

Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, April 25, 2007 -- 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.
 Introduction of visitors.
 Are there returns or documents for tabling?
 Reports of committees.
 Are there any petitions?
 Are there any bills to be introduced?
 Notices of motion.

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to consider the lead of the Province of British Columbia and implement several climate change initiatives to immediately cut back on greenhouse gas emissions from industry, government buildings, cars and homes, including the following 20:

- (1) formation of a climate action team;
- (2) new standards of energy efficiency in government buildings;
- (3) working to develop a system for carbon offsets and credits;
- (4) becoming the first jurisdiction in the world to require carbon sequestration for coal-fired plants;
- (5) zero flaring at producing gas wells;
- (6) a new, innovative clean energy fund;
- (7) methane capture at landfills;
- (8) a low-carbon standard for vehicles and hydrogen fueling stations;
- (9) electrified truck stops to reduce idling;
- (10) a hybrid-cars-only policy for government purchases and leases;
- (11) new incentives to retrofit existing homes and buildings;
- (12) helping homeowners undertake energy audits;
- (13) helping homeowners install real-time, in-home smart metering;
- (14) greening of colleges, hospitals, schools, prisons and airports;
- (15) formation of a new citizens conservation council;
- (16) integration of climate change awareness into the school curricula;
- (17) increasing tree-planting efforts;
- (18) eliminating conical beehive burners at lumbering operations;
- (19) strengthening forest stewardship and reducing forest fire risk; and
- (20) forging a new Pacific coast collaborative.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Party government to provide stable, predictable, long-term funding for non-government organizations that provide programs on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Services so that:

- (1) non-government organizations will not continue to suffer from a lack of funding security; and
- (2) these organizations can continue to serve the Yukon people without having to spend much of their time looking for funding, operating with below-standard salaries, and without appropriate administrative and training opportunities.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?
 Ministerial statements.

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Climate change eco-fund

Mr. Mitchell: I have some questions for the Minister of Environment on this government's \$5-million decision to install a third wheel at the Aishihik Lake dam.

The government is paying for the new wheel with money from Ottawa. The money was supposed to go to projects that will reduce greenhouse gases. The problem with the government's decision is that the project will do very little to reduce greenhouse gases, at least for some considerable time.

According to the Yukon Utilities Board, which reviewed the project, the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from this project will be insignificant. In fact they said that this project isn't even needed until 2013. This money is supposed to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The government picked the wrong project.

Why did the government not look at other options that would have done much more for our environment?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: First, Mr. Speaker, the eco-trust is a national initiative. All jurisdictions have to reach agreement with Canada; the projects to be invested in have to have the concurrence of Canada. We went through that process, and this is the project that was agreeable to them. We are very pleased that we are able to make this investment in enhancing our hydro capacity, and indeed, our efficiency in the production of hydro. The realities are -- the facts are -- that in peak demand periods, we will be able to reduce harmful emissions of CO₂ into Yukon's atmosphere by using hydro instead of diesel.

Mr. Mitchell: I'm sure the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources can tell his colleague, the Environment minister, that it doesn't increase capacity, although it does make more energy available. Despite the fact that this project has been announced, the money to actually build it has not been allocated. It's not in the budget that was just tabled this week, so there is still time for the government to consider other options. There is still time for the government to change its mind, so I have a positive suggestion for the minister. Why doesn't he go out and ask people what they think we should do with the

money? Why doesn't he go out and ask some experts how this money could best be put to use? Most of Yukon's greenhouse gases come from two sources, Mr. Speaker -- vehicles and home heating. They account for more than 80 percent of all Yukon's greenhouse gases. We think this is the logical place to start looking for the best reductions.

Is the Premier willing to take a look at the suggestion, particularly since the money has not yet actually been spent?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: If I may opt for some levity here, it's good to see that the Leader of the Official Opposition has grasped the issue of climate change; however, once again, he is leading from behind. The government already does address vehicle efficiency when it comes to emissions. Fleet vehicle services recently purchased vehicles that are highly efficient in fuel consumption. I believe some 31 vehicles are being changed out for more efficient use. We already have many programs for home heating efficiencies, as an example, and we've also recently invested in the City of Whitehorse's transit system by offering and providing the City of Whitehorse close to \$1 million for the purchase of more buses. So we are already doing that, Mr. Speaker, though I do commend the Leader of the Official Opposition for finally understanding the importance of this initiative.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, Mr. Speaker, there will be more about that later.

The Yukon Party government got a \$5-million eco-trust gift from Ottawa. The money is supposed to be used to reduce greenhouse gases. Across Canada, other provincial and territorial governments went out and asked people where the money should be spent. Where would it do the most good? Where would it have the most impact?

What did we do here? The Minister of Environment made a decision, with no public consultation, and picked a project that the Yukon Utilities Board has said won't reduce greenhouse gases and isn't needed until 2013. But it is not too late. Let's look at other options.

As we said, more than 80 percent of our emissions come from vehicles and heating our homes and buildings with heating oil. Let's start there. We need to look at programs to get more people out of their cars and into buses. I am glad the minister mentioned that, but we need to do more. We need to help people reduce their heating oil costs by fixing up their homes.

Is the Premier willing to consider putting money into any of these options?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The short answer is yes, because we already do. There are a myriad of programs available to Yukoners when it comes to home efficiencies.

This approach that the Leader of the Official Opposition is taking is somewhat confusing given the fact that they are representing to Yukoners that they are serious about this global phenomenon, climate change, and the impacts on Yukon. How can the member stand on the floor of this House and suggest that increasing the capacity for hydro production and its efficiency and the reduction of harmful CO₂ emissions during peak demand periods by shutting down our diesel generators in the Yukon to produce electricity? How can the member articulate to Yukoners that this is not an appropriate investment? This is

an ultimate investment in addressing Yukon's emissions factor, and it is in the thousands of tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually.

Question re: Climate change action plan

Mr. Elias: I have some questions for the Minister of Environment on this government's non-existent climate change action plan. In last week's budget the minister announced that this plan would be in place by 2008. In a news story a few weeks back a government official said late 2008. That would be six years after the Yukon Party came to office. If something is a priority, it does not take six years to put it in place. Why is this action plan so far down on the Yukon Party's priority list?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Actually, Mr. Speaker, it is not far down on the priority list. It is number one on the priority list. But if we want to draw comparisons, the Yukon has advanced in this area much quicker than even the national government. The Liberal Government of Canada spent 13 years talking about this while they watched our emission factor increase many times over.

We are already in the stage of an implementation of our climate change strategy and the member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition, was just chastising the government for not engaging with Yukoners. Well, the strategic action plan is all about engaging with Yukoners as we go about implementing a very thorough, comprehensive and detailed climate change strategy.

Mr. Elias: Under this Yukon Party government we were the last jurisdiction in Canada to even develop a climate change strategy. This is nothing to be proud of. Instead of moving ahead right out of the gate, this government is content to wait around another two years before putting the strategy into action. I would hope the development of the action plan will involve the public. When is the public going to be invited to have their say on the climate change action plan, and when is the government going to start hearing from the public on this plan?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: We're listening now, we're hearing now, and we are going to continue to do that. But to suggest, in some opinion from the members opposite, that the Yukon is somehow behind on this very difficult challenge globally is not addressing the facts at all. In fact, we're ahead of it in a number of areas, including bringing forward to the national stage the issue of adaptation, which is now part of all processes happening with the federal government when it comes to climate change -- because we emit very little, but we experience a great deal of impacts from the global phenomenon. So that's one example of where we're ahead.

This is the first jurisdiction in the north that has moved toward a climate change centre of excellence. This is one of the first jurisdictions to move ahead with the innovation cluster when it comes to cold climate research technology adaptation for construction as it relates to climate change. This is a jurisdiction that is moving ahead to modernize our database so that we have a biophysical database, second to none in the country. I call that, in all matters and all instances, leadership.

Mr. Elias: The Yukon Party government has taken a very hands-off approach to this issue. They have fallen behind

public opinion on this topic. People want action. They don't want more delays and more stalling.

During the recent campaign, we suggested a climate change action plan. It involved: targeted government assistance for Yukoners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes; improved efficiency and sustainability for Yukon government buildings and operations; working with a community partner to develop a biomass community heating system; ensuring that energy conservation and renewable energy are part of the Yukon Energy Corporation's long-term strategies; developing community energy management in Yukon communities that includes district heating, with a focus on local employment and conservation; confirming baseline conditions and working collaboratively with industry, governments and others to establish targets for greenhouse gas emissions.

The solutions are out there. When is this government going to start acting on them and doing something significant to combat climate change?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, the list that the member has just recited here on the floor of the Legislature, and that the Official Opposition brought forward in the election campaign, mirrors Yukon government's climate change strategy that was implemented and tabled here in this Legislature long before the election campaign. That's a point that's quite obvious, Mr. Speaker, in this debate.

We're talking about investing in the areas that the member has just recited. We're doing that, including investing in more hydro and reduction of CO₂ emissions. We are already doing a number of things the member is talking about, like the research and the database, like programs for more efficiency in our homes, like programs for building efficiency within the government building complement, like vehicles that are more fuel efficient. We're investing in that.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken the steps that Yukon must take to address this global phenomenon, and we intend to do more, going forward -- more investment, more database gathering, more access to research and development investment. We are going to be a leader, not only in the north, but in the country, in addressing climate change north of the 60th parallel.

Question re: Thomson Centre reopening

Mr. Edzerza: Mr. Speaker, on Monday I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services about the continuing delay in opening the Thomson Centre. Well, his response opened up a whole new can of mould. During his response, the minister said that the project had been delayed because more mould had been discovered. Now the minister would like us to believe that all of this is the fault of the government that was in office 15 or 16 years ago. I should remind the minister that it is this government that is responsible for current repairs, not any previous government.

Will the minister tell us what he knows about the cause of the newest mould problem? Specifically, have there been any problems with the roof repairs that may be contributing to the mould situation?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The Member for McIntyre-Takhini is correct in noting that the Thomson Centre has been a real

challenge. It has certainly been a very frustrating file to deal with.

In his question, the member missed noting the fact that the construction of the building is the root cause of the problems we are facing. We had believed that the problems were addressed. I believe that a review was done in November, and it was hoped to have been a final check confirming that the mould was eliminated. It was determined that, in fact, there was more mould in a different area. This is now being dealt with.

As I indicated before to the member or to the press, or both, this is something we will be announcing as soon as the plan for the opening of more continuing care beds is approved by Cabinet. An announcement will be made, and I anticipate doing so within about a month.

I look forward to other questions from the member opposite.

Mr. Edzerza: On Monday, the minister said that the government cannot move its clients into a building where there is mould, because they are a very fragile client group. I certainly agree with the minister's concerns. We don't want to expose long-term care patients to such a health risk. I wonder why the minister didn't say anything about the people who are required to work in that building. My understanding is that the Thomson Centre is currently being used by outpatient dietitians, physiotherapists, Diabetes Education Centre staff and some of the hospital administration staff. Why are these people required to work in a building that the minister admits has a mould problem?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would have to point out to the member for his comfort that the level of mould, based on the advice we are receiving from experts, is not believed to be a health issue for anyone except those who are in a fragile condition or who are particularly susceptible to problems with their respiratory system. It is an option for the individuals there, if they feel there are issues, to relocate. I would point out to the member opposite, as per our announcement, that the plan is to work with the organizations currently in the Thomson Centre to move them to other facilities. As we announced, we are not going to boot them out onto the street. The long-term -- though hopefully shorter rather than longer -- vision for the Thomson Centre is opening it up with 44 beds, including continuing care and a palliative care unit. It will require the relocation of the organizations to which the member just referred.

Mr. Edzerza: Well, that answer kind of skirts around the safety of the workers that are involved in this situation.

I think Yukon people deserve to know exactly what the situation is at the Thomson Centre. People who work there, members of the public who get services there, need to know the health risks they may be facing and what is being done to mitigate those risks.

Just to set the record straight, will the minister tell us what is being done to monitor any adverse health effects among people who are currently working in the Thomson Centre and are using the services there, and exactly what steps are being taken to ensure that people are not being exposed to any risk while the repairs are going on?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The member is failing to recognize -- and I'd be happy to provide him with more information on it should he wish -- the fact that there is a process for any employee under occupational health and safety regulations and under the environmental health provisions through which complaints can be made about air quality within a building, and monitoring of that takes place. So the member, in reference to his comments about staff, should any of them have a complaint, there is a process so that they can put that complaint in. This matter has been reviewed but I would be happy to provide the member with more detail should he wish at a later date.

Question re: Tantalus School construction

Mr. Cardiff: I have a question for the Minister of Community Services. The minister's department is responsible for both building inspections and employment standards, and my question relates to both of those areas.

It concerns the long-delayed, overbudget Tantalus School project in Carmacks. Is the minister aware of any concerns regarding either occupational health and safety or rights of employees on that government-funded project?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I am unaware of any specific issues with regard to the Tantalus School. However, if he has something, maybe he can bring it forth in his second supplementary.

Mr. Cardiff: I would like to table a notice that was posted on a bulletin board in the main entrance of the job site at the Carmacks school. It says, "Employees discussing this project with government representatives or elected officials without the authority of this office will have their employment immediately terminated."

I certainly hope that this minister or any other minister of this government does not condone this type of threatening behaviour on any work site, let alone a government-funded project. Was the minister aware of this notice and, if so, what has been done to advise the contractor that this type of worker intimidation is not acceptable in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Hart: Well, obviously I haven't been aware of this particular notice on the wall that the member opposite has tabled here in the House, nor has any other minister been involved, either okaying or justifying that notice. I'm sure that the notice being posted is not an official documentation either of the contractor and/or any of our contracting people involved in the building of the school, either project management and/or government-related.

Mr. Cardiff: Why was it allowed to remain posted in the school? It is my understanding that it was there for quite a number of weeks. On Easter weekend I toured the job site and, during that tour on two separate occasions, I raised concerns about safety practices. One had to do with the lack of hardhats; the other concerned smoking near a diesel tidy tank. On both occasions the response that I got was, "That's one of the rules we bend."

I have also been told privately by individuals who have been on that work site that some of the employees there are not being paid according to the fair wage schedule that is mandatory on all government projects.

Will the minister, together with his colleague who is responsible for the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and

Safety Board, look into the matter and take appropriate steps to make sure that all employment standards and occupational health and safety rules are being strictly observed on this work site?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As in all contracts that this government undertakes, we undertake to ensure that the contractor follows the RFP that has been provided for them to construct and complete the facility that they're building. We ensure that the contractor is living up to the obligations there, either through hiring locals, if that's one of their requirements, and/or meeting the occupational health and safety standards. That is something that we ensure takes place on all government projects.

Just as another note, if in fact that notice was posted on the bulletin board, it was posted without our notification.

Question re: Carbon dioxide emissions

Mr. McRobb: Sometimes we have to face an inconvenient truth. If you want things to change, you have to start at home, with yourself. That is why, starting this year, the Yukon must take steps to become carbon-neutral, and the Yukon government has an important role to play. Even if you are not familiar with the term, you are probably familiar with the conclusion that carbon dioxide emissions are a leading cause of climate change. The idea, then, is to reduce CO₂ output with an ideal target of zero. There is nothing in this government's throne speech last fall or in last week's budget speech that even hints at any initiative in this direction.

My question for the Environment minister is, simply: what are we doing to make the Yukon carbon-neutral?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I am not sure what the member is even referring to when he talks about "carbon-neutral", considering he has a distance to travel to get home, but I will leave that at that point.

We are doing quite a bit and have been doing quite a bit throughout the last mandate and, of course, we have announced what else we are going to be doing with respect to climate change. When it comes to the reduction of carbon emissions, I have already articulated here in the House some of the areas that we are working on -- Highways and Public Works -- changing 31 vehicles, for example, to more fuel efficient vehicles. There are all the programs we have -- in Yukon Housing Corporation and other agencies and departments -- for home and building efficiency. We are investing in hydro, reducing the potential emissions of thousands of tonnes of CO₂ into our atmosphere. These are all tangible examples of what we are doing. We are not being neutral at all; we are being very proactive.

Mr. McRobb: Two months ago, the Province of British Columbia announced several climate-change initiatives to immediately cut back on greenhouse gas emissions from industry, government buildings, cars and homes. Twenty of them were identified in the notice of motion I gave earlier today. One of those initiatives is to forge a new Pacific Coast collaborative extending from Alaska to California. B.C. Premier Campbell has invited together political representatives from the Pacific region this spring. B.C. has also joined with five U.S. states so

far to form an alliance called the Western Regional Climate Action Initiative.

Can the minister explain why the Yukon is not part of that alliance? Will he be attending the meeting of political representatives in the Pacific region?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The member well knows that Yukon and B.C. have an extensive protocol between our two jurisdictions. I want to get into the heart of the member's assertions. The member is -- and the Official Opposition is -- suggesting that the government is doing nothing. Let us look at one of our main goals as was tabled months ago in our climate change strategy: to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Yukon through efficiency improvements in the short term -- I stress "short term" -- and with infrastructure replacement in the longer term. What does that mean? To continue to foster alternatives to the use of diesel for electricity generation; to continue to maintain an energy-consumption database so we better understand what measures we can implement to further reduce emissions; to work with the federal government, who, by the way, are about to table a national strategy in this regard; to enhance the Yukon government purchasing policy; to encourage procurement of low-emission goods and services -- I have already demonstrated that we are doing that; to establish energy-performance standards for the Yukon government's new building construction -- R-2000 and in conjunction with the initiative known as LEAD; institute energy efficiency measures for the government vehicle fleet and implement comprehensive energy strategies. We are doing all of these things.

