they've done on the social side of the ledger. Yukoners know that without a functioning, stable economy to support it, a social safety net isn't going to help anyone.

I have also said before in this Assembly and I will continue to remind Yukoners that it's important to remember where we came from. Now, most of us sitting here will remember that prior to the Yukon Party taking office in 2002, Yukon was in the throes of a terrible economic recession. Our unemployment rate was far too high and our economy was suffering. Both opposition parties did their best to euthanize resource extraction in the territory and our private sector economy was in dire need of attention. These were the challenges before us when Yukoners elected the Yukon Party in 2002 and re-elected us in 2006.

I know that both opposition parties would prefer not to be reminded of the past but, Mr. Speaker, I feel it is incumbent upon me as a Yukon Party MLA to remind our constituents exactly what their choices are and the harm that policy choices from opposition parties can have on our economy and our territory as a whole.

Our clear vision for moving forward together and our solid leadership from the Premier maintain our path to support our commitments to all Yukoners. This Yukon Party government will continue down the path improving upon achieving a better quality of life, building a prosperous, diversified Yukon economy, managing and protecting the Yukon's environment and wildlife, and practising good government.

Yukoners selected the Yukon Party to lead the territory because the Yukon Party team has the vision, the energy and the experience to meet these challenges head-on with confidence. On October 11, 2011, Yukoners made a good choice to continue to prosper and grow under the stewardship of a re-elected Yukon Party government. Yukoners, as I've said many times in this Legislature, are smart people.

The Yukon Party government has again used a budget to make considerate and strategic investments. In fact, under a Yukon Party government, our territory and our economy

continue to grow. Both parties opposite have demonstrated to Yukoners that their policy choices are ineffective in building our economy and result in population decreases and huge debt. That's not something that Yukoners want.

The Yukon Party has demonstrated that we can deliver growth with prosperity. I don't share these comments in haste. I share them because I want to make a point — that the Yukon Party made the decision to replace the failed policies of both parties opposite with policy that works for Yukoners. It is as simple as that.

The Premier's Budget Address highlighted a number of key department initiatives. In this budget, we are making it a priority to invest in creating a health system that promotes, protects and enhances the well-being of Yukon people. As the Premier mentioned, the total health budget is increasing by \$11 million, or nearly nine percent this year. We are working to create a system that is innovative and responsive to the needs of our Yukon communities.

Throughout the Yukon, awareness is growing of the mental health and addictions challenges some people face. As a government, we are committed to ensuring effective programs and services are in place when Yukoners need them. The new Sarah Steele facility is planned to open this fall and will significantly increase access to addictions and mental health services for adults, youth and families.

The new Alcohol and Drug Services program will offer a continuum of services, providing options to match clients' needs. The intensive treatment program will no longer be a 28-day program. Rather, the new program will offer continuous intake, which will help address the wait times and will offer the client a range of treatment options specific to their needs.

After-care services will be improved. Social workers will provide transitional supports to clients coming into and leaving the intensive treatment program. There are eight beds in the new facility that will be designated transitional to increase supports to clients readying themselves to return to their community. As well, three new community addictions workers have been hired in the rural communities of Watson Lake, Haines Junction and Dawson City. Clients returning home from intensive treatment will be offered ongoing support for post-treatment care through these workers.

We heard from Yukoners that youth were not receiving timely access to addiction and mental health care. In response, the new Sarah Steele facility will provide a four-bed youth residential addiction and mental health treatment program alongside youth withdrawal services. These services will use a family treatment model.

Mr. Speaker, we're pleased to announce that our department will soon be releasing a 10-year Yukon mental wellness strategy. The purpose of this strategy is to address mental wellness needs in Yukon and to provide an overall direction for mental wellness system improvements.

The 10-year strategy will take an innovative and integrative approach to mental wellness that integrates best practices from across Canada and international jurisdictions. We have identified short- and long-term actions and we have

allocated \$1 million to initiate the strategy to ensure its success.

We know that over 50 percent of Yukon individuals seeking help for addiction also have a mental health issue. We have all recognized the need to bring mental health and addictions out of the shadows and the new Sarah Steele facility, alongside the mental wellness strategy for Yukon, will work to address these issues effectively and transparently.

Departmental staff are making significant efforts to speak with stakeholders throughout the territory, including Yukon rural communities, First Nations, non-government organizations, health care professionals, RCMP and others who are working to build better mental health among our citizens.

