

Whitehorse, Yukon**Tuesday, April 24, 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.

TRIBUTES**In recognition of Cancer Awareness Month**

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I rise on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to the month of April as Cancer Awareness Month. Work on research, treatment and elimination goes on all year long, but in April we take the time to thank those men, women and children who work so hard at giving us a healthy future.

Not all the causes of cancer are known yet, but we know that some cancers are caused by certain kinds of viruses, first- and second-hand smoke, exposure to certain levels of radiation and genetic inheritance. Research is expensive and lengthy and must be undertaken by trained professionals. These professionals, from the laboratory technician to the geneticist, could not do their work without the support of thousands of people every day.

One of the most important organizations undertaking fundraising for cancer research and education is the Canadian Cancer Society. It provides a focus for volunteers to raise funds and awareness on the prevention, treatment and care of cancer. The Canadian Cancer Society estimates that 44 percent of new cancer cases and 60 percent of cancer deaths will occur among those who are least 70 years old.

The good news is that at least half of all cancers can be prevented and many of the remaining ones can be beaten.

Statistics Canada has just released its latest report on cancer rates. In the Yukon, our incidence rate of new cancers is below the national average, which may reflect in part our relatively young population.

I want to take this time to thank all the volunteers working to eradicate cancer, from those who canvass at our doors to those who, as survivors, offer comfort and advice to the recently diagnosed.

The Canadian Cancer Society refers to April as Daffodil Month in honour of the bright yellow flower that has become the symbol of hope and renewal for cancer survivors and to those who love them.

In recognition of Biodiversity Awareness Month

Mr. Elias: I rise today on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly in recognition of Biodiversity Awareness Month. In celebration of Biodiversity Awareness Month, we have an opportunity to pay tribute to our environment and support every living organism and the role they play in our environment. Many Yukoners recognize the importance of our eco-

systems and are working hard to ensure habitats are suitable for a wide variety of species to live and thrive.

National Wildlife Week has been celebrated in the Yukon for many years and in Canada since the 1940s. This year's theme is most appropriate for the Yukon: "Canada's North -- Ours to Protect, the World's to Cherish". Yukon celebrations include community displays, public talks, field trips and contests. Special educational kits produced by the Canadian Wildlife Federation were sent out to Yukon schools to encourage our youth to do hands-on projects to understand and protect special areas. National Wildlife Week activities are now part of the larger Yukon Biodiversity Awareness Month.

There are many unique celebrations planned throughout the Yukon in celebration of this month. We have had many events so far this month. I would like to recognize a few of the events still to come: continued viewing of swans at Swan Haven, including a Yukon student art display, where you can place your vote for the People's Choice Awards. Swan Haven has offered Yukoners and visitors a unique opportunity to share in the true heralding of spring here in the Yukon: the arrival of trumpeter and tundra swans. The swans are here, and they continue to arrive daily. I encourage all Yukoners to visit Swan Haven, and please bring your family and friends.

Many biodiversity events carry on into the month of May, including the swans of the Klwane viewing walk, Faro Crane and Sheep Viewing Festival, and a celebration of the three rivers of the Peel watershed, to name a few. As we welcome spring and view many of the migratory birds returning home to the Yukon, take a moment to recognize our fragile and unique northern environment during Biodiversity Awareness Month.

Merci beaucoup, thank you and mahsi'cho.

In recognition of National Donor Awareness Week

Mr. Edzerza: I rise on behalf of the Assembly to pay tribute to National Organ Donor Awareness Week. Donation of organs is not a subject all of us are comfortable with. Until it becomes a possibility within our families or for a friend, we are not usually aware of the process. This national awareness week helps to educate the public about this vital medical procedure. More than 4,000 Canadians are on wait-lists for an organ transplant to save their lives; three quarters of them continue to wait. There is no need for Canada's poor rate of organ donation compared to other countries.

Organs that are retrieved after death include the heart, liver, kidneys, pancreases, lungs and small bowel. To donate these the body must be supported by a ventilator so the organs remain alive. Living donors can provide a kidney or a part of their liver. Should a person die without support, tissues such as corneas, heart valves, bones and skin can be used. Bone marrow can be retrieved only from living donors. Generally transplantation success rates are excellent, and recipients continue with a quality of life equal to anyone.

In Canada, organ retrieval is covered by the health care system. To become a donor you only need to have it indicated on your driver's licence or carry a donor card. It is important to discuss this possibility with your family members so they do not have to make decisions while they are in an emotional state. Saving lives is possible with some foresight. I urge everyone to

consider how they would feel if they were on the waiting list for a donor.

Thank you.

In recognition of the Rotary Music Festival

Mr. Mitchell: I rise today on behalf of all members of the Legislature to pay tribute to the Rotary Music Festival. This year marks the 39th annual Rotary Music Festival. It was a two-day event when it started so many years ago with about 60 participants and one adjudicator. Today, the festival runs from April 21-27, with over 2,000 participants and an array of adjudicators from across Canada. The gala concert wraps up on Saturday, April 28, at the Yukon Arts Centre.

The Rotary Music Festival is a major event for our territory and a major event in the musical lives of the participants. Each one gains experience in public performance and a professional critique of their work. We have students participating from across Yukon with performances that include piano, vocal, choral, bass, woodwinds, string and guitar and styles ranging from classical through contemporary to jazz, folk and pop. Over the years, many participants have gone on to successful musical careers.

Every year, the Rotary Club of Whitehorse and the Rotary Music Festival award bursaries to a number of the participants. These bursaries help to support these students in their continuing music studies. I urge all Yukoners to take time out of their busy schedules to take a moment and enjoy the performances of the many talented participants by purchasing a festival program for \$5, you not only get unlimited entrance to all the events, you also help support this great festival and all the participants.