Question re: Climate change action plan

Mr. Mitchell: Today, we have asked several questions about climate change and what this government is doing to help stop our contribution to it. The short answer is, "Not enough." The government is taking \$5 million from Ottawa that is supposed to be spent on climate change, and it is spending it on a project that will do almost nothing to reduce greenhouse gases, according to the Yukon Utilities Board, because they say it won't displace any current diesel use. After five years in office, this government still has no climate change action plan, with no hope of becoming carbon-neutral or close to it. They're content to sit around until 2008, when the action plan is supposed to be ready. This is an urgent problem, Mr. Speaker. It requires action, not more years of study. Why, after four and a half years, is this government unable or unwilling to make this a priority?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, the question that the member opposite has just asked isn't a question at all, because it doesn't in any way, shape or form relate to facts. The government has long been doing things to address climate change, especially in the area of efficiency and emission.

But let's look at what the member's saying. He's saying an investment in hydro isn't something that is going to do any good. Well, Mr. Speaker, let's look at the facts. Right here in Whitehorse, we are converting buildings to electrical heat to reduce emissions from the burning of diesel. We are going to increase our hydro capacity and indeed our efficiency when it comes to the Aishihik system, and we are going to reduce thousands of tonnes of carbon emission today in peak demand.

What the members fail to recognize is that the Yukon is growing, and there are more and more things happening in the Yukon, including mines going into production. And we have a mine going into production shortly in the Minto area that will be able to use hydro instead of burning thousands and thousands of more litres of diesel fuel, emitting thousands and thousands more tonnes of CO₂ into our atmosphere. So I'm not sure what point the member's trying to make, if the member even had a point.

Mr. Mitchell: In fact, the Utilities Board said that, with the mine that's anticipated, it was still not a priority to do this. Climate change is also just not a priority for this government.

In this House in 2002, the Premier's predecessor as Yukon Party leader had this to say: "Global warming -- several things are agreed to, that the temperature on the surface of the earth rose in the 20th century, and man burned more fossil fuel during that time. That's about it. It's not really all that clear that the two are linked because most of the warming occurred early in this century."

"It's not really all that clear that the two are linked" -- well, Mr. Speaker, that's the philosophy from which this Yukon Party government has come. So my question for the Premier is: does he now agree that there is a link between burning fossil fuels and climate change and global warming? Does this Yukon Party government now accept this as a fact?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: This area of our globe used to be covered in ice. To suggest that global warming hasn't been happening for thousands of years is ridiculous and absurd. Furthermore, the linkages to global warming -- the acceleration of this global phenomenon -- has been established by scientists, not by the member opposite and not by us on this side of the House -- by the scientific community.

Of course we recognize those linkages and that's why we're doing what we're doing. That's why we have a climate change strategy. The members opposite do not. They're trying to find one. That's why we're investing in efficiency measures for buildings and homes. That's why we're converting home heating and other residential heating and commercial heating from diesel to electricity. That's why we're investing in hydro. That's why we're converting fleet vehicles to more efficient vehicles -- less consumption of fossil fuels. That's why we are going to work very closely with Yukon College, the private sector, Natural Resources Canada, the University of Alberta -- which we now have an agreement with -- to forge ahead with research and development as it relates to climate change and the need for adaptation. We're far ahead of the opposition, I can tell you that.

Mr. Mitchell: As little as five years ago, the Yukon Party did not support the Kyoto Accord. They didn't believe that burning fossil fuels was a big cause of climate change. So it's no wonder that after four and a half years, they're only up to having a strategy to develop an action plan. Five years later, we are making some progress, but this government still has a long way to go.

This should be a top priority. Across this country and around the world, governments are swinging into action --

some faster than others. The Yukon Party government is certainly not leading the way. They're moving, and I'll give them credit for that, but it is time to pick up the pace.

We recently hosted a climate change forum. We heard Yukoner after Yukoner urging governments at all levels to step up on this issue. So the public is miles ahead of the government on the issue. They want action now. When is this government going to start giving the issue of climate change the top billing that it deserves?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, Mr. Speaker, if there ever was a case of the pot calling the kettle black, this is it. To say that Kyoto is something that this side of the House did not support is incorrect. What we said all along is that we want to know what the action plan to implement the tenets of Kyoto was going to be.

Let's look at what the Liberals have done. Thirteen years later, after all the rhetoric about the tenets of Kyoto, Canada's emissions have risen 20 percent plus. Finally we have a government in Canada that is doing something about that.

Mr. Speaker, the member brings up his environmental forum, which was conveniently held at the same time the government held one of the first ever -- if not the first ever -- Yukon Environmental Forum, at which over 180 participants were engaged with government and others to address Yukon's environment, climate change, wildlife and other matters. I am not sure how many Yukoners showed up at the member opposite's meeting at the Transportation Museum, but I can tell the member that we heard loud and clear from all those participating -- experts, scientists, stakeholders, First Nations and others -- that we are certainly heading in the right direction in addressing this global phenomenon as it relates to Yukon. We will continue in that direction.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 74

Clerk: Motion No. 74, standing in the name of Mr. Mitchell.

Speaker: It is moved by the Hon. Leader of the Official Opposition

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to take immediate action to address the serious environmental and economic effects of climate change on the Yukon.

Mr. Mitchell: I am pleased to have the opportunity today to speak to the issue of climate change and what role the Yukon government plays to help in the fight. First of all, I want to say that I don't consider this to be -- nor should it be -- a partisan discussion this afternoon. It is too important and not what Yukoners want. That is why we were careful to word the motion in a neutral way: "THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to take immediate action to address the serious envi-

ronmental and economic effects of climate change on the Yukon."

I suspect and realize that there might be some doubting Thomases out there -- those who probably think that the world is still flat. I would like to believe that none of those doubters are Members of this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I was looking forward to last week's Budget Address, anticipating that after this government's first term of perpetual non-stop planning, studying options and plans, and even studying studies that, as they promised in this last election, they would hit the ground running to move forward. I will not conceal my disappointment.

The Budget Address referred to Yukon's climate change strategy and to the action plan. I know that the Minister of Environment is well-intentioned and sincere, but the plan is to plan yet another plan. I fully appreciate that there must be adequate thought. I am not advocating that we run off willy-nilly, but there are things that can be done sooner as opposed to later. All members here know very well that we can make plans. We can plan for a new home, a world trip, a new business or a business expansion, but unless we commit financial resources to these plans, they remain just dreams. We have seen that Yukoners are prepared to get involved and follow the lead. Just look at the Canada Winter Games again. Some 4,000 Yukoners stepped up to the plate and said, "Count me in; let's go!" But that took real leadership. It didn't just fall out of the sky. So as we move forward today, at the end of it all, if we can say that the people we sought to serve are better off when we conclude this debate than when we started, then it will have been worth it and more.

The Yukon is a special place. We now have a made-in-Yukon process: the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* to responsibly guide development in the Yukon. We are also affected by international threats such as climate change. In the long term, it will likely change the Yukon more than anything else happening in the world today. Global warming and climate change are already hitting the north especially hard. The long-term impact on our ecosystems could be devastating. The Yukon needs to speak loudly in Ottawa and internationally. We are small, but we must be vocal. We must ensure that the federal government stands up aggressively to catalyze international action.

The *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change* is a 700-page report that was released on October 30, 2006, by economist Sir Nicholas Stern for the British government. It discusses the effect of climate change and global warming on the world economy and the potential future effects. And although it is not the first economic report on global warming, it is significant as the largest and most widely known and discussed report of its kind.

Sir Nicholas Stern may well be the most renowned and respected economist in the western world. He is a small "c" conservative in every aspect of his life. The main conclusions of his report are that one percent of global GDP will be required to be invested per year in order to avoid the worst effects of climate change. We might say, "It is too high a price to pay; we don't want to have any form of diminished growth," but failure

to do so could risk global GDP being up to 20 percent lower than it might otherwise be.

The Stern report suggests that climate change threatens to be the greatest and widest ranging market failure ever seen. It provides prescriptions, including environmental taxes, to minimize the economic and social disruptions that will otherwise occur. Sir Nicholas stated that our actions over the coming few decades could create risks of major disruption to economic and social activity later in this century and in the next on a scale similar to those associated with the Great War and the economic Depression of the first half of the 20th century.

It's not my intention here to be negative. I do commend the government in acknowledging the problem and taking the first steps. However, the Official Opposition is not prepared to just sit on our collective hands and wait, or whine. We know the problem. We, like the members opposite, have seen Al Gore's video. We've listened to the world scientific community; we've read countless reports. We have heard other world leaders and the United Nations' reports. We have heard Yukoners. The time for action is now. That's why we devoted a great deal of our modest budget to engage Yukoners.

The Premier mentions that there was a coincidence of timing on two forums. We certainly hadn't seen any advertisements of the government's forum when we scheduled ours and when we engaged guest speakers. We too saw the timing and wondered, although there were some different focuses because I believe the government forum -- and I'm sure there were many government officials amongst the 180 attendees -- focused on a whole lot of other issues, including animal counts and many other issues that, while they're related, are not specifically the focus of climate change.

We had a nationally recognized guest speaker, Guy Dauncey, an environmental author and a very dynamic speaker -- and the Premier mentions caribou herds and we'll speak to that, because it's a good point -- on the issues of addressing climate change. The forum also included a panel discussion with Jim Pojar, the executive director of CPAWS, J.P. Pinard, a Yukon Conservation Society board member, Don Trudeau, a First Nation Elder, Jessica Thiessen, a young person who was the founder of the Arctic Youth Network, and Michael Westlake, from the Northern Climate Exchange.

We actually had invited some other people but, in the case of some government employees, they suggested that they didn't think they could get permission to attend and we can understand that people are worried that it's politically sensitive.

Although I would say that the first thing we did in our introduction was to say that we happen to be hosting this, we acknowledge that there were members from other political parties in attendance, members from the third party, and that there was no intention, nor was there any attempt to be partisan during that evening forum. In fact, when people from the audience started criticizing any particular party or group, including the federal government of the day, we said, "Look, governments need to do more. Let's talk about solutions, not criticizing them."

Mr. Speaker, to put our emissions in perspective, we should talk a little bit about where they come from, because I

think not everyone in the public, perhaps not everyone in this House, is aware of what our contributions are. Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions in 2004, data in thousands of tonnes of CO₂, or kilotonnes: heavy-duty vehicles, 113, which is 27 percent of Yukon's entire greenhouse gas emissions; buildings, with heating oil or propane, 100 kilotonnes, 24 percent of Yukon's emissions; light-duty cars and trucks, 82 kilotonnes, 20 percent of Yukon's emissions; off-road diesel, 50 kilotonnes, 12 percent of Yukon's emissions; domestic aviation, 23 kilotonnes, 5.5 percent; agriculture and forestry, 14 kilotonnes, 3.5 percent; solid waste and waste water, 13.5 kilotonnes, which is three percent; mining, oil and gas, 8.3 kilotonnes, which is two percent; electricity and heat, eight kilotonnes, two percent -- two percent of our total emissions actually come out of using electricity and electricity for heat. The total is 418 kilotonnes, 100 percent. Now, these were figures that were presented by the expert at the forum.

Coming out of the forum were more ideas and suggestions than I have time to mention here. Here are a few, and I'm going to state for the record that we're not necessarily endorsing every one of these ideas, but these are ideas that came from Yukoners, from the panel and the audience at a public forum. I tried to categorize them a little bit into those areas.

It was noted that buildings are responsible for 24 percent of our emissions. One suggestion was to add the climate solutions charge to utility bills based on CO₂ emissions, then use the income to support programs to reduce CO₂ and establish a home-retrofit program using tax credits, grants and loans.

We know that there are some programs, but people feel there need to be more: offering hot water and energy upgrades as a utility program for all oil-heated homes; setting a goal for all buildings to be EnerGuide 80 by 2020; requiring all homes to be upgraded each time they are sold.

Electricity and diesel power -- 12 percent of emissions -- and I am sure the Premier will enjoy hearing this. Like I say, I'm not the editor; I am relaying what people have said: work with the Yukon Electrical Company to replace all the diesel-fired power plants with efficient wind, solar and micro-hydro installations; plan ahead for a transition to electric and plug-in electric vehicles; require both the Yukon Electrical Company and Yukon Energy Corporation to offer an advanced renewable tariff.

There was some discussion earlier today in Question Period about the pros and cons of adding the potential third turbine at Aishihik in terms of offsetting carbon and greenhouse gas emissions. The Premier didn't seem to get the point. We weren't saying, "No, we don't ever want to do this. No, never any more turbines at Aishihik." Of course not. The Yukon Utilities Board has some expertise in this, because these are the people who serve on behalf of Yukoners, looking into what our needs are, looking into what rates should be, looking into how our energy system should function -- it is the board that said that this won't have any real effect until perhaps 2013. They suggested that this not be included among the first things that are done. They did not say, "Never do it." We did not say, "Never do it." We asked if it is the best way to spend the \$5 million today when it may not be offsetting any diesel use for

one year, two years, three years, five years or eight years. Will there come a time when it makes sense? Sure there will. In the meantime, could that \$5 million be offsetting greenhouse gases, be reducing our carbon emissions sooner rather than later? Yes, we could be. That is the point.

So, I guess the disagreement we have on the two sides of the House is one of timing, not one of purpose and not one of end goals.

It is disheartening when I hear the Premier suggest that we're Johnny-come-lately to this cause, because that is not true. As I mentioned on Earth Day, I attended my first Earth Day celebration April 22, 1970, which was the first year there was an Earth Day celebration. I don't know if there are any other members of this House who did so, but I was there. It mattered to me then and it matters to me now.

Over the years since then, I have tried to be proactive in many different ways, long before I came to this Legislature. I know that many members on both sides of the House make personal efforts to recycle, reuse and make better use of their driving habits. That is commendable. We are only suggesting that people are looking to government to lead and show them the way and to enable Yukoners to do what they have clearly told us they want to do.

Back to the list from the forum: transport, 52 percent of emissions, and in flights beyond Yukon, 60 percent go to emissions. Each Yukoner on average -- it's an average and includes all transport that occurs back and forth for goods and services when we look at these numbers -- burns three litres of gasoline a day. That translates into 10 kilograms of CO₂ a day, which is 3.65 tonnes of CO₂ a year. It seems that we are not doing much when we bop around Whitehorse or in our communities in our cars. Too often we are driving as one person in a pickup truck, as the Premier often does, or one person in an SUV, as I do. Again, we all need to look at this.

These are averages and we realize that not everyone consumes that, but we are making a significant impact when it adds up to the better part of four tonnes of emissions a year. One thing that could be done is to establish a Yukon-wide ride-share program. This doesn't cost very much. It requires the government to put a bit of funding money into organizing something that people basically do by themselves.

I lived in Atlin for 20 years. In the early years, we had a ride-share program because, when someone was planning to go to town, they usually talked to their friends and neighbours to tell them they were going into Whitehorse to shop for the day and ask them if they needed anything picked up or wanted to come with them. People would drop by and say that they heard we were going to town and ask if they could go with us. Yukoners probably do this too.

Well, in Europe and many other jurisdictions, they actually organize these things. The government participates, and they fund non-government organizations -- or the governments themselves do it -- to actually help, because we know that we're not going to have public transit or inter-city transit running on a frequent basis between Watson Lake, where the Premier lives, and Whitehorse or between Dawson, where the Member for

Klondike resides, and Whitehorse or where my colleague resides in Haines Junction and Whitehorse.

We're not going to run railroads to every community either, but we can actually do something to cut back on that. As I pointed out, our vehicle emissions come to a lot more than what we're burning in terms of electricity, so that's something we should be looking at.

Establish a free public transportation system, such as Denver has and San Francisco is planning. That is one of the suggestions that came from the public. Again, these are significant American cities. When Denver makes its transportation free and San Francisco does the same -- and I was recently in Salt Lake City and discovered that, within a sort of inner ring of their city, their light-rail transit is now free as well. So, again, we only have one city where we're logically going to have any form of mass transit, and that's here in Whitehorse. I'll speak to it more a little later. But perhaps this government needs to work very cooperatively with the City of Whitehorse toward assisting them to try something like that -- as a pilot program.

These are things that could be done. They could be done next year. If the money were in this year's budget, they could be done this year.

Require all motor vehicle dealers to display vehicle efficiency data on every vehicle offered for sale. People want to do their part. We certainly go into vehicle dealerships, and we buy recreational vehicles. We're great users of recreational vehicles in the Yukon, and I'm an avid boater. I ride a motorcycle, and I know the Premier does too and that he likes recreational vehicles. Maybe we should make this information more prominent, so that we don't ask Yukoners not to enjoy their forms of recreation, but so they're better informed when they choose them.

Use the Yukon College's video conferencing facilities for distance meetings to cut down on many trips for meetings for both government and non-government organizations -- now, I can't count the times when I have travelled around this territory -- and I'm sure it's more so for the government members and Cabinet ministers who travel very frequently. You get to one of Yukon's rural communities and you run into resident after resident who has driven from Whitehorse to one of those communities to attend a meeting. The meeting is two hours long, and 30 people have driven up there, just in terms of government employees.