Many of us don't even question whether we have somewhere to go at the end of the day. For our more vulnerable population, knowing that you have a home to go to at the end of the day makes life more bearable. We will continue to work hard to ensure that the most vulnerable Yukoners have a safe and secure place to stay.

We are opening the new St. Elias group home this spring. The new group home will provide safe and supportive housing to individuals with moderate to severe cognitive disabilities. It will increase its current capacity from five to 10 rooms and will include four suites designated to accommodate more independent living.

The new Salvation Army Whitehorse Centre of Hope will open next winter. This facility will not only provide emergency shelter for 25 people but also 20 transitional housing units. Individuals living in these transitional units will receive support services to assist them to be more self-sufficient.

The partnership between the Salvation Army and our government has provided a great opportunity to work collaboratively in supporting our homeless and our most vulnerable populations. I am pleased that Yukon government has joined the partnership with Kwanlin Dün and the City of Whitehorse to address the priority needs of our vulnerable people.

Our government continues to expand home and community long-term care options to ensure that Yukoners receive timely access to the most appropriate care in the most appropriate place. Improving housing and long-term care options for an aging population in Yukon has been and will continue to be a priority for this Yukon Party government.

The first phase of the new 150-bed Whistle Bend continuing care facility will begin construction this spring. Providing quality, responsive services that are centred on the needs of the residents was at the forefront of the design of the Whistle Bend continuing care facility.

In the interim, we have completed the Sixth Avenue continuing care home facility now known as Birch Lodge. This newly renovated property provides 10 beds for long-term care and will also free up beds at Whitehorse General Hospital for acute care right away. This facility opened in February and is operating now at full capacity.

In Dawson we have worked collaboratively with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to replace McDonald Lodge. The new building has 15 beds available to individuals who require services that are not available in their own home. I was pleased to see so many people, including the former MLA for Dawson, Steve Nordick, at the opening of McDonald Lodge. I know how hard Steve worked and advocated for that new facility during his time representing the people of Dawson. In fact, during the announcements, not only the Premier, but the Mayor of Dawson and the Chief of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in recognized Steve's efforts and success as the doors of the new facility were open. We recognize that supporting individuals in their homes for as long as possible is so very important. This next year we will continue to enhance home care services to ensure that we can meet the needs of Yukoners who require and desire that level of care. This will include the addition of three new positions to home care services.

As you can clearly see, our government is committed to providing quality and accessible care for Yukoners requiring long-term care assistance. I recognize how fortunate seniors are in Yukon. Over the last 10 years, the Yukon Party government has increased the budget for home care across the territory because we believe it is important to keep seniors in their homes and their communities for as long as possible. Seniors and elders used to move out of the territory after retirement. For many reasons, we wanted to find a way to help make Yukon the best place for them. I firmly believe that grandparents can play an important role in helping children and teens as they grow up. Some of my constituents found that grandparents could be that bridge in those sometimes difficult teenage years. One of those changes we have seen is the increasing number of seniors who in fact choose to remain in our territory.

I have spent some time talking in this Assembly talking about the continuum of care in Yukon and in Canada. It seems to me that part of the challenge is definitions and terminology for living supports and the fact that they are not consistent across Canada. I will spend some time talking about that terminology. I will begin with the most basic kind of support and then will move through the list of the most complex kinds of supports.

Home living is for people who live independently in their own home, apartment or condo. They are responsible for arranging for any home care or other support services that they may require. Supported living combines accommodation services with meals, light housekeeping and sometimes social activities. Supported living is able to meet a wide range of needs, but cannot support those with serious or complex health care needs. Home care provides professional and personal care as required and arranged by the individual. Assisted living provides housing, hospitality services like food, laundry, housekeeping and personal care services for adults who can live independently but require a supportive environment and light care due to physical and functional health challenges. These are usually very large complexes, sometimes called retirement communities, and have aging in place.

Residential continuing care provides the 24-hour professional clinical care and supervision for individuals with complex care needs who are unable to manage at home with the support of family, friends, home care and so on. These clients have extremely heavy care requirements — for example, advanced dementia or total care — and require specialized care services that are delivered in a home-like setting. These are not individuals who can be maintained at home or in assisted living or supported living complexes.

Since 2012, the Yukon Party government has increased the home care budget by some 350 percent. I would add that the members opposite voted against those increases to home care, just as they voted against the new hospital in Dawson, just as they voted against the new hospital in Watson Lake, and just as they have already indicated they don't support providing continuing care to seniors with a higher level of need in a new 150-bed facility in Whistle Bend.