For the final gala concert, juniors perform at 6 p.m. and seniors at 8:30 p.m. Adult admission is \$10 for one concert or \$15 for both. Students and seniors pay \$7 for one concert or \$10 for both. Tickets are available at the Arts Underground office in the basement of the Hougen Centre or at the Arts Centre box office.

We would like to thank all the music teachers, the Rotarians, the adjudicators and the dozens of volunteers who make this event such a success. Congratulations to all the individuals and groups that are participating. We wish you well in your future endeavours. Thank you for sharing your talents with us.

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?
Are there any introductions of visitors?

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Edzerza: I ask all Members of the Legislative Assembly to help me welcome Farley Hayes, who is in the gallery. He has a special interest in donor awareness, because he was a recipient.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?
Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Edzerza: I have for tabling a graph from Statistics Canada comparing per capita alcohol consumption in the Yukon with all other Canadian jurisdictions.

Speaker: Are there any further documents for tabling?
Reports of committees.
Are there any petitions?
Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 103: Introduction and First Reading

Mr. Inverarity: I move that a bill entitled *Apology Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek South that a bill entitled *Apology Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 103 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?
Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr. Mitchell: I give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to take immediate action to ensure the uninterrupted provision of dental services in Yukon communities.

Mr. Cardiff: I give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Yukon government to immediately begin a process to amend the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, including a review of the recommendations by the former Information and Privacy Commissioner, and to invite all persons who have used the act to provide information in confidence regarding their experience with the act and its administration.

Mr. Elias: I give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to comply with the *Environment Act*, section 46(1), and table the annual report of the Yukon Conservation Strategy Council where the council reports on its annual review of the performance of the Government of Yukon in the implementation of the Yukon conservation strategy.

Mr. Inverarity: I give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Yukon government, in light of extraordinary changes occurring in the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, to have the president and chair appear as witnesses before the Legislative Assembly during the spring sitting 2007.

Mr. Edzerza: I give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Yukon government to promote organ and tissue donations through a campaign of public awareness, including information about the organ and tissue

donation option on their Yukon health care cards, and to give Yukoners the additional option of indicating on their driver's licence that their organs or tissues may be used after death to help others who need them.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT it is the opinion of this House that

(1) Statistics Canada reports that alcohol consumption in the Yukon, per capita, is nearly double that of all other Canadian jurisdictions;

(2) the rate of alcohol consumption is directly related to problems of violence, illness, family disruption and employee absenteeism; and

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to publicly report territorial statistics on alcohol consumption community-by-community on a monthly basis to determine what impact, if any, tourism has on such an unacceptably high rate of consumption.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?

Hearing none, is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Rate stabilization fund

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to the spring sitting with a few questions. Earlier this year, he announced the termination of the rate stabilization fund for June 30 of this year. The end of this rebate to electrical consumers will increase the average person's power bill by some 30 percent. It appears there's nothing in this government's budget to extend the program after June 30.

Let's start from the beginning with this minister. Will he confirm that as of June 30, Yukoners will see a 30-percent increase in their power bills, thanks to the actions of this minister and the Yukon Party government?

Hon. Mr. Lang: This government has extended it until July 1. I'm looking forward to the options that should be in front of me before that date.

Mr. McRobb: Well, we're not off to a very good start with this minister. Let's review the facts. We know the Yukon Party has unilaterally made a political decision to cut the rate stabilization fund. The decision will cost all Yukoners 30 percent on their power bills. This will reduce the purchasing power of Yukon families at the grocery store, pressure up rental costs, prices at the store and fuel inflation. It's a classic case of government hands in your pockets, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier this year, the chair of the Yukon Development Corporation emphatically proclaimed that power sales to the Minto mine would actually reduce power rates within two or three years. Well, if that's true, then there is a practical solution to avoid punishing Yukon ratepayers. During the interim period, between June 30 and the point of these forecast rate reductions, will the minister continue the program?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, we certainly are looking at all our options and that's why we extended the rate stabilization plan until July 1, and we're doing just that.

Mr. McRobb: The Yukon Party is sitting on a financial reserve of no less than \$85 million, yet threw \$10 million at the proposed power line instead of funding the rate stabilization fund during the interim period. It's disappointing but not surprising to discover yet another Yukon Party backroom decision without public discussion. Furthermore, it announced funding for that major project before the Yukon Utilities Board had completed its feasibility analysis. When the minister axed the rate stabilization fund he said, "The government expects to make an announcement soon concerning further initiatives which will help Yukoners save on their energy bills." Of course, none of those initiatives have been announced. The budget just came out last week, and there were no new initiatives to help people save money on their power bills. So much for the soft landing. Instead, Yukoners are just going to have to put up with paying higher bills, thanks to the minister.

When is he going to come forward with plans to help Yukoners save on their energy bills, or is he content to jack them up by 30 percent?

Hon. Mr. Lang: The member opposite knows that we have extended the rate stabilization plan until July 1. I am waiting for the options. Those options will be put in front of me, and we will go forward managing the energy of the Yukon. We have extended the rate stabilization plan; we did not axe it.

Question re: Climate change eco-fund

Mr. McRobb: I have more questions for the same minister. Earlier this year, the Premier and his good friend the federal Environment minister announced, completely out of the blue, that the Yukon's share of the federal eco-fund would be spent on construction of the third wheel at the Aishihik dam. This \$5-million decision was made, once again, in the backroom without public involvement. The Conservatives all got together and decided this was the best bang for our climate change buck. In this day of climate change awareness, governments across the land are taking a much more sensible approach. They first consult with their citizenry to hear suggestions and ideas. What a novel concept, asking the public how they would like their government to spend their money.