And by no means am I suggesting that there shouldn't be personal visits. And, obviously, it's the obligation of every minister to get out and meet as many people as they can. But do we really need to conduct all of these meetings in person? We have facilities here, and we're developing facilities in other areas. There are things that could be done to reduce the number of vehicle trips by making use of technology, which would have the same effect.

That may include putting video conferencing facilities in place in more communities. So really, we can make these facilities available to non-government organizations and, perhaps for a fee, make them available to the private sector as well so we can cut down on some of the unnecessary travel and make better use of the people as well, because when you are driving

for five hours to a community you are not really doing a whole lot of productive work.

Warmer temperatures -- these are just a few of the ideas -- may sound kind of nice, especially in the winter and when we have our snaps of 30, 35 or 40 below. However, climate change is a lot more than just warmer temperatures. It is a more complicated scenario than just whether the temperature is actually warmer or not.

There are a few things that are already affecting Yukon and our northern territorial neighbours because of climate change. Melting permafrost -- some northern buildings and roads are already shifting and sliding, both in Yukon and elsewhere across the north, as the permafrost they are built on melts. This melting snow also causes landslides and collapsing riverbanks. With earlier breakup of sea ice, wildlife like polar bears or walrus that live on the ice are already being affected by disappearing ice. Polar bears are more of an issue obviously for our neighbours to the east of us than for us, but nevertheless it is something that is happening. Even hunters are being affected. Earlier breakup also means, on the other hand, that ships can travel into northern coastal towns for more weeks of the year. That can have both positive and negative effects and my colleague from Vuntut Gwitchin has reminded me that there will perhaps be serious issues affecting our sovereignty if the Northwest Passage becomes a year-round open passage sometime in the future.

The Porcupine caribou herd -- and the Premier, the Minister of Environment, was indicating earlier today that it is a concern for him. I am glad to hear that. In 1999, some 15,000 calves perished because the cows couldn't make it to their calving grounds in time due to record snow levels. By the time they reached the Porcupine River, the river ice had broken up. So, due to their late arrival, they calved on the south side of the river instead of where they should have been on the coastal plain.

Thousands of calves drowned thereafter in crossing the river or became separated from their mothers and died because the cows, following their traditional instinct, en masse, were crossing the river, with or without their calves. So this was really an environmental disaster. It was a disaster that the Gwich'in people -- including my colleague, the current Member for Vuntut Gwitchin -- experienced personally on the spot. I know that the current Member for Vuntut Gwitchin told me earlier that he was among those Gwich'in people who tried to assist the caribou across the river using boats, but there is only so much that could be done. It is a hopeless effort to save all animals, though I know they saved some.

Mr. Speaker, this was devastating to the largest migratory caribou herd we have here in the north, and potentially these sorts of events could be devastating to the Gwich'in way of life, with the Gwich'in, also a crucial part of our cultural heritage -- all of us as Yukoners.

Rising sea levels -- Mr. Speaker, communities along the northern coasts across Canada and in Alaska are losing land to the ocean. Here in the Yukon, we're now seeing first-hand evidence of this. The settlement area of Herschel Island will be submerged in 50 years or a century from now if current trends

continue. There have been quite a few articles in our local papers about this recently. In fact, it has been noted nationally that this is a cultural and heritage disaster that is happening. The territorial government has already moved the old whaling station twice to protect it from rising water, but I know that the experts in charge say that at some point it becomes a losing battle. For one thing, one has to ask: what is the cultural significance of a building that no longer is anywhere where it once resided and you have to keep moving it to higher ground until it resembles some sort of latter-day Noah's ark perched on the last remaining piece of land? So we're losing our cultural and our historic heritage.

There are more forest fires. We saw evidence of this a couple of times over the last decade. Higher temperatures are drying things out, and larger areas of the forest are burning. They are burning more often across North America. We saw it in B.C. with the tragic fires they had several years ago near Kelowna. We have seen it here. We have been very fortunate in the Yukon. Due to our sparse population, there has been next to no loss to actual infrastructure; however, there has been tremendous loss of the forests. Of course, this also contributes that much more to climate change. Also, when the forest is denuded, the ground that's left with a dark surface reflects more of the sun's light back up into the atmosphere to be trapped, so there is more warming. It becomes a bit of a vicious cycle.

New plants, fish, animals and insects are being introduced. All sorts of new species are being found in northern areas. Warmer temperatures are making it easier for southern species to survive further and further north, but some northern species are finding it harder to survive as their environment changes. Again, we are seeing threats to caribou and other large mammals that depend on hunting on the sea ice. By the same token, we have all noted the influx of deer over the last 20 or 30 years. We have had cougar sightings, so we know that there's a migratory pattern happening. Some of it may be benign. Other things, like the spruce beetle infestation, are less so. In fact, the pine beetle that has moved north in B.C. is heading this way as well. These are serious issues we are going to be facing.

We know that climate change means that temperatures are getting warmer, but this could also lead to more precipitation in some areas. In the north, this has already started to occur. Our previously sunny and arid areas are beginning to have a more coastal and damp climate. As a result of climate change, permafrost is melting and sea ice is getting thinner. We have talked about this. In terms of the change, we are perhaps in store for warmer winters, but with greater snowfall and perhaps cooler summers with greater precipitation.

I know this was something that was predicted in the early 1970s by the noted glaciologist, Dr. Maynard Miller, who since 1947 has been working up on the Juneau-Atlin icefield doing research and drilling hundreds and hundreds of feet down through the ice core. Before anyone else was talking about climate change -- in his little presentations to 30 or 40 people, and sometimes 80 or 90 people, in Atlin at the end of the year, he was noting that, just like we can look at the rings of a tree and the tree growth tells us the story of past years in terms of when there were dry and wet summers, you can look down through

these levels of ice and, because you can see the change between the seasons and you can see the pollen each year that is deposited, they can actually see and measure what has happened. At the time he said we don't know what is causing it -- this was in the early 1970s -- but he said, "I can tell you that what is going to be happening in the coming years by what we are seeing is that we are going to be going into a warmer period with a more coastal climate moving inland, and it is going to be damper and warmer, with cooler summers with more rain, cooler winters with more snow." And now we are seeing it and we now know a little bit more about why.

Rivers and lakes are freezing later in the year and melting earlier in the spring. These are just a few ways that our northern world is starting to change as the climate changes. What will this mean for our wild friends like the Porcupine caribou and the moose and even the pesky mosquito? What will happen as their home environment starts to change?

In all three of Canada's northern territories there are large herds of barren ground caribou. These herds are sometimes made up of 100,000 to 300,000 caribou. As I said earlier, caribou herds travel great distances, season to season, from their wintering grounds to their calving grounds and back again. Caribou travel to different areas because different places provide particular conditions that allow them to survive the season. If climate change affects the travelling conditions, it will affect the caribou. I have already described the disastrous events that occurred in the spring of 1999.

As I am sure you know, the main calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd are located on the Arctic plain in northern Alaska. The Gwich'in people who are strongly connected to the Porcupine herd believe that the calving area in northern Alaska is sacred ground. Like clockwork, the Porcupine caribou herd heads to this area in Alaska every spring from their wintering grounds in north and central Yukon, eastern Alaska or northwestern N.W.T.

However, as climate change warms things up and possibly causes more snow to fall, as has been predicted, the snow may become deeper and heavier than normal. Walking through deep, wet snow is much harder than walking through dry, fluffy snow, isn't it, Mr. Speaker? Travel for the caribou is also getting harder because warmer temperatures in the spring are causing rivers and lakes to break up earlier. Communities in the range of all these caribou herds depend on the migrating caribou for food. Caribou have been central to the culture and life of many northern aboriginal people for thousands of years. If the caribou change their migration routes or decrease in numbers, this will have a serious impact on people in many northern communities. For example, caribou meat is a healthy and inexpensive source of food. If hunting caribou becomes too difficult, this will affect the health of northern people who currently eat a lot of caribou. It will also change a long tradition of how people live on the land.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Environment minister earlier this afternoon made note of "adaptation". In some areas, that's a very forward-looking thing to say, because we know that some of these things are going to happen regardless of what we may do here or what decisions we may make here or what decisions

may be made across Canada, for that matter. Where we can adapt, we will. That may mean changing the style of how we build homes in the far north because of the change in the permafrost. It may mean changing how we build our homes in Whitehorse for that matter. Some things you can't adapt to, and for one, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how the Gwich'in people would adapt to the caribou simply disappearing and leaving and not showing up on this annual migration. So adaptation is part of the solution, but we still have to do what we can for mitigation as well.

No one is exactly sure how each of us in our communities will be affected, because no one knows exactly how things will change, but we do know that things on the ground have changed during the past few decades. We know that many of these changes are man-made, and people's lives are already being affected.

Folks are getting a pretty good idea of what the future might bring based on the changes that are happening, and based on the information that is being collected across the north and around the world.

I could spend the rest of my time just talking about the impact of global climate change, but enough doom. I think we all get the picture.

Now the important question is, of course: what can we as Yukoners start doing now to help stop this impending disaster? The bad news is that we cannot by ourselves prevent these changes from occurring. Some people say, well, what's the point? There are 32,000 of us. If we are as effective as we possibly can be, then it won't make the slightest bit of difference, and if people around the world don't do their part and if the great powerful nations like the United States and China and Russia don't do their part, then it won't matter what the Yukon does. But I say that we can't take that attitude. We can't simply defer to the next larger jurisdiction. We can't say, "Well, it doesn't matter what we do; it really matters what Alberta does, or what British Columbia does." And then we can't have Alberta and British Columbia saying, "It doesn't matter what we do; it really matters what California does." You can take that all the way up until there is only one government that is going to take action because they are the biggest.

We have a responsibility to our children and to future generations to do whatever we can do to contribute to solutions. We can start today with actions that will lessen significantly the degree to which we will be impacted and we impact the environment.

Now, some types of energy help to put more of those nasty climate-changing, greenhouse gases into the atmosphere than others. We know that fuels like oil, gas and coal are the main culprits as they put lots of greenhouse gases into the environment when we use them. Earlier today, during Question Period, the Environment minister was thinking that we didn't understand that and was reminding us that that's what an additional turbine at Aishihik is all about. Again, we are not saying it is not worth doing; we are asking if that is the best thing we can do now with the money we have at hand. Is that number one? Is that the best thing we can do if we can only do one thing over the next four to five years?

In many northern communities in Canada, there are large generators that burn diesel to create electricity. Those generators do send a lot of greenhouse gases and other air pollutants into the atmosphere. Of course, the diesel is usually transported into the community by truck, plane or barge. All of these forms of transportation also burn fossil fuels. Greenhouse gases are produced both when the diesel is brought into the community and when the diesel is burned in the generators.

In some northern communities, river water is used to produce electricity and hydroelectric power can be a greenhouse-gas-free source of power, but it is not necessarily so. In Canada, 61 percent of the country's electricity is produced by hydro power. In the Yukon, that number is much higher already. It is important to remember that hydroelectric power can cause some environmental concerns that also must be considered. Although many hydroelectric projects involve building dams that change the flow of rivers, there are smaller hydro projects that produce power by using the natural flow of the river or stream. Small turbines can either sit in the flow of the river, or water can be piped to them to generate power. These micro hydro projects don't have to dam the river. These smaller projects produce much less power than the big dams, but they also have less impact on the natural environment.

Wind turbines are a great example of renewable energy. They are a power technology that has been around for hundreds of years in some countries. It is the fastest growing source of power in the world today. We know that there have been problems. There have been problems of rime ice on the turbines on top of Haeckel Hill. Just because we are struggling to adapt it to Yukon, we should not dismiss this potential form of clean power when it has been successfully used in so many parts of the world. Again, that's something else we can be doing for the future.

The sun is a huge source of free power. In fact, most forms of power, including our carbon-based fuels, can be traced back to the sun's energy as the original source. Really hydrocarbons are just a form of energy that has been stored in the ground very slowly over hundreds and hundreds of thousands of years. We are using all that energy in 150 to 250 years, and that is really the crux of the problem. It's not that there is something inherently evil about this form of fuel; it's just that we are consuming it at such an incredibly rapid pace compared to the pace at which it was first stored.

Solar power can be used to generate both electricity and heat. We've all seen solar panels that sit on a roof and use the sun to create energy. They're becoming more common in Yukon despite our short winter days. Now, these panels use technology called solar photovoltaics, or PV for short, to make electricity. In the north, these panels are a great way for hunting camps, cottages, research stations or others to generate electricity, especially if they're too far away from an area's main source of power, like diesel or hydro power.

I might point out, Mr. Speaker, that I lived off-grid for a year or so in the early 1970s when we built our home in Atlin, outside of the community, and the grid didn't reach us yet. We were looking into what forms or ways we could have power, and we looked at solar power and wind generators. The tech-

nology -- and we're talking 1974 -- was very expensive back then. It was prohibitively expensive.

Today, you can go down to Canadian Tire, and for \$19.99 or less, you can buy a photovoltaic solar panel that you leave on the dash of your car that will perpetually keep your battery from running down. The larger units that are put on rooftops cost a small percent -- five percent or less of what they did 25 or 30 years ago. So, some of the decisions that were made years ago, saying this isn't practical -- wind power, solar power -- are becoming practical today.

In communities like Old Crow, for example, this type of power generation could have a significant positive effect for a portion of the year, and this technology exists now. We don't need more two-year studies to determine that. The financial savings of not buying diesel and transporting that fuel to Old Crow for at least part of the year -- because we know that in part of the year there is not a great deal of sunlight. But for a portion of the year, it could produce major savings over the next 50 years, both in greenhouse gas reductions and in dollars saved -- a win-win.

There's also a newer technology called the solar wall, which helps use the sun's heat to warm the inside of a building, even in northern winters. The dark-coloured metal with lots of tiny holes in it is placed on a sunny outside wall of a building. The outside air travels through the small holes and is warmed up by the metal via the sun's heat. This pre-heated air is then moved into the building with fans. I believe this technology is already demonstrated on the Energy Solutions Centre, and it could be employed on many commercial buildings and residences, and particularly in multi-residential buildings. This technology can be cost-effective today.

For example, the Weledeh Catholic School in Yellowknife, N.W.T. and the recreation centre in Fort Smith, N.W.T., both have solar walls. Even in the short, darker days of December, Fort Smith's solar wall, combined with a heat recovery ventilator, is able to meet 75 percent of the recreation centre's heating needs. That's quite impressive in the middle of a northern winter. As the sun gets stronger in January and February, the solar wall provides 100 percent of the centre's heat. If it works in the N.W.T., Mr. Speaker, it can work in the Yukon.

Some places also have warmer hot water under the ground that can be used to help heat buildings. Whitehorse is one of those places. The warm water can be circulated through pipes to help warm up buildings. Studies are being done in Haines Junction to see if the 17 degree Celsius water that flows below the town can be used to heat the buildings above-ground. About 40 percent of the energy in Iceland is produced by hot water extracted from volcanic rocks. In Yukon, we also have the potential for deep-drilled geothermal power, and I'll talk about that a little bit later in my remarks.

I could go on with more examples but I believe I have made my point that there's more we could do there.

There are some things government can do today in assisting Yukoners. I recently spoke at the Earth Day celebration here at Mount McIntyre and I outlined several of the things that Yukoners can do now. I'll outline briefly a few of those points here.

Leave your car at home for a day and try walking or biking. Do you drive to work? Can you take a bus? That's an area we need to take a hard look at, particularly in Whitehorse. Busing can be a better and far more attractive alternative. I feel that government has to show leadership in this area and, with the eco-trust monies, this could be easily achievable. Mr. Speaker, no one was able to take the bus to Sunday's Earth Day celebrations at Mount McIntyre. How sadly ironic, because the city's bus service doesn't run on Sundays. We all saw how well used the bus service was during the Canada Games. With extended hours, more frequent service, perhaps even free bus service as it was during the Canada Games, we can increase ridership significantly and make a real dent in vehicle emissions in the Yukon.

The reason it worked during the Canada Games, Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure you probably had occasion to ride the bus - I think a number of us did -- was it was a sort of a carrot-and-a-stick approach. On the one hand, the games committee told the volunteers and visitors, "Don't drive to the venues because you're not going to be able to park when you get there." I guess that was the stick. You couldn't park if you got there. The carrot was, they said, "We'll start the service early in the morning, and we'll run it until 11:00 at night. We'll schedule it so it gets to more locations more frequently, like up at the Yukon College, and we'll make it free for the volunteers."

We know that nothing's really free, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps the territorial government could look at making an increased contribution as a trial program and see if the city could run the bus service at no charge or at a reduced charge over the course of a year or so. I do appreciate the fact that the territory has already assisted the City of Whitehorse in buying new and more efficient buses, as was mentioned during Question Period today.

Turn off lights, computers and TVs when not in use. Using highly efficient appliances can reduce the electricity consumption of an average household to one-tenth of the national average. Again, the individual component of this is to make the initiative to do that, not to leave the computer on and the TV on and not to squeeze another year out of an aging appliance. Government can make the contribution with programs that provide incentives and rebates for doing so.

Where's the beef? Try eating meat-free at least one additional day a week. A meat-based diet requires seven times more land than a plant-based diet. Livestock production is responsible for more climate change gases than all the motor vehicles in the world. I find that hard to fathom, but apparently that's the case. Hunt bison, the Member for Kluane says. Good point.