My constituents reiterated to me that the Whistle Bend facility is needed by the citizens of this territory, by all citizens in this territory. I still can't believe that one of the members opposite asked if we knew what the root causes of aging were. A member opposite, in a response last year, quoted from a 2008 Yukon health care review, "the right care at the right place at the right time" but, as I've said before, Mr. Speaker, that statement is very much behind the philosophy of our continuing care system in 2016.

Yukon has the best low-cost home care program in Canada, bar none. Through this program and its amazing staff here in Whitehorse and in rural communities, when needed, we're able to maintain our seniors and elders in their homes and their home communities for longer periods of time than we were able to do in the past. Our staff work with families, when there are families, and other health care providers to ensure collaborative care in a truest sense of the word, but the reality is that there sometimes comes a time in an individual's life, despite all the services that we can provide, when they cannot stay in their home.

Yukon also has a higher than average number of individuals with absolutely no social or family support, and many of our clients rely on their neighbours for aid, rather than a child or spouse. Fourteen percent of home care clients have no caregiver at all to assist them — again a higher number than the national average of three percent without caregivers. We have the highest ratio of individuals over the age of 85 living alone. As I've said, this government has increased the home care funding over the last decade by some 350 percent and we'll continue to support home care when we can, but we also recognize that 40 percent of our home care clients are at risk of requiring a much higher level of care for some of the very reasons that I have already mentioned.

Of our over 500 clients throughout the territory, more than 200 are considered high risk, a much higher number than our national average. The reality is there comes a point when people can't remain in their homes and they can't remain in their home community, if that happens to be outside of Whitehorse. I'm aware that attracting medical professionals to small communities is an ongoing challenge. MLAs who

represent ridings outside of Whitehorse have shared with me some of the obstacles their communities face in getting people with specialized skills to come to rural and remote Yukon.

The reality is that, in a territory of 37,000, not every community is going to have all the options available to them in the continuum of care. Our reality is that we must have centralized services to care for our seniors who have reached this stage in their lives.

Many seniors are in fact able to remain in their homes, supported by a family until the end of their life. Others are not as fortunate and will require the care and support that we can provide in our facilities. We're proud of the care that continuing care staff give to all of our citizens and we're proud that, as a government, we can do this.

We've also worked to ensure that Yukoners health care dollars improve quality care and health outcomes for patients and families. Yukoners have been able to access our new MRI machine at the Whitehorse General Hospital for some time now. The Emergency department expansion is underway and will increase efficiencies and improve the standard of care.

Another very positive new development is that, for the first time, Yukon will be supporting the costs for hepatitis C treatment. This expensive treatment covers the cost for a 24-week course of medication and will prevent future health care needs associated with hepatitis C.

We've been pursuing opportunities to make our health care system more sustainable. More than ever before, we are committed to innovative options to ensure our health care system is there for generations of Yukoners to come. Technological advances have resulted in productivity gains and more effectiveness of health care.

Yukon has invested in the development of an electronic health records system. This project will eventually lead to more efficient and secure sharing of information between health care providers. One component of the e-health system has been operationalized in the community health centres and continuing care facilities, which has allowed for the direct flow of lab tests electronically between these programs and the Whitehorse General Hospital. We're also working on two other key components: the client registry and drug information systems.

The territorial health investment fund project is well underway and has made progress in improving the effectiveness in the use of technology to improve mental health service delivery. For example, this year THIF is piloting the use of telepsychiatry services in rural Yukon communities. This program will increase access to needed mental health support services in patients' home communities. THIF is transforming our health care system by building strong performance measurement and quality improvement mechanisms into our health care programming. The evidence helps improve our health systems by establishing more efficient and effective practices and, at the same time, reduces gaps in services. This continues to help us make informed decisions as to how resources should be allocated to best serve Yukoners.

This government has worked to make best use of the skills and capacity of all our health care providers, hospitals, community clinics and organizations to ensure patients receive timely access to quality, coordinated care. Building our health and social system around the needs of individual patients, Mr. Speaker, is essential.

The *Clinical Services Plan for Yukon* provided many insightful recommendations on how to achieve patient-centred and collaborative care, address the delivery of services in rural communities and use technology to expand resource capacity and access to all Yukoners.

Motion to adjourn debate

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I move that debate be now adjourned.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Health and Social Services that debate be now adjourned.

Motion to adjourn debate on Bill No. 23 agreed to

Mr. Elias: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:24 p.m.