Why did the minister responsible for energy support the approach to spend all of the Yukon's climate change eco-fund money on one distant project, without first hearing from the public?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Again, the member opposite is wrong. The third wheel at Aishihik will cut our diesel emissions by half. That is what we are in the business of doing.

The member opposite doesn't have the responsibility of managing our power. This government does. Another job we have is to manage the emissions that we put into our atmosphere.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good-news story. We are spending \$5 million on the third wheel at Aishihik. That will eliminate a lot of the diesel that we use right here in Whitehorse. Again, it is a managing tool so that we can manage the hydro of the Yukon in a manageable way.

Mr. McRobb: Well, it does nothing for years.

It is interesting to note that in its January 15 report on Yukon Energy Corporation's proposed 20-year resource plan, the quasi-judicial board that regulates our power utilities -- the Yukon Utilities Board -- did not approve the proposed third wheel project. In fact, the board recommended not proceeding with this project until the year 2013 -- or at least wait until any additional industrial loads are added to the system. What did the Yukon Party do with that recommendation? It ignored it.

This is another typical case of government arrogance. It asks the responsible boards for advice and expertise and then ignores any recommendations that it doesn't fancy. It's déjà vu and father-knows-best.

Why is the minister in such a hurry with this project when the utility regulator, the Yukon Utilities Board, has already said that it is not needed any time soon?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I appreciate the member opposite from the Liberal Party lecturing this side of the House on managing hydro power when one thinks of what they did to the Mayo-Dawson line.

The reason this government moved forward with the \$5 million is that we got the \$5 million from the federal government. It's money that the taxpayers and the consumers of the Yukon will not have to invest in the third wheel. It is a partnership between us and the federal government. We will manage the power in a very businesslike way, not like the Liberal Party did in their last tenure in office.

Mr. McRobb: The facts are that the Yukon Party government took an arrogant approach to spending the public's climate change money by throwing \$5 million at the third wheel and did so without any public discussion and opted to ignore the recommendation of the Yukon Utilities Board.

The Yukon Party has been busy dressing up this announcement as part of a climate change plan. Of course it has very little to do with climate change. If the Energy, Mines and Resources minister had actually read the Yukon Utilities Board report on Yukon Energy's resource plan, he'd know that the board determined that the diesel fuel savings from this turbine would be insignificant. In other words, the effect on climate change would be minimal.

Why did the minister put all the eco-fund money into a distant project that is not so eco-friendly when so many other attractive possibilities exist such as helping Yukoners insulate their homes, convert to higher efficiency appliances and furnaces, or enhancing public transportation options?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you for highlighting the issues that this government is doing today and will be doing into the future. The water licence at Aishihik dam was approved through a process that involved the general public. We are just completing the third wheel in the Aishihik hydro project; it is licensed and permitted. All of that involved the general public.

As far as insulation, helping people in their homes, helping people stay in their homes, all of the things that the member opposite questioned whether this government was doing -- I should give that member a list of the things that this govern-

ment is doing to help people conserve energy in their homes. We are doing quite a bit.

Question re: Child custody exchanges

Mr. Cardiff: On August 2 last year I wrote the Minister of Health and Social Services about an issue regarding the personal safety of one of my constituents. This young woman is separated from her husband and they have shared custody of their child. On numerous occasions the husband has been verbally abusive to my constituent when it came time to transfer custody of their child from one parent to another. In my letter I asked the minister if his department has examined the possibility of providing third party supervision of these exchanges. It took the minister six months to reply to my letter, and all he said was that his department and the Justice department would review the matter and consider options. That is shameful.

Does the minister consider this an appropriate response when it comes to the personal safety of a Yukon mother and her child, which could be at risk?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I find this somewhat interesting. I did personally take this matter up with the Member for Mount Lorne and recognized that, in fact, what happened in the case of the reply to his letter was that the case file was initiated by the department just prior to the writ being dropped in the election. It was not, as it should have been, reactivated when we returned to government, because, frankly, the procedures within departments for years had not had to deal with the same minister come into place after an election. With that in mind, though, we did reactivate the file, and we did respond to the member opposite. In answer to his question, the matter was reviewed before and rejected based on cost feasibility. But I recognize the member's concerns. I appreciate the importance of this matter. To that end, I replied, as indicated in the letter, that we would take another look at this in partnership with the Department of Justice, and officials are doing that right now.

Mr. Cardiff: The minister is taking his sweet time. Now, in my letter to the minister, I quoted a Territorial Court Judge who expressed surprise that such a service didn't exist here in the Yukon, when other jurisdictions do provide third party supervision in such cases. In fact, this is what the judge said. Maybe the minister should have read this quote: "This is a critical shortfall, and we should use our best efforts as a matter of considerable urgency to try and get something in place to deal with this situation." Now, on February 19, I wrote the minister again, saying that I found his response completely unacceptable. One month later, he sent back an even terser, dismissive note, saying, "We are looking into the issue and considering the feasibility of options to address the issues and needs in this area."