Eat it. Choose foods produced organically, locally and in season as much as possible. Support our local farmers. Buying locally and in season is better for the environment than buying foods that have been shipped thousands of kilometres. We should look at what we can do to assist the locally owned organic farm and its endeavours to convert to a cooperative owned model. Because we are at the end of the food supply chain up here, and if there is ever to be disruptions, it would be nice if a little more of our food was available locally and we were a little more self-reliant.

Let it rot. Composting organics has two benefits. It reduces the amount of waste going to landfills, and when added to your garden, it helps nourish soil and plants. I will say this: make sure that you're doing it in a bear-friendly way, because there have been cases where people have neglected to do that.

If in doubt, do indoor composting, with or without worms.

Don't be idling. If every driver of a light-duty vehicle avoided idling by five minutes a day, collectively we would save 1.8 million litres of fuel per day -- almost 4,500 tonnes of emissions and \$1.7 million in fuel costs each day in Canada. In Yukon we are perhaps more guilty of idling our vehicles than in most of southern Canada. We get into the habit when it is 34 or 40 below and then we just seem to keep on idling regardless of the temperature. We don't need to be doing that, and it is a very bad contribution to greenhouse gases.

Keep cool. Set your thermostat above room temperature in the summer and below room temperature in the winter. For each degree you can save five percent on your utility bill and one percent on your energy use. I know there aren't many air-conditioned homes in Yukon, but the winter thermostat setback can really be important, and so can employing more sophisticated thermostats that adjust house temperatures depending on the time of day -- another item that can assist people in converting to those setback thermostats. This could be helped by government.

Bright ideas in government -- the Yukon Energy Corporation is beginning to push this. Replacing incandescent light bulbs with fluorescent light bulbs, or LEDs -- a compact fluorescent uses only 25 percent as much energy as an incandescent bulb and lasts 10 times longer; LEDs are even better.

Recycling -- the simply act of recycling has more impact on the environment than the average Canadian thinks. The amount of wood and paper that North Americans throw away each year is enough to heat five million homes for 200 years. In Whitehorse we have Raven Recycling that allows residents to drop off many objects that can be recycled or at least prevented from entering the landfill.

We took part in the trial program years ago. I think it started when we were in Riverdale and we carried forward with that in Granger. Now, of course, the City of Whitehorse has that program for all residents with the alternate weeks. I am amazed at how little garbage we actually put out when we become very active in what we are able to take back to the recycling centre. We never have one full container of garbage any more because of the amount that we are taking back and recycling on the green days.

We need to encourage more communities to set up similar programs, and the territorial government could assist with funding for this across rural Yukon.

And finally, tell someone what you are doing to make the world a better place, and how fun and easy it is. I would say to my fellow MLAs, encourage your constituents to do the same.

Government has to take the lead and lead by example. Government could make a significant move now -- and I spoke about this earlier -- by funding a rider-free public transportation system, similar to what was in place for the Canada Winter Games. Some of the \$5 million eco-trust money received from

Ottawa could have been used for this. It still could be, because it hasn't actually been spent yet, or for that matter, even received.

The City of Whitehorse officials did an excellent job of re-arranging their bus schedule. They proved it can be done, but the city doesn't necessarily have the funding to do that on a long-term basis. The reduction of greenhouse gases would be in the thousands of tonnes overtime if we were to do that.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Member for Kluane, mentioned this earlier in Question Period. The governors of Washington, Oregon and California and New Mexico have approved a series of recommendations for action to combat global warming, and they have directed their staffs to continue working on state and regional goals and strategies to combat global warming over the coming year. One reason they are leading the way is because they feel that the federal government in the United States has been dragging its heels. And I will point out that the governors of these states come from all political stripes -- Republican and Democrats -- so it's not a partisan issue.

Their joint staff reported that "Global warming will have serious adverse consequences on the economy, health and environment of the west coast states. These impacts will grow significantly in coming years if we do nothing to reduce greenhouse gas pollution. Fortunately, addressing global warming carries substantial economic benefits. The west coast region is rich in renewable energy resources and advanced energy efficient technologies. We can capitalize on these strengths and invest in the clean energy resources of our region." The report is the most recent action taken as part of the West Coast Governors Global Warming Initiative launched by the governors in September 2003 -- the first full year of this government's term, coincidentally.

This effort is widely considered one of the leading state initiatives on climate change in the United States. The governors have committed to act individually and regionally to reduce greenhouse gas emissions below current levels through strategies that promote long-term economic growth, protect public health and the environment, consider social equity and expand public awareness.

Closer to home, Premier Gordon Campbell's climate change plan is gaining praise throughout North America with renowned environmentalist David Suzuki, as well as California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, lending strong words of support for that premier's announcements. It is hard to envision any program that gets endorsed by both Governor Schwarzenegger and Dr. Suzuki, but here we have one. They are strange bedfellows but they have a common cause. I quote: "I am pleased that British Columbia has joined the fight against climate change," said Schwarzenegger. "Global warming impacts everyone, and states and nations must work together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I look forward to meeting with Premier Campbell and working with British Columbia on this critical issue."

The two leaders will meet this spring in what is to be the start of a new west coast green plan to be forged with California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and Alaska. According to Premier Campbell, that group will work toward

common environmental regulations to control emissions from oceanic resources and container ships and enable the construction of a -- and I quote -- "hydrogen highway" from Vancouver to San Diego.

The Yukon should -- and, more importantly, could -- be part of that alliance. Just think of the global impact we could collectively muster. Not only would we be combating global warming, but we would also be an inspiration to other jurisdictions around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I am talking today about the example set by Governor Schwarzenegger to help me make my point. Governor Schwarzenegger is a Republican governor. I know that my colleagues across the floor in the Yukon Party have been friendly with Republican governors in the past. Perhaps it would be more suspect if I quoted from Democrats, which I could just as readily do.

But the California governor gets it. He recognizes that the time for action is now and he's moving forward rapidly. He has been in office for less time than has this government. He has been in office less time than our Hon. Premier has been in charge. Yet here he is, on the cover of the April 16, 2007 edition of *Newsweek*, because he is showing real leadership. I am going to be tabling copies of the article.

I'm going to be tabling copies of the article, but thank you for that, honourable members. The article states: "His faith in the power of technology and free markets to show global warming is neither depressing nor polarizing. As a Republican, Schwarzenegger says his environmentalism is easier to sell in some quarters. He refers to America's federal sideline position as 'embarrassing.' What we're basically saying to the federal government is, look, we don't need Washington. So let us create the partnerships and let the world know that America is actually fighting global warming, said Gov. Schwarzenegger."

Well, why not have Yukon's Premier and Environment minister step forward and lead the way in Canada, Mr. Speaker? Perhaps we could see the Premier on the cover one day of *Maclean's* magazine for leading the way within Canada, and we'd be yelling "prop" from this side of the floor. Wouldn't that be a treat, Mr. Speaker?

Another initiative worth exploring is time-of-day tariff, or TOD, not a reference to our colleague, the Member for Whitehorse Centre, Mr. Speaker. This example is available in Nova Scotia. It's available in Nova Scotia now to customers employing electric-based heating systems. The Environment minister noted earlier today that the government is now, once again, encouraging people and is going to be helping people to put more electrical heating in place and doing it in government buildings. It has to be confusing for Yukoners, because in the short 36 years I've lived in the north, I've watched the Yukon government encourage electric heat, help people to put baseboard heat in, and we had it all over Riverdale, where I used to live. Then the government encouraged people to replace their electric heat with large and poorly thought-out at that time, not very environmentally clean wood stoves, compared to some of the technology that's available. Then government discouraged people from using those wood stoves. Then there was a period of time when people were encouraged to use propane heat.

Then they were encouraged to use oil heat. And so it goes -- we're back to electric heat.

This time-of-day tariff is now available in Nova Scotia. It allows customers to employ electric-based heating systems, utilizing electric thermal storage, ETS equipment, and electric in-floor radiant heating systems, utilizing thermal storage and appropriate timing and controls approved by Nova Scotia Power.

This tariff is applicable to electric energy used by any customer in a private residence for the customer's own domestic or household use, including lighting, cooking, heating or refrigeration purposes. In order to qualify for the TOD rate, you must have an electric space heating system that has the capacity to store heat, with appropriate timing and controls in place, approved by Nova Scotia Power.

Electric thermal storage heating systems are available as central heating systems -- forced warm air, hot-water baseboard, in-floor radiant or heat pump with backup ETS, or individual room units. ETS is exclusively electric with all the advantages of electric heat -- clean, safe, comfortable, healthy heat -- at a great savings over regular electric and oil heat costs.

Unlike oil-fired heating systems, there are no open flames or fuel storage tanks. For example, 1,500 kilowatt hours per month in the winter, 75 percent off-peak, 20 percent mid-peak, and five percent on-peak, the cost per month, excluding taxes, comes to \$122.34; 750 kilowatt hours per month non-winter, 75 percent off-peak, 25 percent on-peak, comes to \$68.81. The standard rate paid by all residential accounts in Nova Scotia is 10.67 cents per kilowatt hour, but by buying off-peak, the rate is cut in half to 5.335 cents per kilowatt hour.

What we're really talking about is demand-side regulation, and it will require the Yukon Utilities Board to authorize doing that. But, since the honourable members on the government side have pointed out that while we're not currently in a deficit of electrical power, the day will come, if enough mines start up, where we may be burning more diesel, this, then, is something for which we need to start putting the process in place to change.

Off-peak hours in Nova Scotia are 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., Monday to Friday, all weekend and every holiday. Consumers are quite frequently saving 40 percent, and the utility is not adding to peak demand time and therefore not reducing their capacity. So it's a win-win for many Nova Scotians.

I'm not saying, "Let's run out and do this." I'm saying, "Here's another idea worth looking at seriously." And while it might not have an impact now when we are still in a surplus situation here on the Whitehorse-Aishihik-Faro grid most of the time, it could have a real impact after we have one or two mines operating and are burning more diesel, particularly in Whitehorse.

My final reference on different alternatives, Mr. Speaker, is to geothermal energy. We talked a little bit about that earlier. I want to talk about a different form of it. The earth's interior contains heat energy, or geothermal energy, that yields warmth and power that we can use with limited environmental impact.

The heat from the Earth's core continuously flows outward in the form of hot, liquid rock called magma. Sometimes

magma reaches all the way to the Earth's surface where we know it as lava from volcanic eruptions. Most often the magma remains below the Earth's crust, heating nearby rock and groundwater. Some of this hot water travels back up through faults and cracks and reaches the Earth's surface as hot springs or geysers, but most of it stays deep underground, trapped in cracks and porous rock, known as geo-thermal reservoirs.

We can drill wells into the geo-thermal reservoirs to bring hot water to the surface. Geologists, geo-chemists, drillers and engineers explore and assess areas that contain this geo-thermal water to determine where to drill geo-thermal production wells. Once the hot water or steam travels up the wells to the surface, it can be used to generate electricity in geo-thermal power plants or for energy, saving non-electrical purposes. Yukon is said to have some of the best potential for this form of geo-thermal power in North America.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and give more details. I know that members on all sides of the House are eager to address this issue, so as I draw my remarks to a close, I want to again emphasize to the House that we in no way see this as a partisan issue. I was disappointed earlier today to hear the Environment minister say we have finally caught on -- we are finally on to this issue. He was practically indicating that they had been working on it for 20 or 30 years and we just discovered it yesterday.

We don't want any more of that. It really doesn't make one whit of difference to me which side of the House, which member, which party thought of it before another party or another member thought of it. I think the important thing is that Yukoners are looking for us to lead and lead effectively, and take action and take action now. And as they point out, the government is currently the Yukon Party government, so it is in their court to take action.

My caucus is prepared to do whatever is required to help the government and members of the third party in moving this issue forward. So I want to say -- and again I bring you back to the wording of the motion -- in supporting this motion, you are in no way admitting that you have been wrong and deficient in the past. Quite the contrary -- you will be showing leadership and the Liberal caucus will be supportive of initiatives that will move this issue forward.

We all know the acronyms and the slang vernacular that too often have been used in the past in referring to private members' day in this Legislative Assembly. I won't diminish the Assembly by making reference to the actual wording today, but we all know them, and we have all made reference to them.

Part of the reason why that happens, part of the reason why so few motions pass this Legislative Assembly, part of the reason why so many motions are talked out -- which means this House doesn't actually make a decision to do anything -- is because of the political partisanship that is exhibited. It happens on both sides of the House. It's done by the government in response to opposition motions, and it's done by opposition in response to government motions. We aren't laying the blame on any one party or on any one side of the House.

My challenge today is to invite all members to say what they will. When the Hon. Premier, the Minister of Environment

stands, I know he will talk about what he believes the government is doing, and on some of those issues we will agree. Let's not play games here today. Let's not start amending motions -- and I've seen it in the past -- to say that this House lauds the fact that this government has been taking effective action, or that this government continues with their wonderfully effective action. The motion does not imply what has or hasn't been done in the past. I was very particular about that. It doesn't say that nothing good has been done or that nothing good is happening. It simply says, "...take immediate action..." I'll be disappointed -- and more importantly, I think Yukoners will be disappointed -- if this debate deteriorates into name-calling, references to past governments that members may or may not have been part of, talking about how great the government of the day is or how great the opposition parties would be if only they were there. Let's just talk about moving forward for Yukoners.

It is about leadership, Mr. Speaker. A friend, many years ago, once told me that every politician wants you to believe that he was born in a log cabin he built himself. I say to all honourable members, let's build this Yukon log cabin together.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: First, I want to just quickly make mention of something in the member's wrap-up. He talked about issues on private members' day with respect to the passage of motions. I would point out to the member that under the Yukon Party government's watch there has been a record number of motions that have unanimously passed this House. So the government side has long been promoting and fostering that very concept of recognizing that this institution and the members in it have a duty and a responsibility to be constructive and to advance initiatives in the interest of the Yukon public. So that is being done, just so the member can be somewhat comforted in our debate today.

I secondly want to extend to the Leader of the Official Opposition a tremendous amount of appreciation from the government side for the insights that the member has brought forward here today in all these areas of climate change that have been well known for, in some cases, decades and, in other cases, they have been made public in a much more understandable manner recently. But I would point out to the member that the member's dissertation today reflects all matters that have already been known or that jurisdictions, governments, scientists, people, citizens, First Nations and others have been well aware of for some time.

That said, that knowledge, that understanding, that input, that guidance and that networking by all concerned is what has shaped the Yukon government's climate strategy. I have to make mention of the date -- July 2006, Mr. Speaker -- when this government brought a climate change strategy that reflects all the areas -- and I repeat, all the areas -- that the Leader of the Official Opposition has brought forward today in April 2007. That is why we thanked and encouraged the members opposite today for having grasped this very important matter for Yukoners, the nation and the world.

Let me just make some points that corroborate my statement. If you consider the climate change strategy that has been brought forward, there is a science to this that reflects much of

what the member has articulated here today. It includes rising Arctic temperatures, it includes declining sea ice, it incorporates thawing permafrost, shifting vegetation zones, increasing fires and insect outbreaks, for example. I bring these forward because they touch on a number of the areas that the member presented here today with respect to the science of climate change and what we are experiencing. It's important to note that there are some areas specific to Yukon and what we're dealing with in the territory as it relates to this global phenomenon.

I want to touch on some biophysical impacts that the member has pointed out. I would remind the member that many of these are in the climate change strategy from one year ago. Glaciers, permafrost, land stability, water resources, habitat and, of course, land ecosystems and more are there. It includes wildlife, birds, freshwater ecosystems, marine ecosystems, sea levels and coastal zones and impacts. There are also, as the member stated today, social and economic issues. The member would surely recognize that one year ago those areas were tabled in the climate change strategy that the Yukon is going forward with today. That includes tourism and culture, community infrastructure, hydroelectric production, the transportation infrastructure -- this is of course a huge issue for us in the north considering the distances we travel between our communities -- forestry, agriculture, renewable resources, traditional lifestyles and overall health.

I make these points to reassure the members opposite that the Yukon is already addressing these areas in the climate change strategy, because we recognize that this is what all the reports the member mentioned and all the science, network and inputting has shown to date. These are the things that we must work on. As we all know, from that we have shaped a strategy. It consists of four main goals. These are very important goals, because they essentially address all the aforementioned areas and, to the extent possible, allow Yukon to advance positively and constructively with a climate change strategy that not only ensures that we contribute globally to dealing with this phenomenon, but also addresses the impacts and emission factors here in Yukon.

The member made a point that certainly stuck in my mind, because it can really be effective in dealing with this kind of phenomenon, and it was about people being aware. One of the main goals is enhancing awareness and understanding of climate change, its impacts, determinants and so forth. I point out to the member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition, once again, that even though the member has mistakenly not recognized that it is happening in today's Yukon, I commend him for bringing it forward here today, albeit almost one year behind the implementation of that very fact.

Secondly, reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I think we all agree that there are a number of areas that the member listed where those emissions take place but, once again, that's already something that we have gone forward with as part of our strategy some time ago.

Build Yukon environmental, social and economic systems able to adapt to the impacts of climate change -- once again, we're already doing that, but I thank the member for reminding

his colleagues across the way that we must be doing that and I commend them for joining with the government on such an important initiative to Yukon, to Canada and to the globe.

Lastly, support efforts to establish Yukon as a northern leader -- the member talked quite a bit today in his dissertations about being a leader. That was in our strategy of a year ago, that the Yukon become a leader. We've gone farther with this budget in investments toward that end when it comes to modernizing our database. We will be a leader when it comes to our biophysical database, as we are when it relates to our geophysical database. You can see the balance here, understanding through geoscience and that database our values in resource, for example, and through the establishment of a second-to-none biophysical database, understanding more clearly our ecosystems, our wildlife and those values. When you put the two together, mitigation, innovation, adaptation and, indeed, responsible development are the net results.

So under those goals is a litany of measures that we're already proceeding with to deal with climate change here in Yukon and, indeed, one of the recent initiatives is the investment in enhancing our capacity in hydro and our efficiency in hydro.

It's interesting to note that in Question Period we had a robust debate around the initiative for the eco-trust investment, and the members opposite said that investment is not needed. I want to express how encouraged we are here later on this afternoon, given the Leader of the Official Opposition's speech in which the Leader of the Official Opposition rightly pointed out that we must think ahead and, in doing so, recognize that more and more demand will come on our electric system and that we should be mindful of ensuring that we don't need to use harmful fuels that are going to increase Yukon's emissions. That is exactly what the investment that we have gone forward in partnership with Canada does.

So all these things obviously lead to this conclusion. The debate here today is one that can be dealt with expeditiously -- in fact, very constructively on behalf of the Yukon public -- because the motion brought forward -- and, once again, I have to make some commendations where they are due. The Official Opposition has demonstrated here today the willingness to be constructive, given the content and the approach of their motion. For clarity, I would like to point out that the motion states that "we here in this institution should go forward to address this issue." It states that "This House urges the Government of Yukon to take immediate action to address the serious environmental and economic effects of climate change on the Yukon."

Mr. Speaker, the government side could not in good conscience or in any way that relates to reality not support this motion wholeheartedly. We are buoyed and encouraged by the Official Opposition's recognition of what we have been doing for months now as a government here in the territory. It is very important, and they are encouraging us to continue. And I am hoping that this motion tabled by the Official Opposition represents their willingness to, shoulder to shoulder, work with all Yukoners and experts in the scientific community and Canada

and the world at large to address this very challenging global phenomenon we call climate change.

To that end, I can assure all members of this House that the government side need not discuss nor debate in any way further the motion. We will fully support it and are ready to vote.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Edzerza: I feel it important to put some things on the record with regard to this motion. The motion speaks to the serious environmental and economic effects of climate change.

We must not forget climate change is occurring because of man's disrespect for Mother Earth. The world has had the pleasure for hundreds of years of riding a great tsunami wave of industrialization and reaping Mother Earth of her wealth and sustainability.

Well, the great wave is about to become a breaker. Mankind is on the track of self-destruction, and it is good to see the panic across the country about something the First Nations warned about hundreds of years ago. First Nations tried to warn all people about the importance of protecting Mother Earth. First Nations recognized the value of protecting everything Mother Earth has to provide -- the air, the water, the land and all living species that Mother Earth provides.

Mr. Speaker, let's discuss how well we have done and let's start with the air. For example, I went on a vacation some years ago and flew to Los Angeles. In fact, we were taking our children to Disney Land. When we were within an hour of landing, the pilot made special notice to his passengers to look out their right window, and he said, "You see that great big, dirty, really rusty-coloured orange cloud coming up into our beautiful blue sky?" And he made the observation that this was Los Angeles. That ugly cloud in the nice blue sky was coming from the city of Los Angeles. I never did forget that because you can't see that when you're walking on the earth as we do today, but from up there you could.

We also, that one time, took a trip to Reno. It was beautiful in the wintertime. As we drove down through the states and through Salt Lake City, it was just unbelievable. It looked like some areas up in the Yukon when there is a very bad forest fire. That's the way it was around Salt Lake City. Atomic power pipes, so I was told, are what they were. They were all over the place just bellowing these humongous clouds of steady smoke. I could not believe that anybody could survive in that kind of an environment where the air was so polluted and so horrible smelling.

So, those were two examples that I really took notice of. I also hear from other First Nations in Alberta, about Fort McMurray and how ugly that place is becoming. I've heard from First Nations down there who said that since they put Fort McMurray into operation, their communities now stink from what is coming out of those oil fields, so man only has to blame himself for what's happening today to this earth. I think no one in this Assembly or in the Yukon needs to be told that without air you're not going to live. Without clean air, without having good air to breathe, you just won't survive.

The air is a very necessary element to sustain life unless somewhere down the line something else is invented so we can breathe water. I don't know. That leads me right into water.

Let's talk about the water and what we use it for. We use it for a means of disposing of and getting rid of raw sewage of all things. Can you imagine? That's what we use it for. Dumping raw sewage into the rivers and letting it float down. Again, we need water to be able to live. We can't do without it.

Right here in the territory, we're as guilty as the people in the south, anywhere south of here. For example, how many years has raw sewage been pumped into the Yukon River in Dawson City? How many years? People actually eat the fish out of that river. I can't believe it. I can't believe that in this day and age we're still actively doing this. I would prefer to have seen the sewer in Dawson City become number one priority versus another turbine in Aishihik Lake. Seriously.

Look at the Yukon River and look at Whitehorse. It was stated to me some years ago by First Nations that they had actually found, in the gills of fish that had been harvested in Lake Laberge, toilet paper that had come from the City of Whitehorse.

Now, even today, I've gone down the river here, and I see this pipe coming out of the ground that is pumping out this sort of a bluish-green coloured stuff. I don't know what's in there. But we are, right today, still actively polluting the water. I've also heard stories of different countries using the ocean as a dumping ground for outdated ships that they want to get rid of -- put them out in the ocean and sink them. I've heard of atomic waste being pumped into the oceans as a means of getting rid of it.

So again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we don't even take into consideration everything we're doing with regard to the oceans. We also eat and harvest a lot of the fish that come from the oceans. So it's no wonder that we have diseases that we can't get a handle on.

Let's talk about the land. What are we doing to the land? Again, our traditional belief is that Mother Earth is sacred and we must do everything we can to protect her. What have we done to the face of Mother Earth, all in the name of progress? I know the world has become dependent on vehicles, housing, you name it. There are lots of things that Mother Earth provides, and that's good. But the thing we don't do is do repairs for the damages that we have caused. We don't repair Mother Earth like we should. A good example of that would be the mine at Faro. When I was there, it was called Cyprus Anvil Mine. There was destruction and damage done to the environment for the sake of employing people and for the sake of mining the ore. I believe that most of it was sent to foreign countries and wasn't even used in Canada.

I have a story about a time when I was coming home from work when I worked at the mine in Faro. In the middle of the tailings pond, there was a moose struggling for its life. I don't know to this day if the moose ever got out of that tailings pond. They put that great big tailings pond right along a river where there was enormous potential for a large amount of water to be polluted with cyanide and other poisons from that tailings pond. I know of more than one occasion when that tailings pond did give way and a lot of that stuff drained into Rose Creek. Rose Creek runs into the Pelly River. It has been stated to me on more than one occasion that when someone goes

down the Pelly River, they can tell when they're coming close to where Rose Creek comes in, which is approximately 15 miles downstream from Faro. They can tell where Rose Creek is because they can smell it before they see it. They can actually smell the mill 15 miles downstream from Faro. I don't know exactly how many miles it is from the mine site to where the river runs out, but it is unbelievable that, again, all this destruction has happened within the last 30 to 50 years.

When I first went to Keno, I thought it was the most beautiful valley I had ever seen; however, it has the ugliest tailings pond all the way through the middle of it. It has beautiful, pristine meadows and balsam trees. It is gorgeous country, but it is totally destroyed by that tailings pond.

When we look at Whitehorse Copper, right in the city limits, I don't care what anybody says -- for the sake of industrialization that should never happen. The tailings pond at Whitehorse Copper is constantly blowing all through the City of Whitehorse on a windy day. Does anybody know what kind of damage that does to our health with we breathe it in? Does anybody care?

When I go up the Annie Lake Road to Mount Skookum and look at all the beautiful country there that is covered by a tailings pond -- tailings from that short period of time that Mount Skookum was open -- I think government has a lot more responsibility to ensure that these things aren't happening. Sure, it is nice when everyone can pat themselves on the back when a mine opens when they are in government, but what does that do to the environment? We are not looking at that. We aren't taking care of the land. We are constantly destroying it and now there is a big panic that there is a problem with climate change. I think there are going to be a lot more problems than just climate change at the rate that the Earth is being destroyed. It is coming to the point where there is going to be no way to sustain life on this Earth the way we are going. When we talk about all the living species that we have, I think at the rate animals are being slaughtered, even in the territory, I don't really see a future for the people who are going to be here long after we are gone.

It's almost impossible to be able to sustain the same amount of harvest that is happening today forever and ever. I think everybody in the territory and across the country has the responsibility to start taking care of this a little bit better. Actually, I think it's probably a blessing to a lot of the First Nations people right across the world that all of a sudden something they have talked about for hundreds of years is becoming a reality -- starting to realize that there is a real problem here with how the Earth is changing.

Our traditional belief is that some day Mother Earth will rebel, and then mankind will find out just what powers are out there. And it's starting to happen. You see the tsunamis, the tidal waves, all of the fires and the washing away of land that has been clear-cut. There is nothing more to hold that land together, and it is washing away.

So I think I would like to close by saying that I sincerely hope that people right across the world will start recognizing the fact that First Nations and Inuit across the land have valu-

able knowledge about respecting Mother Earth. And it is now time for the peoples of the world to start listening.

Thank you.

Mr. McRobb: I will try to be brief in my comments, given the cooperative mood in this Assembly to pass this motion today.

I want to start with acknowledging the increased public awareness of climate change across the globe. Although some people, namely scientists, have been aware of this emerging issue for decades, it has only been in recent months that one can safely say the public has really moved and supported this issue. And as a result of that action, governments have quickly followed by taking action themselves.

I would be remiss if I didn't give some credit to former U.S. Vice-president Al Gore in his travelling lecture series and production of the movie *An Inconvenient Truth*. When I saw that movie late last year it certainly made an impression on me and on others who saw it. We had discussions afterward. This has resulted in some extreme turnabouts in the political world. For example, the Australian Premier who was so opposed to climate change, moved earlier this year to ban incandescent light bulbs in the country. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, a hard-line right-winger, is now being referred to as the "green governor". Even here in the Yukon we've seen a change. So there have been a lot of drastic turnabouts in very recent times. Of course, there are still the naysayers, like U.S. President George W. Bush, or radio talk show mogul, Rush Limbaugh, whom I had the displeasure of listening to during my recent trek across the United States. Let's just say there's no hope for some people. It's going to be up to the more forward-thinking elected representatives and people in our society to ensure responsible action is taken.

That explains today's motion debate. If we in the Official Opposition felt it was pointless to be raising these concerns that are of great import to the public and the globe, we wouldn't have done it. But we understand the government is receptive to the suggestions we are putting on the table today and I do have some suggestions to contribute. First I want to put a few more items on the record.

Members will notice that we in the Official Opposition caucus are wearing green ribbons today. This is in support of an initiative called Climate Action Now, and the mission of this initiative is to raise awareness of the need for action in climate change. The money collected goes to support sustainable transportation. More can be learned about this cause at the Web site www.greenribbons.blogspot.com. I would also like to thank Yukon MP Larry Bagnell for accommodating my request for ribbons during my visit in Ottawa earlier this year.

I think that before us in the Yukon we have some great opportunities to take action to address the threat of climate change. Some of them have been identified while others have not. I want to give an example. Today in Question Period I raised some of the initiatives that B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell is taking. He has seen fit to try to capitalize on being a world leader in at least one of the actions his government is taking; that is, requiring the complete carbon sequestration of

coal-fired generation plants, in terms of CO₂ emissions. B.C. is now the first jurisdiction in the world to require this. I'm wondering, what about the Yukon? There are lots of possibilities here to make the Yukon first -- lots of possibilities.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was some talk about the eco-trust fund money and some of the issues around that. I want to make a suggestion in a most non-confrontational way, and that is: the whole area of demand-side management, which has been touched on by our Crown-owned utility, the Yukon Energy Corporation, and its parent company, the Yukon Development Corporation, back in the early 1990s, and since that time, demand-side management, or DSM as the acronym is known, has not been part of the utility's operations.

If you talk to utility people, they will point to a former ruling of the Yukon Utilities Board that disallowed its investments into this area. In other words, the utility had to eat the cost of DSM without recovering it from ratepayers.

I was part of the process, and I would like to put on record that the Yukon Utilities Board was under a lot of pressure to disallow costs in order to reduce the 60-percent rate hike that was proposed at the time. I know that the Yukon Utilities Board supported DSM; however, at the time it was one of the areas it was compelled to disallow as an expense. Some people have taken that as a negative signal and as some kind of landmark decision that DSM shouldn't be part of the utility's operations in the future. Given this grey area, there is a likely solution to this dilemma, and that is: why doesn't the Yukon government look at putting some funds -- like it did toward the Aishihik third wheel -- into DSM to relieve the cost burden from the Energy Corporation and absolve the risk issue there? There are plenty of conservation initiatives that could be undertaken in this area to decrease demand on the system and decrease CO₂ emissions that would be efficient and constructive and practical and just plain good. I wanted to get that on the record.

There has been a lot of discussion in the Yukon on how climate change impacts would affect us most severely. There is absolutely no doubt about that -- from wildlife to plants to permafrost melting, our cultures, our highways, and there is a long list to follow. But there are other areas in the world that would suffer too, and we know that with a sea level rise in the magnitude of some seven to 10 metres, 80 percent of the world's population residing in low-lying coastal areas could be inundated by sea water. That's a huge impact.

Recently, on my trip, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I spent some time in Manhattan. You will know from viewing Gore's movie that Manhattan Island would be largely inundated in such a scenario. I also spent some time in San Francisco. On the day I left, the front page of the *Chronicle* had a rather startling map of the city in a rising sea level scenario that clearly displayed that many of the low lying areas and sites of proposed future expansions would all be under water.

The Yukon is not alone in this threat. I look to the Lower Mainland in B.C. where I spent my childhood. I look at areas along the Fraser River or the Delta and Richmond areas. There would be huge impacts there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to switch gears now and talk about some of the Yukon-wide initiatives that could be considered. Our leader put on the record such items as geothermal heat programs to assist people to heat their homes. I would also like to mention net metering, which I had put on the record long ago in the form of a notice of motion. This would allow electrical customers to sell electricity -- produced in residences or nearby land through alternative generation means, including solar, wind or micro hydro -- back to the power company. From what I understand, the utilities are prepared to meet this request, but are waiting for government direction. That is one area that could be explored and acted upon rather quickly.

I mentioned demand-side management already. That could be as simple as a snap of the fingers and funds from the government -- and it happens.

I want to talk about a few projects in the Klwane region. Let's start with the northern most community, which is actually the most westerly community in the country -- Beaver Creek, Yukon. Yukon Electrical Company Limited supplies the power through a diesel generator in the community and it has for several decades. When it was rebuilt about 15 years ago, I believe it was, the manifolds were adapted to provide for a district heating connection. About eight years ago I had some discussions with the former president of Yukon Electrical about how they would look upon the Yukon government actually doing something to tap into the waste heat from that generator to supply nearby buildings. They were extremely receptive to this proposal. Within one block of that generator there exists the Nelnah Bessie John School and the community club and the post office and pool. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that this is probably a very low-cost, practical suggestion to lessen the CO₂ in that community by adapting a small district heating system to that diesel generator, making it more acceptable.

I'd also like to point out that in 1985, I believe it was, there was actually a community energy district heating study done that proposed eventually expanding such a system to meet the needs of the whole community. So there are possibilities in Beaver Creek.

In Burwash Landing there is an existing woodchip boiler and an existing district heating system, but the plans to expand that district heating system have not been funded. This could be as simple as appropriating funds toward that cause in order for that project to proceed.

In Destruction Bay there is potential for wind generation. There might be potential for geothermal as well. I was talking to a geothermal expert en route to Alaska a couple of years ago and he said that basically that whole region is similar to Alaska where there is all kinds of geothermal heat available. This was echoed by Guy Dauncey, our guest speaker at our climate change forum last month.

In Haines Junction we have a warm water well and lots of district heating possibilities. There's some question about the feasibility of implementing such a system in the community; however, there's nothing stopping the Yukon government from making a contribution to make it feasible as it did with the power line north of Carmacks, or the Aishihik third turbine.

There's nothing stopping the government from doing that. And from what I understand, warmer water yet may be available even further down in the ground but that, too, requires some expenditure. This is something else for the Yukon government to consider.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the energy commission's report from 1998 that included 56 recommendations. For your benefit, and for the benefit of all members, I would like to table a copy of that report for filing. One of the areas with so much potential is called "community energy management". I'll give you an example. There's a native community in northern Quebec -- and excuse me if my pronunciation isn't quite accurate -- called Ujé-Bougoumou. They adapted a woodchip boiler to supply heat to the whole town and there were several spinoffs as well, creating a local industry with employment. At any time if the government would like to learn more about this, I do have a video about this project at home that I would be more than happy to lend or make a copy of.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did say I would be brief today, and I think that's all the comments I would like to put on the record.

Thank you.