The question is this: why is the minister refusing to take this matter seriously, when one of the most experienced judges in the Yukon calls it a matter of considerable urgency?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: As I laid out to the member opposite in my first reply, and as I indicated verbally to him previously, the response time in this case did not meet our normal standards. I apologized for that and do once again. However, I would point out to the member opposite that this was a matter that was reviewed under a previous minister. This was rejected

because of the cost feasibility. Despite that, we are looking for an innovative way of working with the Department of Justice to find a way to deliver this service. I reactivated this file -- and this initiative and this attempt to create the supervision -- at the member's request. I recognize that the timeliness of it does not meet the timelines that I would prefer and he would prefer, but we are dealing with the matter. These things, unfortunately, do happen and the apology for the lack of timeliness was offered, but we are taking proactive action.

Mr. Cardiff: This government spends a lot of money every year, so he can't talk about the cost. They spend money educating people about domestic violence. They spend money providing programs for both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, yet this minister to this point has done nothing to help my constituent and others who are being re-victimized by their former partners during custodial exchanges. It is simply shameful. It brings me back to the concerns of regular Yukon constituents that were dismissed yesterday.

The Minister of Justice is aware of this correspondence and so is the Premier. Since the Minister of Health and Social Services refuses to take this matter seriously, let me appeal to the Premier. Will the Premier give an undertaking to take personal charge of this matter and get some help in place without any further delay for women who do not feel safe during custodial exchanges with abusive former partners?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I don't know what else to add for the Member for Mount Lorne but to point out that we are reviewing this file. We are dealing with it and it will be dealt with from this point forward in an expeditious fashion, but it does involve two departments. It has significant impact on resources in terms of support and supervision. We are looking at it. I am optimistic that we will be able to give the member a favourable response. We will do that at the earliest opportunity.

Question re: Employee insurance policies

Mr. Edzerza: I have a question for the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. It relates directly to the fact that this is National Organ Donor Awareness Week.

Does the minister know of any policy that would allow the government to terminate someone's employment after a given period of time, even though the employee is in line for an organ transplant that would make it possible for them to return to work?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I am unaware of any policy that would restrict this.

Mr. Edzerza: I realize that I am asking the minister a fairly specific policy question that he may need to look into; however, I would appreciate a complete response, even by way of a legislative return. The situation I mentioned actually did happen recently to a worker here in the Yukon. This employee -- not a Government of Yukon employee by the way -- was fired two weeks before the person was scheduled to receive an organ transplant. The transplant was successful, but the termination still stands. The worker wants to return to work and is able to return to work, but the employer won't budge.

Can the minister give his assurance that no government employee would be treated in such a callous manner?

Hon. Mr. Hart: We have programs available to our employees that are addressed under the collective agreement. We will honour all aspects that are available to all our employees. We will take it from there.

Mr. Edzerza: In the case I am referring to, it appears that someone in the insurance company that holds the employer group policy took it upon themselves to decide that this employee would never be able to work again. On top of all the anxiety surrounding their medical condition, the worker suddenly faced both the indignity and the financial hardship of being abruptly fired. All of this was just two weeks before what turned out to be a life-saving organ transplant from a family member. How callous is that?

Will the minister make it a priority to have his officials review the government's insurance policies to ensure that they don't include such a draconian provision, which would allow a Yukon government employee to be fired on the opinion of an insurance company official, so that they will not be able to work again after a transplant?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I will undertake to follow up on his request. But as I stated earlier, we will honour all the personal health issues and requirements for all our staff and employees of the Yukon government. That is something that we will do.

As I indicated earlier also, we have a collective agreement, which we have to honour, and health issues are substantially covered, as well as issues relating to time off, long-term disability and short-term disability. All those aspects are covered off under the agreement, and we have policies in place for those employees who require time off for health reasons and/or cannot come back, for example, after they have gone in for an organ transplant and/or require different job duties as a result of the operation that they had to have. We have programs in place for that. We have issues of dealing with employees who need assistance to change their career paths if, in fact, they can't carry on the duties of their previous job. That is already in place.

Question re: Carmacks-Stewart transmission line

Mr. McRobb: I have more questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The government recently decided to proceed with the proposed Carmacks-Stewart transmission line. The power line project is now before the formal board, tasked with reviewing and regulating such power company proposals -- the Yukon Utilities Board.

Let's review the facts. On April 2, the government determined this project was significant enough to warrant a thorough feasibility review by the Yukon Utilities Board. However, for political reasons, the government gave the board less than two months to conduct its process on a significant capital project that will have long-term impacts on Yukoners' power bills. What's the rush?

This government's panic has forced the board to shorten its review period, which has substantially hampered the ability of the board and members of the public to examine the complicated impacts of this proposal to ensure the best decision is made. Why did the minister support short-circuiting this review process for the project?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I will correct the member opposite: the Yukon Utilities Board is an independent board. It's doing its work on the power line, and we will be reviewing the final decisions that come out of that board. We don't set the timelines. The Yukon Utilities Board works with timelines.

Mr. McRobb: It is clear that this minister did not support a full review of this project by Yukon Utilities Board as set out in this government's order-in-council. If he did, he and his colleagues would not have strong-armed the Yukon Utilities Board into shortening its important review of this process. The minister should have been in support of allowing the independent, quasi-judicial board to conduct a full review. Instead of taking the right approach he has politicized the process and placed undue pressure on the board and all participants. So much for a respectful and arm's-length relationship.

Let's review more facts. The board is still conducting its review, has not made a recommendation on the project's feasibility, yet the government has interfered with this process and subsidized the project by throwing \$10 million at it. Furthermore, the minister has issued a \$450,000 contract for preliminary design. Why did he hand out a contract for a project that hasn't even been approved, and why does he have so little respect for the board's review?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I find it amazing the member from the Liberal Party would even question the Yukon Utilities Board when you think about how they treated the board on the Mayo-Dawson line. They are treading on thin ice. We recognize the Yukon Utilities Board as an independent board. We work with that board, and we are waiting for that decision. That decision will come out of the Yukon Utilities Board, not out of the government of the day. We aren't short-circuiting anything. We are involving the Yukon Utilities Board. That's more than the Liberal Party did on the Mayo-Dawson line.