Mr. Elias: Changes in the climate are now affecting physical and biophysical systems on every continent. It's unequivocal. The north is the first to feel the impacts. Science and traditional knowledge complement each other and really have influenced how people think and view climate change. We are facing a mass extinction of species in the north that also affects us here in the Yukon, from our polar bears to the little wood frogs that seem to have disappeared from around the lakes behind Old Crow. When I look at the science, which is irrefutable, we have changed the chemistry of the atmosphere and have trapped radiant heat energy in the atmosphere. In our own country and in Alaska, whole communities have been moved because of melting permafrost and erosion. Average Arctic temperatures rose almost twice the global average rate in the last 100 years.

I'll tell you a little story about how we associate climate change and the late fall freezing. In Old Crow, it has been a traditional activity for the elderly women to cross the Crow River and go ice fishing. One of our elders who has walked across that stretch of the Crow River on the same weekend in late October since she was a child fell through and drowned. She has walked across that stretch of river for years upon years upon years. With the continued late melting from the mountains, warm water came down the Crow River and melted the ice from underneath. So now the traditional harvesting is moved two weeks later. That's what it means.

We have a moral obligation to do something substantial. As a Yukoner, I want to be able to say that we are leading this battle and be able to tell anyone in the world who will listen that we need their help, but we need to do something substantial to set the stage. Climate change is a threat my constituents are not prepared to ignore, because too much is at stake. The prospect of losing our caribou or our way of life is unsettling.

There are indigenous cultures within Canada and other countries of the north that have made submissions to the United Nations that inaction of the industrialized nations becomes a human rights issue, because the Arctic ecosystems are in a real and present danger of irreversible damage.

Just recently, the Chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin went to Paris, France to discuss the International Polar Year proposal led by his government. A major portion of the Vuntut Gwitchin proposal was to look at various physical and biophysical systems in north Yukon and how climate change will change the Vuntut Gwitchin culture and lifestyle. The International Polar Year will play a big part in understanding how climate change is impacting the polar region and its people. Survival of our northern culture goes beyond a line item in the budget, but having that support and leadership from all governments in this territory is crucial. I simply do not view the action from this government as wanting to make a real difference, make a statement and take the lead to show the rest of the world that this is vitally important to Yukoners and our indigenous northern people.

In the Yukon, we are seeing the treeline in the Kluane wildlife sanctuary and the Burwash uplands move up the mountain slopes at a very rapid rate. It has been a matter of 85 metres in elevation in just a few short years. There is the spruce bark beetle infestation that grows each year, because it doesn't get cold enough to kill the larvae in the winter. We have seen the advancement of the boreal forests into tundra landscapes and that harms the barren ground caribou populations. We have witnessed the migration patterns change so we can no longer set our clocks by them. An ivory gull was recently found in the territory, and its closest habitat is on Banks Island in the Northwest Territories.

Ticks and other parasites are also moving north into our ungulate populations that we treasure so much and about which we have debated time and time again. Southern-borne wildlife diseases may be on their way or are maybe here already. Herschel Island is falling into the sea and taking a piece of our precious heritage with it. The Old Crow flats wetland, arguably the most biologically productive ecosystem in the Yukon, is also in danger. This internationally recognized wetland has over 2,000 or so lakes that are home to hundreds of thousands of migratory waterfowl and raptors. It is a major migration route of the Porcupine caribou herd. There are over 700 migratory moose that call the lakes home. There are thousands of muskrats and populations of mustela and many other species of carnivores that live there.

This delicate system has been showing signs of global warming and climate change disturbances for well over 15 years. About 10 years ago, I was walking on the clear ice with an elder from my community. For safety reasons, we carry a long, dry wooden pole. He pushed it into the opening of the ice until it touched the bottom and he pushed on it some more. When he brought it up from the bottom of the lake, there was a foot or so of mud at the bottom of this dry pole. He said that the lake never used to have such a soft bottom. He said it has been like this for two years.

This entire ecosystem is permafrost-dependent, and that means that the water needs to be held in largely because of the permafrost and the frozen ice. Many of my constituents have witnessed the lakes and the flats draining at a rapid rate, and it hasn't been seen before. I'm not talking about a little trickle here. When a lake is drained, it's gone in a matter of hours and all that habitat and water -- and basically the lake is gone from the system.

We have also witnessed the slumping and the eroding of our riverbanks and lakeshores, which leads to year-round murky waters that used to be crystal clear. When permafrost melts it also releases methane gas and carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, so this is a vicious cycle that has been happening. Many new species of plants and animals and insects that haven't been seen before at the 67th parallel are now being seen quite frequently. It was quite amazing when last summer a bunch of people were gathered around the administration building in Old Crow and a couple of hummingbirds came around to the front doors -- hummingbirds at the 67th parallel. Things like that are moving north.

Many people of Old Crow are worried that our environment is changing so fast that the animals will not be able to adapt quickly enough and they are going to perish. Without the animals, especially the caribou, the Gwich'in will also perish. It's that simple.

I hope this government receives this message with an open heart and has the courage to set politics aside and hear this important message because much of it is from the Vuntut Gwitchin people who have been living off the land for thousands of years and continue to do so. There is no way we can survive without our land, water and wildlife. The Vuntut Gwitchin is one of the oldest cultures in the Americas and to me it would impoverish mankind to watch another indigenous culture suffer and then cease to exist.

When we speak of climate change, the next generation must be a large component of our scope of thought. We must be cognizant of their needs in order to avoid social despair and the feeling that there is no hope to avoid a catastrophe in the next generation. In our work with monitoring the effects that climate change and global warming are having on our infrastructure, our natural ecosystems and our health, we must also consider what effect these changes are having on us in a social context. What I mean by this is that we must ask ourselves: how are the social effects of climate change changing our ability to make decisions as a society?

So when I witness this government allocate very little that is directly associated with immediately combating climate change, and hear this government say they are still in the developmental stages of a climate change action plan, it is disturbing.

Over the last decade I am sure everyone in this Legislature has witnessed the world's fury around all regions of the globe in the form of floods, drought, hurricanes, ice storms, tsunamis, melting icecaps and glaciers, and the reduction in sea ice. There has been as much as 300,000 square kilometres disappear from the Arctic sea ice each year. There are drunken forests and, closer to home, tremendously deep snow years; continuously

mild winters and extremely hot summers; rain in December that wreaks havoc in the animal world when it happens; melting mountain ice patches; more forest fires and the intensity of those fires which destroys the habitat of a large number of wild life species; there is early breakup in the spring and late freezing in the fall. The list goes on and on.

I was told by an elder once that our Mother Earth was trying to cleanse herself of the damage humans have caused and that is why we are witnessing the fury of weather that has not been recorded by human kind before. The elder also said that Mother Earth is sick and trying to tell us through weather and earthquakes and other natural disasters.

In closing, the alarm bells of climate change are ringing loudly and we as Yukoners are ultimately responsible for our own well-being. Therefore, we have a role to play and our territorial government must lead because by doing as much as we can to combat climate change, it is our way of asking the rest of the world to also act. We need to curb climate change and do what is morally right and set an example for our children and their children. Let history read that we started to fight back and right a terrible wrong and that it started in our time. It is the beginning of societal change in the Yukon and we must show that we as Yukoners won't sit idly by as observers.

I believe Yukoners are willing to make changes in their lives, but are not willing to do it alone and without government support. Business, government and industry must all do their fair share. I believe the time is near when many Yukoners, especially from my riding, are no longer willing to tolerate the effects that climate change is having on our lives as northerners; the effects on our fish and wildlife, infrastructure and business. To combat climate change, a considerable coordinated effort is required. Sacrifice and much work needs to be done because our northern lifestyles, ecosystems and survival of our living cultures are at stake. We must exemplify to the future generations that our relationship with what we now know as our Yukon was that important to us and that our significant commitments in time, effort and money are reflective of our caring and belonging to the north, our home.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cardiff: I'm pleased to rise today and speak to this motion. I think it's actually pretty amazing how long -- actually, I suppose it's not amazing how long -- it has taken Canadians, and especially politicians, to recognize this issue. But it's amazing how quickly, in the recent past, this issue has become really important, not just to people here in the Yukon but to Canadians and people the world over.

You know, I think there was a lot of goodwill and some good ideas and progress made when the Kyoto Accord was signed. What's unfortunate, I believe, about that now is the lack of will on the part of Canadian governments especially -- because that's where we live. There was a commitment made and a commitment not kept by the federal Liberal government at that time. They made the commitment, they signed on to it, but they never followed through on it and it appears that the current Conservative government is also looking to get out of and not live up to the responsibilities of the agreement that was signed.

That's sad, because ultimately humankind is going to pay the price. When you look at the impacts and the changes to the environment -- the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin was mentioning the impacts it has had in the community and on the land in northern Yukon and in the area of Old Crow and how that changes their traditional way of life. And it's going to change the traditional ways of life, not just for them, but for mankind the world over if we don't act.

I guess it's kind of sad that it has taken so long for it to become such a big issue for the current federal government to actually take note of it and make it a priority -- because it wasn't a priority in any of the previous Conservative election platforms. In fact, they were adamantly opposed to it when they were in opposition.

I have to say it's good to see that even though the Member for Kluane and the Member for Mayo-Tatchun left the ranks of our caucus because we were too green, they haven't lost all their environmental concerns and they still recognize that the environment is important. I'm glad to see that.

I believe the intent of the motion is really honourable. It's urging the government to take immediate action to address the outcomes of climate change and the effects of climate change on the Yukon. I think we have a responsibility here in the Yukon and we can actually lead by example. The Premier likes to say that our greenhouse gas emissions, our CO₂ emissions, are minuscule and that they're not part of the problem and that the problem is somewhere down in Ontario or British Columbia or down in Illinois or wherever there are coal-fired generation plants and steel mills. We don't have that here so we shouldn't worry about the impact that we're having. What we should worry about is the impact that it's having on us. I'm not saying we shouldn't. I mean, there are a lot of things to be concerned about -- how it's going to impact our lives here in the Yukon and the lives of everyone who lives here. It was impacting just the other day -- and it has been impacting for awhile -- on residents in Mount Lorne due to the runoff that was flooding a poorly constructed and poorly maintained road. Those things have to be addressed. Infrastructure needs to be built and adaptable to what these changes are going to be. If permafrost is melting, it's going to affect our highways.

We all know and we've travelled on some of the highways where there are frost heaves and where there is permafrost, and if it's melting, it's going to cause problems.

I don't buy the Premier's argument that because the effect we have, what we produce in greenhouse gas emissions or CO₂, is so minuscule, we don't have a responsibility to try and change that. I think there are things. The Premier talks about how they went out and bought a bunch of fuel-efficient cars, hybrid cars, and that's one thing they can do. I'm actually glad to see them do it because I seem to recall from the last legislative session reading a motion into the record, encouraging or urging the government -- it would have been the Minister of Highways and Public Works -- to buy hybrid vehicles for the fleet vehicle agency. So I'm actually encouraged that we on this side of the House can actually encourage the government to do things like that and that they actually listen and something comes of it.

But there are a lot of other things that Yukoners and the government can do to reduce CO₂ emissions, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to do our part as Yukoners in the whole global picture in addressing this problem that's going to seriously affect us. If we don't do our part, how can we expect others in other jurisdictions, whether it's British Columbia or Ontario or in the United States or Mexico or China do their part? There are things that we can do.

You know, one of the things that really irks me when I come in to the office in the evening or on the weekend to do a little bit of work because it's quieter and there's not as much going on -- I walk into the office and there's a light switch at the door. You hit the light switch and every light in that office goes on.

I think there is one office that has its own separate switch, but every light goes on. In order for me to go to my office and do work, I need the light on in my office. I don't need the light on for the office in the back or the light on in the caucus room or in the chief of staff's office. I just need the light on in my office. I might need a light on where the photocopier is if I'm photocopying or scanning, but that is an incredible waste of energy.

In other jurisdictions and other cities, there are concerted efforts to ensure this doesn't happen. It used to be that when you went to a big city, you would see 30 or 40 storey high-rises. You know people aren't working there at night, but every light in the building is on. There is a concerted effort being made in some jurisdictions to stop that, because that consumes an incredible amount of energy. A lot of those places have coal-fired electrical generation, so the greenhouse gas emissions would be huge at that point with all the lights on and no one working. That is one thing the government could do right here, right now, in this building.

If the Minister of Health and Social Services comes in and turns on the lights on the weekend to do some extra research, we don't need all the lights on. If the government isn't there, there is no point in making it look like they are just because there is one person in the office.

It is through these kinds of efforts and through even requiring other office buildings -- other government office buildings and leased buildings that the government has -- to have the lights turned off. There can still be security lights on, but there is no need to use all that electricity.

There are other initiatives. The government could give more encouragement to homeowners to reduce their emissions as well. In the amount of greenhouse gas emissions -- I can't find the figure, but it's the amount, the percentage of greenhouse gas emissions produced by a resident just from the heating system alone. So by improving the insulation, the building envelope and the windows and doors, you can reduce not only your heating costs -- and there is an economic benefit to that, because if you are reducing the heating costs, the consumer has more available disposable income that they are not spending on heating fuel and they can put to other use in the economy. The government could encourage and provide more programs and more education to homeowners in that regard and I think that would go a long way.

It could also require, seeing as how it does lease space for its own purposes in other building, require that those buildings be more energy efficient as well. The same thing applies -- the building envelope, insulation, windows, more energy-efficient heating systems. There is a lot of other technology out there that's actually a whole industry unto itself and it should be looked into -- what's available and what would actually pay off in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and our contribution to that problem.

We can adapt as best we can, but it's still important for us as Yukon citizens to do our part in acting to reduce the effects and to slow it down. I don't know if we're going to ever be able to reverse what's going on. More than likely not, but maybe we can slow it down. And who knows what's going to happen? It's something that is hard to predict. But I think that we all owe it to ourselves and to our community to try to do all that we can and do our best to reduce our impacts on the environment, not just for ourselves, but for our children and for our grandchildren.

I remember my eldest son talking to me, and he was really concerned not just about global warming, but he was concerned about a whole bunch of other issues about the state that the world was in, whether it was wars in Iraq, what was going on with the environment and climate change. He really had a concern about whether or not having children was a good idea, because what was he going to be able to leave for his children, what was going to be left on this planet for them.

That was quite awhile ago, and it gave me pause to consider and think not only, "What am I leaving for my children?" but "What I am leaving for my grandchildren and great-grandchildren? What are the impacts that I have on this planet, on a daily basis, when I drive my vehicle or am out recreating?" A lot of the damage that gets done is irreversible. We need to consider that.

It was my eldest son that made me think about that a little bit more. It was brought home to me that everything we can do individually adds up. So everything we can do here individually together will be greater. It all accumulates and we can make more progress, but we each need to think about what it is we can do individually and do whatever it is that we can do.

I think as an individual government -- provincial, territorial -- we can make a contribution, just like governments in other jurisdictions, whether it's British Columbia or Alberta or Ontario -- they can make a difference, and we can make a difference.

I will support this motion because I think that the Government of Yukon should take this just a little more seriously. I'm not saying they aren't taking it seriously, but I think that there is a lot more that we can do and that the government can do to make a difference.

Thank you.

Mr. Fairclough: I would love to speak to this motion. I know the members opposite would like to vote on this too, and I will try to be as short as I possibly can.

I would like to thank my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt, for bringing this issue forward. For me, it is an issue

that I have brought to the floor of this Legislature in the past and one that I have spoken on nationally at ministers meetings.

I just want to go to that first because I was the Minister of Environment -- it was Renewable Resources at the time -- and this had come to our attention even back then. It was over 10 years ago, or close to that, and we brought the issue of the effects of climate change on the north to the rest of the ministers across Canada, and they listened. At the time, both Northwest Territories and Nunavut thought that we did a good job in bringing issues forward for them. They really supported the Yukon at the time. It was simple things that we spoke about: like the fact that permafrost was melting in the north; we were losing a metre of shoreline every year, and it could go three times faster if we warmed up by one degree; the fact that plants were blooming earlier had a big effect on the migration of the Porcupine caribou herd and so on. I could go into a lot of detail on that, but I won't.

The fact of the matter is that at the time, this big conference in Kyoto, Japan, was to take place, and I asked the federal minister to see if he could fund my way down so we could at least have a voice from the northern part of Canada heard. He did that; I went to Kyoto and, interestingly enough, I was with the most right-wing people at the time. There were a couple of ministers from Alberta: Ty Lund was one of them and I think the other was Steve West. He was the Energy minister at the time.

It was so interesting, because Kyoto was an international conference. It had almost every country there. It was interesting to be there and watch it, because so many of the people dress much differently from us. We started to realize that we are basically among people from around the world. We had a bit of input. Canada had the second-largest contingent -- the United States had the largest -- and we had a little part in trying to steer Canada to the position we wanted to take.

We returned home and tried to make the changes here in government by doing things like energy efficiency and so on. A lot of it was implemented in every department. It is good to see that it's being carried on to date.

Since then, as everyone knows, this issue has become quite a bit bigger and a lot of attention has been put on it. There is an urgency to bring a motion forward to get everyone on the same page and ask government to move more quickly. We are doing things now, but we need to move faster. I am glad that the government side is agreeing with this motion. I know we want to vote on it and everyone is anxious to do that. I don't need to go through the list of things we can do. The Leader of the Official Opposition has already done that and I thank him for doing all that research. We have talked with a lot of people in the past to try to get a focus on where we want to be today. The Member for Kluane talked about Al Gore's movie and everyone is watching it. There are critics of it, but the fact of the matter is that we are all seeing the effects of climate change and global warming already.