Mr. McRobb: Instead of throwing old mud, it would be more constructive if the minister answered the questions. The Auditor General criticized this government quite severely this spring for awarding contracts and projects before environmental permits are in place. It is only months later and the government is at it again. This project is currently before YESAB, the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. Once again, this government has not received the permits to proceed, yet it is already awarding contracts to design the project.

Why did the minister ignore the criticism from the Auditor General? Why did he insist on committing \$450,000 to a project without first ensuring environmental permits are in place?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Again, I hate to muddy the water with the past like the member opposite mentioned, but the Mayo-Dawson line is not a done deal yet. Under the watch of this government and in unison with the Yukon Utilities Board, we will do all we can to make sure the Carmacks-Pelly extension is done in a businesslike fashion and done in agreement with the Yukon Utilities Board.

We're not fast-tracking anything, Mr. Speaker. We are involving the Yukon Utilities Board. The Liberal Party didn't involve the Yukon Utilities Board with the Mayo-Dawson line,

and look at the mess that they left Yukoners in on that business decision.

Question re: Energy policy

Mr. McRobb: Let's try again with the Energy, Mines and Resources minister. As noted earlier, the Yukon Party government has made a number of ad hoc announcements in recent months regarding energy policy. Let's review the facts: this government spent all \$5 million of Yukoners' climate change funds for the premature Aishihik third wheel; it spent \$10 million on the proposed power line for which regulatory reviews have not yet been completed; and it has doled out big contracts in the project before permits were in place. As if that's not enough, the Yukon Party has ignored recommendations from the Yukon Utilities Board on the power company's 20-year resource plan. All of these ad hoc announcements occurred in the absence of a comprehensive energy policy.

The minister has taken it upon himself to decide that our territory does not need a comprehensive set of interlinked policies dealing with matters such as infrastructure investment or community energy management. When is he going to pull up his sleeves and finally produce a comprehensive energy policy?

Hon. Mr. Lang: In answering the member opposite, we work with the 20-year plan that was put forward by the Yukon Energy Corporation and we work with the Yukon Utilities Board, and certainly YESAA will have to be addressed. All of the bases for the expansion of the power line from Carmacks to Pelly will be covered. The Yukon Utilities Board will make its decision. The rights-of-way have to be agreed to by all of the First Nations. All of the players, the governments and the stakeholders will be involved in the final decision on the energy going to Pelly. That will be done.

The member opposite, with his comments about us manipulating the Yukon Utilities Board, is dead wrong. It is an independent board. We will listen to what they come up with. Their timelines are their timelines. We will address the issues from the Yukon Development/Yukon Energy board and their needs, and of course we will be working with YESAA, as the board is today, to do the final work that has to be done to make sure that the Carmacks-Pelly line is a success. We only have to look back four years to the Mayo-Dawson line to know how not to do a power project. We are hopefully not going to repeat that fiasco.

Mr. McRobb: That was most unconstructive, Mr. Speaker. None of it related to the question on energy policy.

Nearly three years ago -- May 6, 2004, to be exact -- this minister said that while the Yukon Party government was proceeding with the development of a comprehensive energy policy, his department will only be working on it in its spare time, with no guarantee that anything is going to happen in the near future. Well, he kept his word that time. Three years later and still nothing; the results are all around us. Under this minister's watch we continue to have energy decisions written on a napkin without a set of guiding principles and void of good public policy. The minister has to take responsibility for that. Why is he so unwilling to roll up his sleeves and put together a long-term energy plan for the territory?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite -- the Energy Corporation and the Development Corporation put together a 20-year plan on what we are going to need in the future as far as energy is concerned. We are working around that plan, Mr. Speaker. We are spending our money wisely, and we are going to spend it to get some benefit. When we have the line from Carmacks to Pelly finalized, and we work toward tying in our Stewart and Pelly line, and we work toward managing the Mayo hydro project and tying it into our hydro project here and the Aishihik project, we are going to have a pretty dynamic hydro inventory. We are going to have an inventory that is going to cover 95 to 96 percent of our consumers. We are putting a mine -- an economic engine -- in place at Pelly that is going to be on hydro instead of burning dirty diesel. We are eliminating all those emissions in not only the mine, but we are taking the community of Pelly off diesel. All those things are very positive, and that is called infrastructure investment and that is what this government is here to do and that is what this government is going to do today and into the future.

Mr. McRobb: Well, we are still not on the policy page, Mr. Speaker. Decisions on energy issues affect Yukoners directly every day, whether they relate to electricity prices or what the Yukon government can do to offset sudden gasoline price increases that hurt so many parts of the economy. The tendency in smaller jurisdictions like the Yukon is for policy renegades to fill policy voids with self-serving actions. In the policy void, entities like the Energy Corporation have been allowed to set Yukon's energy direction in landmark areas like capital investment and avoidance of regulatory monitoring without any resistance from the elected government because the elected representatives and staff haven't had enough spare time. It's time now to recognize that even in the Yukon, policies cannot be continually set by actions. It's time to quit running around fighting fires as they get out of control and focus on getting a forward-thinking plan in place. Will the minister finally step to the plate and tell us when the Yukon's comprehensive energy policy will be established?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, for the member opposite, we did have a public consultation. It was called the last election. Part of our election platform included working toward the development of a territory-wide electrical grid -- investing in infrastructure -- number one, Mr. Speaker. The biggest consultation you can have is a general election. The people of the Yukon spoke. They voted to tie in our hydro. They voted for this party to go forward and manage the affairs of this great territory, and that's what we're going to do on a daily basis, a monthly basis and a yearly basis. Then, when the next general election comes forward, maybe the members opposite can put a platform out that Yukoners can live with, and they might get voted in.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. McRobb: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, April 25, 2007,

which is tomorrow. It is Motion No. 74, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt.