I just talked to someone in my riding of Carmacks about the ice breakup on the Yukon River. Every year, it breaks up in May, except for six years. It has been in the most recent years that it has been breaking up earlier. I talked to Don Trudeau

from Pelly Crossing and he talks about crocuses blooming twice a year. He is feeling a difference in the sunlight. A lot of people are feeling it. It is warmer than it was back then.

I think it is incumbent upon all of us as elected members to do something. It's the political people who are going to make it happen, more so than the private sector, so we are going to have to take some risks and look at the future. And we're asking government to do exactly that, in this motion, to address them immediately. Let's see if we can make some big changes together.

I thank the government and the members opposite for their support of this motion, and I'll reserve my time speaking to this, for perhaps another time. I thank members opposite for hearing me out.

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

Mr. Mitchell: I won't take very long in closing, because I know that the members of the House are eager to get to the vote. I thank the Premier for signalling that earlier this afternoon. There are a few things that I want to say. I do appreciate the spirit of cooperation in the House this afternoon. As I'm sure the Premier will recognize, I don't necessarily agree with all the assumptions he made while being so agreeable, and in assuming that we were simply commending his government for taking the lead, but I will recognize that his government has taken some steps, and that's what we need to do. I don't really want to get into a debate of who did what when, because I don't think it serves the public one iota of good. I will let that go, but I want to make sure that the Premier understands that we both recognize the importance of the issue. I don't necessarily concur that we are late to the subject, or simply are endorsing the strategic plan, because we talked about many of the same things.

I think the point that we wanted to make here today was, "Planning is great and we always have to continue to plan," but Yukoners and the Canadian public are saying that it is time to take more action and to actually move forward and make some progress.

I'll just mention a couple of points. There are two books in front of me. I won't hold them up, because then I'll turn them into props and I'll be back there photocopying again. You've heard of both books. The first one is *An Inconvenient Truth* by Al Gore, and the second one is *Stormy Weather: A Hundred and One Solutions to Global Climate Change* by Guy Dauncey. The reason I am talking about these two books today is because they have two different focuses. Al Gore's book was really a call to action. It started with this slide show; it shows you how long he has been engaged. It was not a PowerPoint show but a slide show that he was using. It was something that he did as an individual. As a former politician, he is certainly no longer in the political spotlight, but he went around and spoke.

I happen to have been fortunate enough to have seen that movie the week it came out because I was travelling down south and visiting my daughter who, at the time, was living in Sacramento, California. Again, I'm not a supporter, I might say,

of Arnold Schwarzenegger, not a typical Republican voter -- but someone who since then has acknowledged that Governor Schwarzenegger has made some meaningful contributions even though she certainly didn't vote for him when he ran for office. That's the point that I'm hoping we're making today -- that we get beyond partisanship and we end up maybe with some solutions. As I said earlier today, I talked about Governor Schwarzenegger and I have the photocopies now for the members. There are a couple of interesting articles from which members may gain something, even if they only gain one thing from them.

Al Gore's movie, which was his slideshow and also a book, really goes into great detail on the science of what's happening. There are just three things I want to mention here from his book out of the many that I could mention. The first one is the Greenland icecap and the melting that has been occurring in Greenland. A lot of confusion exists in the public about icebergs, icecaps and sea ice. If sea ice melts, it has significant impact on animal populations that survive and depend on it. It changes the ability of indigenous hunters to hunt and things like that. If icecaps melt, be it the ice close by here on the Atlin-Juneau glacier or the ice in northern Yukon, then Greenland matters more than most and there have been dramatic changes in the melting of that and it can affect shorelines around the world, so I would ask people to refer to that when they get the chance.

The next became poignant because it is photographs they have of today and projections on what could happen in Manhattan. Everybody remembers the World Trade Centre and what happened there. I think there were tributes paid in the House to that. It affected everybody, whether you lived in the United States or not, to see something that major happen.

A World Trade Center memorial is on that site. Well, if the sea levels rise as much as 20 feet, or six metres, which is one of the scenarios that has been brought forward, that memorial will be well under water. So that is kind of a visual thing to keep in mind -- this isn't just all hypothetical; significant things can happen.

The third is on page 229 in Mr. Gore's book, which I know many members here probably have, or at least have access to. There is a chart that shows wildfires becoming much more common as hotter temperatures dry out the soil and leaves. It shows the number of wildfires between 1950 and 1959, between 1960 and 1969, 1970 to 1979, and 1980 to 1989, and 1990 to 2000. I don't want to hold it up here, but I will say that the growth is logarithmic. These are severe wildfires that have covered massive areas in North America. The growth is absolutely phenomenal when you see it. That's a 50-year period of time, so it's not just a blip. So those are some things that I would just commend to the members in thinking about the big picture.

Now, here we are, facing a challenge. I am going to just quote a little bit from Mr. Dauncey's book, because what I like about him is that he talks about solutions. He doesn't spend huge periods of time talking about what's happening, but what we can do about it. He says: "So here we are at the beginning of our challenge to phase out fossil fuels and the greenhouse

gases that result from human activity. Who is to do it? (a) the government, (b) big business, (c) city governments, (d) you and me. The answer is (e) all of the above. We're at the beginning of a major planetary transition, and we all have a role to play. Once upon a time, we all lived in the Stone Age. One day soon, we will all live in the solar age."

He also goes on to say, "In North America, our personal use of fossil fuels represents 25 percent of our national greenhouse gas emissions." That's due to the way we heat and power our homes, the way we travel and the way we eat. He does talk about the fact that this 25 percent represents an average of five tonnes of CO₂ per person per year in the United States, but only four tonnes per person per year in Canada because we do use more hydroelectric power. The Premier and Environment minister talked about why he believes that the third wheel at Aishihik is so important, and he suggested we agree. Again, my response is to say we agree that at some point in time this may well be a very worthwhile thing to do, but decision making in government is always about timing, and we're not convinced that it's the time yet.

Having said that, I want to thank all members for their contributions today. I would have hoped that more members on the other side of the House -- on the government's side -- would have felt that they had something to contribute to the debate and, if they felt that we didn't end up making enough new points, then perhaps they could have made them themselves -- more than waving around platforms. We can all wave around political documents and strategies as well, but strategies, as we say, indicate a thought and a plan. What we are looking for is the implementation. I have heard members from both opposition parties talk about how it is time to move forward with action so that we don't leave the wrong legacy to our grandchildren.

With that, I would thank members for their contributions and call for the question if we have come to that time.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, would you poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.

Mr. Nordick: Agree.

Mr. Mitchell: Agree.

Mr. McRobb: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Mr. Fairclough: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Cardiff: Agree.

Mr. Edzerza: Agree.

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

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

Motion No. 74 agreed to

Motion No. 26

Clerk: Motion No. 26, standing in the name of Mr. Edzerza.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for McIntyre-Takhini that this House urge the Yukon government to assign the highest possible priority to expediting the review of the *Children's Act* so that the recommendations from the working group can be embodied in a new act that reflects Yukoners' concerns without any further delay.

Mr. Edzerza: I put this motion forward today because it appears that the progress with regard to amendments to the *Children's Act* is taking a long time to get off the ground. I know that it has been said over and over how important the children are to the territory. I have heard many MLAs in this Legislature state that they are our future leaders. Having said that, it is incumbent on the government to really back that up. To the best of my knowledge, we are the only jurisdiction in Canada where it isn't the law to report child abuse, for example. Those kinds of things are covered in the act. The protection of children is critical.

It's critical in many different ways. We all know from the stories we've heard about historical abuses, whether it happened in other countries or in our own homeland, Canada, that the abuse of children at a young age creates many hardships in the functioning of a whole society. I think there's a lot of evidence to back up the fact that historical abuses seem to be very relevant when, for example, it comes to the high statistics involved with crime and drug and alcohol abuse.

So the *Children's Act* is a very important piece of legislation that should be updated, and it should be done immediately. It may even be possible to make some recommendations on how some of these things can be implemented without the act being amended -- for the short term -- because every day that this act is the only law that governs the Yukon, the more opportunities are missed for children who do need protection and care.

The *Children's Act* was proclaimed in 1984. In 2003, the Yukon Party Cabinet directed the act be revised. In 2004, we had the consultation process going. In 2005, there was the planned consultation on draft legislation. In 2006, it was the planned bill in legislation. In 2007 -- four years after beginning and after several disruptions because of First Nation jurisdictional problems with the review -- there is no deadline for reporting, no draft legislation and no action by the review panel.

So the question really is: when will we have recommendations and amendments to the *Children's Act*?

I guess people who aren't involved with having to deal with the act really aren't aware of all the issues within the act that are not relevant today or should be revised. I know from

experience in working in this area for 20-plus years that there is a real clash here between First Nation culture and European culture.

We all know that laws are necessary with regard to just about everything in society. In order to have some kind of control and to maintain law and order, laws are necessary. But when it comes to the First Nation part of the agenda here we almost have to go back to approximately 1874 when the mission schools were implemented. At one time -- and it is my belief and from stories that I have heard from my mother -- First Nations did have a system. They did have a system of their own. They were self-governing. They were looking after their own people because there were no Europeans here then. My mother used to tell me stories about Telegraph Creek and how it used to be there. There was one road in and it was predominantly the Taltan Nation people who lived there. She told me stories about how the children were really respected and treated as sacred human beings.

I used to be quite inquisitive and I asked her, "Why were they sacred? Why are children sacred?" She said, "It's our cultural belief that children are just fresh from the spirit world. They haven't been conditioned yet to know anger, hate and jealousy; all those things that can create many problems for a person in their life." So children have lots of pride and structure within the First Nation communities. I also heard stories of how children were natural healers. Again, one of our traditional beliefs is to seek understanding of what issues you are going to deal with. Seeking understanding of children is a big job. The way it goes in society today, it almost appears that they have no voice and that they're not as important as they used to be. I questioned my mother one time. I asked, "What do you mean, they're natural healers?" She said, "Because a child can instantly make you feel good; they have unconditional love for adults." I've seen it many times. After my mother told me these things, I started watching, trying to observe these things. I have on numerous occasions, where you might go into a store and there will be someone standing in line who has a small child with them. That child instantly, almost all the time, gives you a great big smile and just the way they greet you, really makes you feel good. So I really do believe that children are natural healers. They can bring some joy into your day when you are having a bad day.

Numerous times in my own experience I've seen where a child would come up and touch me. I often wondered how they know that I'm not feeling good. So all of this has to do with traditional knowledge, traditional ways, some of the things that we believed in. But in the way that things have gone over the years, starting with the mission schools and the assimilation, we've had a real struggle trying to maintain responsibilities for our children.

A lot of things that were done over the years created an environment where a lot of our people now avoid responsibility, because we've never had it. It has been taken from us. So it's a struggle to get back. Right to this day, First Nations are saying right across the Yukon that we need to do something with this legislation because it's a law that makes us do some of

the things that we don't want to do. A lot of the things that we believe in are not in the act.

One of the customary ways of First Nations dealing with family issues, for example, were -- at one time, almost anyone in the family had the authority to take a child and look after that child if a brother or sister or an aunt or uncle were having difficulties. We all know how many different problems we have with addictions and other things -- historical abuses. We used to be able to just take the child until the parents were back in order. I remember in the early 1980s, in our community, we opened our home to help people, those who had addictions, because we understand addictions. My wife and I, we understand addictions.

We helped out a number of people within our community just by taking a child. Sometimes we would have them for a week and a half. We had one for three weeks. We know how addiction works. A person can get to the point where the addiction gets the best of them, and they might be drinking for two or three weeks. It usually works in a cycle like that with a binge drinker. Sometimes it might be three months, but once it's over, the person settles down and gets back on track. They may not have issues again for months. That is the time when they become vulnerable to the act. Someone reports that the people are drunk and the law states that family and children's services branch has to check complaints. A lot of times it can be malicious reporting. Sometimes it's genuine.

The fact remains that the First Nations don't have the opportunity to ask their in-laws for help. Once a child goes into care, there can be a lot of problems with placement process. Who gets to place that child? This has always been an issue. I worked in this area for many years with my First Nation -- the Kwanlin Dun -- and we have always had a hard time being involved with where children should be placed. That could be critical to being able to help a child, because a lot of us in our First Nation know which family is going to do a good job and which ones we might have to question. Not being involved in the placement has always been a barrier. In the act, it doesn't state that First Nations have that authority to be involved in placement.

Over the years this has been a really, really big barrier to getting the families back together again. I think it is almost as important to reunite the families as it is to apprehend a child.

Over the years I have witnessed and been involved with many, many cases where the parents are just outnumbered in the courts by all of the professional people the department can afford. Most families cannot afford a lawyer of their choice to try to keep their rights to their child. I would beg to differ if anybody on the floor of this Legislature would disagree with me that the legal language is very difficult to understand. Most of our people, or people in this territory -- and I must add here that just about everything I have said so far also is right across the board. I have also had non-native people come to me for help and ask, "Can you help me? I can't understand why I can't have my child. Can you guys do anything to help me?" It is right across the board.

There are a lot of issues with grandparents' rights. That is a really big issue across the territory because grandparents are

constantly fighting for rights with their grandchildren. At one time, it was no problem for a grandparent to step in and say to the daughter or son, "You are not upholding your responsibilities and we are going to take the child for awhile." I did it myself, in my own family. I said, "Nope, you are going to have to get your act together before we let you have full responsibility over our grandchild."

If we went through family and children's services branch, we would have lost that child. We would have lost that child to a foster home or some other place.

All of this is really relevant to the amendments that need to take place in this act. I just assumed that one of the reasons why the government has chosen to have this review done in consultation with First Nations is that there are a lot of self-governing First Nations, and I think maybe another reason could be because 63 percent of the children in care are First Nation kids. That's a very high percentage. It's an issue that First Nations have struggled with, and in the act they have no protection and they really don't have much say. When you lose the ability to speak on behalf of your children -- I've known some parents who said, "The child is yours." I've witnessed that. I've witnessed a parent saying, "You want this child. I've done everything I could. I've complied with three years of sobriety, I've taken every program you've asked me to, and you find something else that prevents me from having my daughter. She's yours today and I'm not going to come back to ask you for her." And she never did. This is a true story. She never did go back to ask for that child. Any time she was contacted, she said, "No. You wanted her. She's yours. I'm wiping her out of my life and that's final."

So had there been things in the act that said that, after a certain number of years of sobriety, you have to reunite the family if there have been improvements, it might have happened.

In the early 1980s I did a lot of advocacy work in this area and basically I don't see any change with how it is today. That was 27 years ago, and it was the same before that. I know that the First Nations at one time had jurisdiction with regard to child welfare. In fact, at one time my wife was managing the social department for a First Nation, and it was part of her responsibility to ensure that if a family was having problems the child was placed with other family members. And that family member was paid a per diem, just like family and children's services branch is paying to foster parents today.

The social worker in the band had the authority to say, "Yes, we will pay you \$350 a month" -- or whatever it was -- "to look after your grandchild or to look after your nephew," or whatever. As far as I could recall, there was never the problem that we have today. It just didn't exist. If something didn't work out, the band had the authority to say, "Okay, we are going to remove the child from there because you aren't doing your job, and the child would be put with another person. But at least the children were kept in the community."

The way it is now, some are shipped outside the territory. There should actually be a law against that. But we can't enforce it if there is nothing. In fact, right in my own family, many years ago we had a nephew who was taken out of the

territory against the parents' wishes. I don't know where that nephew is today. I think he may be in Edmonton. We heard he was in British Columbia for a while, but then he moved over to Edmonton, Alberta, and we don't know where he is today. We have lost track of him.

Family and children's services branch has no obligation to come and tell the immediate family where their nephew, son or daughter is. And those people who have these children -- like this nephew of ours -- are being paid big dollars every day -- every day they have this child, 365 days of the year. So it's almost an incentive to really get into that because what other way could you make such an amount of money for looking after a child?

I know that in this particular case, the father really wanted to take the child and was told he couldn't have her. So his immediate family said, "Well, we will take the child." But the child was sent to Alberta -- first to British Columbia, I think, and then over to Alberta.

When it really hits home, that's when people really start to realize there's a problem here. There's a real problem when this can happen. I don't know if it just happens to First Nation people, but this type of thing appears to happen to too many First Nation families.

So, of course, there are a lot of people in this territory who want to see something done with this act. And like I said, I've had stories come to me that are almost unbelievable. In fact, I couldn't believe some of them, but after investigating and checking into it a little bit more here and there, I find that there is a lot of truth to what the people are saying.

I gave a couple a ride downtown one day from McIntyre, and they were very quiet, pleasant people -- not very talkative. They were kind of shy -- you'd have to ask them questions before they would talk to you.

I asked them where they were going. They said they were going down to the courthouse. So just out of curiosity, I said, "Oh, what are you going to court for?" "Oh, we have to go and try and get our son back. We're going to court for our son." They said to me, "John, will you come with us?" At first, I said I can't because I have to go somewhere, I'm doing something. But then I thought about it as I was driving, and I said, "Yeah, definitely, I'll go with you." Anyhow, I was pretty shocked. I went into a courtroom that had a whole row of legal counsel for the government, and these two people were sitting in the corner by themselves. They were supposed to stand up and speak on behalf of themselves against all of this legal counsel. I just couldn't believe it. I thought it was so intimidating. I don't get intimidated very easily, and I felt uncomfortable there because we don't know the law as well as all the highly paid staff sitting in there. Anyhow, it turned out pretty good because we brought that to the attention of the judge, and he saw the situation through different eyes. It worked out quite well. Of course, because we got involved with this case, we had to volunteer to monitor the family and work with the family. So by going there and talking, I ended up with quite a few months of responsibility, which was okay. But there are so many things in this act that need to be addressed, need to be amended. There have to be changes. I imagine that I would have no problem talking for

the whole afternoon. It would be very easy to do that because I could zero in on numerous examples of how this act works against people.

Again, I'd like to just talk about the grandparents' rights for a bit, because I know of a friend of mine who said to me that it has cost him approximately \$20,000 to date, trying to get visiting rights with his grandson.

Now, coming from a family that has to work to make ends meet, \$20,000 is a lot of money. Then, at the end of the day, you are not sure you are going to end up with what you want anyway.

I think an act can address issues like that. It can be law that grandparents have rights to the kids before anybody else does. There is no way it should be any different, whether you are native or a non-native.

We also know that there was differential treatment in this act and how things were administered. There is one example I will give just briefly because I think it is important. I have witnessed where a non-native person was charged with, I believe, sexually abusing their children. The man was moved out and he was not allowed to come back into that home. Well, in First Nations' territory it is the kids who are moved. The children are taken almost instantly and placed somewhere else. There is the difference right there. We are aware of that, and it is a fact; it has happened.

I am going to give the minister a chance to talk here because I think I could probably take up the rest of the day talking about all of the things that we need to address in this act.

I think the longer it takes, the more people are being affected, the more children are being affected. When a child is in court, who speaks on their behalf? I have seen quite a number of times where, for example, a youth is apprehended at probably four or five years old. They were put into temporary care for two years, and I don't think I ever witnessed where in that temporary care they were turned back to the family.

It has always been the case where we go through the temporary care process of two years and then reapply for custody of the child. After two years, one can become a permanent ward. Permanent ward is always what the government goes for. I have never seen it end any other way. It doesn't mean that it has never happened; it is just that I haven't witnessed it.

One would think that one of the main responsibilities of a government when they apprehend a child out of a family would be to reunite them. That is logical. It just seems to me that there should be no other process but that -- to get working with the family. If there is an addiction problem and the child was apprehended because of it, then we should get busy with that family and try to reunite them. It never appears to work that way. Something we have been able to document is that on quite a few cases, after the youth turned 13, 14 or 15 years old and got into trouble with the law, they were then sent back to the community with no questions asked. I can't understand why a process can be so forceful when you want to take but, when you want to get rid of your responsibilities, it seems to be very simple to do that. Maybe some changes in this act could prevent that.

I know of youth who were set free, more or less, because they were being more of a problem for the government. I am not sure if it's even legal to do that. You apprehended the child because you felt they were at risk, safety-wise, yet you throw them back into the same environment at a later date.

So there are a lot of issues here even with fostering, how kids are put in foster homes, and where they are put. I think I've said it before, and I'll say it again because I really believe it, that when you take a child who is very young, five or six years old, and you move them from Porter Creek to Riverdale into a different home, you might as well have moved them to China, because they don't comprehend distance like an adult would. When you take a First Nation child out of their community and put them into a big fancy home, it's like taking one of us from the streets of Whitehorse and dropping us off on the streets of Tokyo. Everything is foreign to you.

There are a lot of different issues that the *Children's Act* review can address. I'm only saying these things today because I know them to be true. I've worked with numerous people and I've seen so many families that were just broken up emotionally, spiritually and mentally, because they love their children. I think society has to understand something: addictions are addictions. You can love your child or your children, even if you are an alcoholic. That doesn't stop you from loving them. We're really struggling with things like that, and I think the act can be more user-friendly to all people in the territory. That's what it's supposed to be; it's supposed to be user-friendly. It's supposed to be able to give solutions to some of the problems that may arise with regard to children. Like I said at the beginning, to the best of my knowledge we're the only jurisdiction in Canada that doesn't make it law to report child abuse.

I find that almost unbelievable because sooner or later society pays a price for that in one way or another.

But the way the motion reads is that we really get some -- light the fire underneath whomever we have to in order to get this moving. I know the minister has a very challenging job in this area to try to make the amendments where all stakeholders will be satisfied with it. I know it's a challenge, but the challenge has to be met. It has been going on for many years now, so I sincerely hope that by bringing it to the floor of the Legislature in this fashion, we will start seeing some actual dates when things are going to be brought to the Legislature. I think that the time has come for the government to really, really make this a pressing priority issue.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would like to thank the Member for McIntyre-Takhini for his comments and for bringing this issue before the House. In fact, I would like to advise him that we on this side are very much supportive of the intent of his motion here. Had time been somewhat longer today, we had looked forward to voting in favour of it, recognizing that we are now drawing very near to the end our sitting day and it looks very unlikely that that will, in fact, transpire, which is unfortunate.

But we would like to indicate our support for this and agree with the member that, in fact, this is a very important

project. It is a project that was launched under our government and I have to remind all members that the process undertaken in the *Children's Act* review was a groundbreaking, new, collaborative partnership in working with the Council of Yukon First Nations, with the goal of ensuring that their needs and their concerns were reflected within the Yukon system.

I point out that what will come forward at the end of this is new legislation, and the legislation will be legislation that affects the delivery of services within public government, within the Yukon territorial government's system. But we recognize that it has a very significant impact on First Nation citizens due to the fact that, as alluded to by the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, there is a disproportionate number of their children who are represented within the system.

In moving forward with this ground-breaking new process, it has had some challenges at times. It took longer than was originally envisioned and it has had some challenges and bumps in the road along the way. But together with the Council of Yukon First Nations, we have moved forward in the public consultation, in the identification of issues in the development of the policy, and work has commenced on the drafting of the new legislation, which we certainly look forward to bringing before this House at the earliest opportunity.

In terms of timelines -- in the interest of fully informing the members where we are -- the optimistic timeline is for fall of this year and, if things do not go as quickly as hoped, by spring of next year for bringing the legislation forward. We will certainly attempt to meet the earlier date rather than the latter. But, of course, as throughout this whole process, the timelines and the partnerships -- you can't force a partnership. A partnership involves working together and working together to resolve the issues.

We are more focused on achieving an ultimately successful outcome than achieving an unsuccessful outcome by a deadline. That is why we have continued, even as there were challenges within this process in working with First Nation governments and their representatives, to ensure that we moved forward in developing this legislation, which is so important for Yukon and its citizens.

The *Children's Act* revision project began in 2003 to review the current Yukon *Children's Act*, and the project was co-chaired by the Yukon government and Council of Yukon First Nations. Information gathered through public consultations was summarized into the *What We Heard* document in 2004, with targeted consultations in 2005, which contributed to further refinement of the policy framework.

In June 2006, two final policy forums were held with First Nations health and social services directors to discuss the proposed policy framework for revisions to this act. The directors responded very positively to the framework that was outlined in the policy paper and the tone of the forum was very collaborative and forward thinking.

I would like to give members opposite, who may or may not be aware of this, a brief outline of some of the work that has progressed on this review and the timelines involved. As I noted in my earlier remarks, it was in October 2003 that the agreement was reached between the minister and the Council

of Yukon First Nations to move forward on this project, co-chaired by the Yukon government and Council of Yukon First Nations with the project team reporting on a quarterly basis to the minister, the Grand Chief and the Chiefs Committee on Health. The agreement also required that all key products of the project team be approved by the political leadership.

From December 2003 to March 2004, preliminary consultations were conducted with First Nations and key professional stakeholders on the process to be used for the project. On April 1, 2004, the official launch of the first stage of project consultation commenced. From then until July 2004, stage 1 consultation, which was to gather the views of the public, First Nations and professionals on concerns with the current law was conducted. As a result, in September 2004 there was the public release of the *What We Heard* documents, which were transcripts of comments received during stage 1 of the consultation.

Following that, from September 2004 to May 2005, a stage 3 consultation was conducted on the proposed policy content of a new law. In January and March 2005, policy forums were conducted over several days to discuss issues such as quality assurance, accountability, prevention, and issues related to custody and access, as well as child protection, children in care and alternatives to the court process, and adoption.

Also in March, an elders forum was conducted to provide the opportunity for First Nation elders to provide their perspective on this important issue and how it affects their society and their families.

This moved forward in 2005 with a number of technical meetings related to issues within the legislation and progressed through 2005. In early 2006 we announced the end of the project team and the initiation of a working group between Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon government. There were some challenges at that time as, of course, was discussed here in the Legislature and in public related to how to move forward. Collaboratively -- the Premier, the Grand Chief, the Chiefs Committee on Health and I -- reached an agreement on how to move forward to a successful completion and agreement on the policy elements related to the *Children's Act*.

This led to further work at the official level conducting, in the late spring and summer of 2006, policy forums to discuss the draft policy paper to be used as a framework for drafting of legislation. Work continued throughout 2006, and in December of last year, a meeting was held with Council of Yukon First Nations Health Commission and non-Council of Yukon First Nations First Nation health directors to review the draft outlined in the legislation to date and to get feedback on the draft First Nations and child welfare policy. This, I must again emphasize, Mr. Speaker, is in keeping with the agreement that the Premier and I reached on behalf of the Yukon government with Council of Yukon First Nations to have the working group jointly advise the legal drafters -- the legal drafting, of course, being dealt with by the drafting resources internal to government -- and the principals -- the principals being the leadership of the two governments and the Council of Yukon First Nations as the government organization representing First Nations. The principals would ultimately be responsible for the elements, but the work would be conducted at the official level by the work-

ing group, and the working group would jointly inform the legislative drafting.

In February of this year, meetings were held with the Council of Yukon First Nations and non-Council of Yukon First Nations First Nation health directors to provide an update on the legislative drafting and to review family and children's services branch's First Nation child welfare policies.

Later on in February a meeting was held with CYFN representatives to review the first draft outline of the legislation.

Further steps related to this legislation will be the continuation of the drafting of the new bill through the spring of 2007 and in summer 2007. I should also note that meetings with the CYFN Health Commission and non-CYFN health directors will continue. Following the drafting of the new bill, in the summer of 2007, targeted consultations are intended to begin with First Nations and professionals who work with the legislation on the proposed language of the new bill. I must point out that this will be done in a very collaborative fashion. We want to ultimately achieve a successful result. As indicated earlier, we will be expecting to table it either in the fall 2007 sitting or in the spring 2008 sitting.

I will attempt to be somewhat brief in my remarks recognizing that other members undoubtedly do wish to speak on this subject. However, there are a few things that must be pointed out in the interests of ensuring that all members and the general public understand this process. As I have indicated -- but I cannot emphasize this enough -- this is a ground-breaking process. The process used in working in partnership with CYFN on the *Children's Act* review is unique. Although we have used this ourselves, our government -- in the previous mandate and continuing through to this mandate in areas such as correctional reform and education review where we have worked together on similar projects and borrowing from a model first established with the *Children's Act* review -- this is an area that had not been practised by previous governments. They had not, to the extent that we have, involved First Nation governments in the review of public legislation that has a significant impact on their citizens, and previous governments in the territory had not worked with them to the extent of involving them jointly in the development of this legislation or the changes related to programs.

Mr. Speaker, I must emphasize several things. The Yukon government remains fully committed to completing the *Children's Act* review and tabling new legislation. As I noted, it will be a significant enough change that it will require a new act to be tabled, obviously reflecting continuation within certain elements of the existing system, but it will be reflective of our discussions and it will be new legislation. We believe that the act can be made much more reflective of the needs and the interests of Yukoners, and we look forward to tabling the legislation.

However, I must emphasize that this commitment to change, to improving the legislation, should not be interpreted as meaning that the current system is, in some way, shape or form, bad, as some members of this House and the media have suggested. Our system and our legislation as they are today stack up well in comparison with other jurisdictions in Canada.

That being said, our government firmly believes that it can be made even better, and that is why we have launched this process fully in partnership with First Nations.

I would also like to emphasize that the staff of Health and Social Services, under my responsibility as Minister of Health and Social Services, who fulfill government responsibilities under this act typically have very difficult and thankless jobs. Mr. Speaker, they do an excellent job of performing the duties with which they are entrusted and I commend them for their dedication. I would urge all members to be cautious in debates related to this topic, and not to cast aspersions on the fine staff we have there and the work they do.

Again, I want to emphasize that this process is groundbreaking. It's a very new process that we look forward to completing.

I apologize for the delay, Mr. Speaker. As you can see, I've been handed a few notes and copies of motions as well. As I regain my train of thought here, please bear with me.

This area, as I noted, is a very groundbreaking process, which has a profound impact on Yukon citizens: the importance of ensuring that we have strong legislation that ultimately protects the needs of children and puts the needs of children first and foremost. It is paramount. We are committed to that; we have embarked on this process to make the legislation more reflective of the realities in the Yukon and the interests here today.

Although we have experienced delays during this process in this work, it should not be used by members to diminish the importance of this new process and the success, in fact, of moving forward. This is an area that has been a cause of frustration to First Nations for many years -- the issues related to children in care dating back to the residential schools are nothing new.

Previous governments had a very adversarial approach to this. They did not involve them in the process. We have changed that approach. We are working with them and we are moving forward. For members to not recognize that going down a new road sometimes entails bumps in the road is simply very short-sighted of them. They need to take a broader look around at the world and recognize that processes like this, have not only not been common in the Yukon, they have not been common in very many places in the world -- this type of groundbreaking partnership between public government and First Nation governments, as the third order of government.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I must emphasize that we do agree with the member opposite. We support the intent of the motion that he has brought forward. The completion of the review of the *Children's Act* remains a very high priority for this government. We are moving forward and good work is being done by our officials and by officials representing the Council of Yukon First Nations to ensure that this is done right. It is not legislation done in a hurry. It is legislation done right, that reflects the needs of Yukoners -- of Yukon citizens, of Yukon children -- for years to come, for decades to come. We want to leave a piece of legislation, once we have tabled it and passed it, that is a net improvement to the system. We want it to be legislation that will stand the test of time and not need to be updated, as

some legislation we have inherited from previous governments has been, immediately after it was tabled. We want to get this done right.

We want to get this done right; we want to get it done right the first time. I am confident that that is being done.

So as we move forward, Mr. Speaker, work will continue. The discussions at the technical level between officials will continue. The working group and smaller working groups related to specific issues will continue to meet. They will continue to inform the drafting process, as well as discuss issues related to implementation, ensuring that our child welfare system is, at the end of the day, improved to the greatest extent that we possibly can. That is something that we can all agree on. There are differences of opinion, but all governments and all individuals involved, I think, are fully committed to a net improvement to the system to ensuring that the Yukon has the very best piece of legislation and the very best *Children's Act* that we possibly can have.

I recognize the concerns that have been brought forward by the mover of the motion in tabling this, and I appreciate the concerns that he has and the experience that he and others have had with our system. We recognize that. We applaud them for bringing it forward. Those types of concerns and comments are exactly what we have been doing in this process when it commenced -- listening to Yukoners, working with Yukon citizens, working with First Nation governments and their representatives to ensure that the appropriate work is done, to ensure that the appropriate policies are established, to ensure that the appropriate legislation at the end of the day is drafted and is tabled before this Assembly. Ultimately we hope and are confident that it will be passed into law and become a net improvement to the Yukon system and legislation that, I hope, all members of this Assembly will be able to proudly say they supported and voted in favour of. But we will leave that and hear from the members opposite once we table that legislation.

Mr. Speaker, seeing the time is indeed drawing to a close today, I will conclude my remarks. I look forward to hearing the comments brought forward by other members. I would reiterate that I would encourage them to be positive and reflect an opportunity for change and not focus on negativity and criticism. Their comments should bring forward constructive suggestions, not just in this debate here today, but in all debate, whether on budget or motion debate. I encourage them to do what Yukoners -- those who elected us -- would expect and would like to see from us all: constructive suggestions, positive improvements and net improvements to the system.

There is one area I should point out for the members opposite before I conclude my remarks, because it is directly related to this. As I alluded to briefly in my speech at second reading, we have, in fact, invested in increasing the funding and creating certain positions related to child welfare in order to help address areas of capacity and volume. I am just searching for the numbers on that, so that I can cite them for the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid I will have to provide members that information at a later date or encourage them to review the Blues from yesterday. As I noted, we have indeed increased the

support in this area and I look forward to continuing to step forward and address the needs related to children in care through family and children's services branch.

As pointed out, since it is the topic of this motion, the *Children's Act* review is moving forward. It is moving forward very positively. It has been a bit delayed beyond what was originally envisioned, which is unfortunate. But, at the end of the day, I think we have come together stronger. Very complex, difficult and challenging issues have been tackled and addressed and governments, both First Nations and public, have been able to collectively and collaboratively come up with an approach that represents and addresses the needs of all Yukon citizens and the people that, respectively and individually, we represent.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank members for their attention. It has been a pleasure to address the Assembly today and to speak on this motion. I look forward to engaging with members in debate on this topic on future days.

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

Debate on Motion No. 26 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.