Mr. Cardiff: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the third party to be called on Wednesday, April 25, 2007: Motion No. 26 and Motion No. 5.

Speaker: We will now proceed with Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 6: Second Reading -- *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 6, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie; adjourned debate, Mr. Kenyon.

Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development has 27 minutes, 10 seconds.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I certainly will try to fill in that time with some of my comments.

Some of the comments in the preceding presentations and certainly some of the comments today are a bit troubling and of some concern. The Official Opposition continues to demand public consultation and wants the public to be engaged. Then, in the next breath, they refuse to take material out to consultation. I hear much of the same thing from the third party, which wants to put through anti-smoking legislation, which is more than admirable, but we on this side would like to take that out and hear what people have to say about it. We look forward to the formation of the committee to go out on the road and engage the Yukon public to discuss it.

One of the things that bother me, as well, is the whole debate about the use of special warrants. The Leader of the Official Opposition has commented that we knew about the Canada Winter Games for up to five years. We probably did, but I find it troubling that he would suggest that he would take up to five years to craft a budget when, in fact, a budget should reflect what's going on in reasonably recent history. Budgets are a dynamic document. We can simply craft them five years in advance and think we are going to do a good job, but then we found that out in the short 22 months, didn't we?

If anyone didn't notice, we made a decision early on this side that we would allow Yukon government employees to volunteer for the games. The use of volunteers was critical to the games. I think it's absolutely a statement about Yukoners that they drew over 4,000 volunteers to carry off what most would agree was the most spectacular games in the history of the games. We are very proud of that.

We're very proud of that, but I think people, certainly everyone that I talk to, are also more than aware of the fact that by doing that, many of our financial staff -- I know within my own department -- were volunteering for the games. How do you prepare a budget adequately with good due diligence and care that's going to do service to the Yukon public when so many of your financial staff are away within each department, within

the Department of Finance itself? That was a decision that we made, so therefore we came into the House a little bit late. The warrant is only for ongoing expenses: salaries, Whitehorse General Hospital, Yukon College -- supporting our employees again. The warrant was for non-discretionary spending and soon will be debated in this House. So again it's troubling that the Liberal Party would suggest that they would craft a budget five years in advance without any due diligence to current situations.

The Leader of the Official Opposition is critical of a variety of past governments -- that one government in particular made some suggestions that perhaps messages were crafted in different ways -- I find that especially interesting. In fact he was the communications officer for that government and was in charge of that crafting. I ask people in the territory to take a more critical look at some of those comments.

Getting back to the budget as it reflects on my departments, when you look at maps and you see how close we are to the Asian market, and you read anything in the papers or magazines these days, watch television, listen to the radio, you understand the degree of economic impact that Asia now has. They require considerable mineral resources in order to maintain their growth path and growth rate. Increased Asian demand has contributed to record exploration spending in the Yukon in 2006, and it's leading to new mine developments, resulting in new jobs for Yukoners. I reflected on that the other day.

While mining and tourism are going to continue to be major strengths in the Yukon economy over the course of the next two decades at least, other sectors such as oil and gas, forestry, value-added manufacturing, film and sound, cultural and knowledge-based industries will all help to diversify the economy.

Marketing Destination: Yukon is highlighted in our 2006 election platform, and we made a commitment to market Yukon as a quality travel destination through general awareness campaigns, especially in relation to Yukon's traditional markets in the United States, Canada and throughout Europe. Affecting tourism opportunities are the U.S. border regulations. As of January 8, 2007, travellers entering the United States by air must have a passport or other secure travel documents such as a NEXUS card. I have already seen cases of airlines denying U.S. citizens without the proper documentation entry onto the aircraft travelling to Canada because the airline is afraid that they won't get back. Despite all our jokes that that is part of our labour recruitment strategy, in fact it is a very serious problem for conventions and for tourism.

The United States has responded to pressure from Canada and from within the U.S. to postpone the passport requirement to no later than June 1, 2009, for travellers entering the U.S. by land or sea only. It has been suggested in many of the meetings that I have attended that, in fact, this may be moved up until the United States presidential elections.

Through PNWER, the Pacific Northwest Economic Region -- of which I am very proud to be the president at the moment -- a pilot project was initiated between British Columbia and Washington State to explore -- and in fact it is now done -- the possibility of utilizing an enhanced driver's licence that

could meet the requirements of a secure travel document if they are issued with voluntary enhanced citizenship status standards. The difficulty there, of course, is that neither federal government is willing to delegate adjudication of citizenship to any state or to any territory. There are liability issues and, boy, that's another several hours of discussion. That project is now done; agreements have been signed; meetings have occurred with the Premier of British Columbia, Gordon Campbell, and with Governor Christine Gregoire of the State of Washington, and those drivers' licences are in fact going to be produced. And they will be available on January 1, although I understand that January 1 is a holiday down there and so it is January 2.

Interestingly enough, in the U.S. system, that must pass individual committees, it must pass through the House, it must pass through the Senate, and then it must be signed off by the governor. An indication of how serious all of us are taking this initiative is the fact that that went through in a matter of four days -- all processes in the State of Washington.

Other projects that PNWER is looking at that are of interest to the Yukon are, of course, the labour shortage/labour mobility issue, transportation infrastructure, energy, and the 2010 Olympics and the tourism that will come out of that. To give you an idea of why that is important to the Yukon, our work through the Department of Tourism and Culture and the State of Idaho indicated that almost \$150 million came into the State of Idaho during the Salt Lake City Olympics. So we're certainly continuing to talk about that and engaging with our Minister of Tourism and Culture.

On February 15, 2007, the three territories, as part of the Canada Winter Games, launched a \$5-million national Look Up North marketing campaign, designed to promote and celebrate Canada's north as a great place to visit, invest in and to live. Despite the comments from the New Democratic Party, which doesn't want any of these initiatives, the marketing campaign is a joint initiative between the departments of Economic Development and Tourism and Culture and includes promotional spots for national television, for movie theatres, along with print advertising and magazine supplements. A new Web site was created, www.lookupnorth.ca, to support on-line advertising and to centrally manage interest generated by that campaign.

In conjunction with the national marketing campaign, Economic Development launched a new Web site, www.investyukon.com, which is aimed at attracting new investment dollars to Yukon. The Web site is just one element of a creative platform that will be used to promote economic development in Yukon. This site has received very positive reviews from viewers and a steady stream of requests for more information about investment and employment opportunities in Yukon. The Web site provided potential investors with information on our infrastructure, transportation, business climate, labour market and lifestyle.

Of interest to all Yukoners and potential interested folks across Canada, the United States and around the world is the Alaska-Canada rail link pre-feasibility study, which will be released soon, as well as the port access study. These studies are complete and we now are waiting for negotiations with our

partner, the State of Alaska, so that this can be released jointly, since both funded it. For the information of the members opposite, who like to throw numbers out and hope that eventually they'll have something in *Hansard* to point to that was accurate, the cost to the Yukon was approximately \$2.35 million.

These studies were prepared jointly between the Yukon and Alaska governments with participation of the U.S. government, the Canadian government and good participation from the Province of British Columbia. I am pleased to say that I was in Victoria talking about this with the Department of Transport and the Minister of Transport and with the Premier, approximately a week ago. The Premier of the Yukon and Governor Palin are in discussions respecting a joint release now. Both studies are complete and we look forward to a release soon on that.

It is very good news. It gives a very broad look at the entire situation. The Alaska-Canada rail link pre-feasibility study includes technical and engineering, market and economic components that will help us plan future developments in transportation-dependent sectors of the economy.

Changes in the global economy are opening up many economic opportunities for Yukon, particularly in resource development. The study provides an opportunity to examine the long-term, multi-modal transportation development potential of Yukon and Alaska. In examining a range of routing options and phase-development scenarios, the study provides a foundation of information to guide the infrastructure development necessary to fully realize Yukon's nature resource potential.

The port access study is grounded in economic realities and will provide enough objective and quantified information to enable public and private investors to take a serious look at developing port facilities and related transportation links.

The Department of Economic Development, through its business funds implemented in 2004-05 and its film and sound incentive programs, has contributed to the continued growth of the business sector. To date, the department has approved the following amounts: the enterprise trade fund has approved 177 projects for a total of \$1.3 million; regional economic development, 42 projects for a total of \$756,000; strategic industries development fund, 54 projects for a total of \$2.639 million; our film and sound incentive program, 105 projects for a total of \$1.482 million; and for the community development fund, 137 projects were received and 80 applications were approved for a total of \$2.713 million.

The enterprise trade fund was developed to stimulate and support the growth of Yukon business activity by focusing on the development and expansion of domestic and external markets, as well as business planning and development activities. The program supports marketing and export projects that enhance the likelihood of Yukon business generating increased production and sales of Yukon products, thus further diversifying and expanding the economy and enabling job creation. Applicants are eligible for up to \$50,000 toward marketing and business development projects and up to \$10,000 toward the development of business plans and professional development opportunities.

The department maintains ongoing consultation with key industry stakeholders to help Yukon businesses develop and maintain a competitive advantage in external markets and to help raise the profile of Yukon business and industry, and products and services in general.

The regional economic development fund provides funding to foster regional and economic development. The fund was established in recognition of the need for effective coordination of planning and economic development efforts by all parties with regional economic development interests. Funding activities have included support for economic development planning, capacity development, opportunity identification and associated research needs assessments and training plans. The strategic industries development fund supports this government's commitment to foster the development of Yukon's sustainable and competitive advantage by funding strategic projects and initiatives that create secondary spinoffs to the economy.

The portfolio of projects funded by the strategic industry development fund is maturing. Fourteen new projects have been approved for funding for the fiscal year 2006-07. This is an indication that projects are moving closer to completion and will contribute to an increase in economic activity in the years to come.

The film industry in the Yukon continues to be strong, providing Yukoners with employment and training opportunities. In the past year, 21 projects were approved for funding under the film incentive programs. These projects will generate an estimated \$2.6 million in economic activity in the Yukon. Of the 21 projects, three were approved under the Yukon location incentive program, five were approved under the Yukon film development fund, four were approved under the Yukon film production fund, and nine were approved under the Yukon filmmakers fund.

Darlow Smithson filmed one episode of *I Shouldn't Be Alive* and spent a total of \$130,088, and 11 residents worked on that production.

The National Film Board filmed the live-action animation *How People Got Fire*, and spent a total of \$214,672 in the Yukon. A total of 46 Yukoners worked on this production during principal photography and throughout the post-production period.

The Yukon company Northscape Productions produced *Land Unlocked* which aired on APTN in February 2007. Of the major film projects during the year, *Out in the Cold*, a six-part series for Discovery Canada was about people working in extreme weather situations. It's being produced by Yukon resident, Arthur (Tookie) Mercredi of Individual Films. There are many others who continue with that.

To go back to the community development fund, we reinstated that in June 2003. Since then a total of \$11 million has been approved. Tier 1 is for projects less than \$20,000, tier 2 is for projects between \$20,000 and \$75,000 and tier 3 is for projects greater than \$75,000. Tier 1 has four intakes per year, tier 2 has two intakes and tier 3 has one intake.

A change this year is that community development fund staff will be visiting the communities to engage with individuals and community associations and First Nations, to promote

this fund and to help utilize it in a way that will benefit the rural communities.

To assist the northern communities of Old Crow, Dawson City and Mayo in the development of small business, the Yukon government is operating the north Yukon business advisor outreach. Services there commenced in August 2005, as a result of a three-year commitment made with the north Yukon economic development partnership agreement. That was signed in 2004.

With our booming economy, another issue that has become apparent is the need for safe and affordable housing. The Yukon Housing Corporation has four distinct programs that can help people with affordable rental accommodation: the joint-venture program, the rental rehabilitation program, the rental suite program and the social housing program. In this year's budget, there is \$1.6 million for the joint-venture program; \$150,000 for the rental suite program; \$100,000 for the rental rehabilitation program, and operating and maintenance funding to support the cost of operating over 550 social housing units in the Yukon.

This year Yukon Housing Corporation will also operate 48 new social housing units in Whitehorse and six new social housing units in Haines Junction. I encourage homeowners who are considering a rental suite in their home to contact the Yukon Housing Corporation and find out how the corporation is working to foster the creation of quality in-home rental suites.

For private sector developers considering a new rental suite construction, once again I definitely recommend that they contact the Yukon Housing Corporation to discuss our many lending programs.

The 48-unit athletes village building -- a legacy of the Canada Winter Games -- will provide tenants with a great living environment for years to come. The Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors reviewed a number of key variables, such as existing waiting lists, demographics and private sector housing activity to help determine who should reside in the building and how much rent they should pay. This is a very important decision, of course, because there are currently many eligible clients on the waiting list for social housing and the vacancy rate within the private sector for rental accommodation is quite low.

The Yukon Bureau of Statistics projects that those 50 years or older will comprise between 36.2 and 39.8 percent of Yukon's population by the year 2016. I guess, Mr. Speaker, you and I had better start picking out our apartments. This was a deciding factor in the board of directors' decision to allocate this building to be used by seniors. Earlier in the year, the Yukon Housing Corporation conducted tours of the building for seniors. All in all, it was very apparent that the seniors were quite impressed with the building and the location.

I am also pleased to confirm that site work on the new seniors building in Haines Junction is well underway. I believe that the roof is on and interior work has started. We anticipate the occupancy of that building in the fall. This new building will help seniors and elders obtain affordable housing in Haines Junction and up the north highway. The building is designed

and will be constructed to Yukon Housing Corporation's green home and accommodating home standards to minimize heating costs while providing a barrier-free environment for tenants. The basement will also provide space and amenities for local seniors and elders, including the potential for programming and social activities, such as seniors meetings and special events. The site selected for the seniors building is large enough for barrier-free site accessibility, as well as allowing for future expansion of the building.

The Yukon Housing Corporation is also working to assist low- and middle-income clients to access home ownership. Since 2001, the average price of a home in the Yukon has increased by \$100,800, or 60 percent. According to the Yukon real estate multiple listing service, the average price for a single detached house sold in Whitehorse in 2006 was a bit over \$246,000. This increase has negatively impacted the ability of qualified clients to find a house, and certainly one to their liking, within the Yukon Housing Corporation's maximum lending threshold. Over the past year, the Yukon Housing Corporation has implemented financing options within its existing home ownership program to help address the affordability gap that has developed particularly in the Whitehorse area.

These changes will help young families purchase their first home and include a one-percent reduction in posted interest rates, providing longer amortization periods of up to 30 years and setting a higher maximum lending threshold of \$225,000. The Yukon Housing Corporation has implemented various financing options to allow qualified, first-time home buyers and bank-refused clients access to mortgage financing.

The Yukon Housing Corporation has also changed their policy to provide priority access to social housing for victims of family violence and abuse. The Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors understands that people leaving an abusive relationship would like priority access to social housing in good repair and in safe neighbourhoods.

In June 2006, the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors approved a series of changes to enable victims of violence or abuse, and those requiring medical relocations, to receive priority consideration. In the vast majority of cases, the new scoring system implemented last December 15 will result in those clients receiving priority on the waiting list.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the 2007-08 budget is the first budget in our five-year mandate, and we are proud of it and the good work that it will do. I think it is well crafted; it serves most of the concerns. There is further work to do as the year progresses. That will be reflected in the supplementaries. There is further work to do as other funds are identified, but I think we have a good start at fulfilling the vision we offered to Yukoners back on October 10, 2006 -- *Building Yukon's Future Together: A Clear Vision for a Bright Future*. As our platform said, Mr. Speaker, "Imagine tomorrow." I urge Yukoners not to take the opposite view and continue to imagine yesterday. I think those of us who were here during the mass exodus of people, double-digit unemployment, declining economy -- that is something that we are not prepared to go back to. I don't think anyone in the Yukon is. We want Yukon to continue to be a truly exciting place to live.

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted today to have the responsibility to respond to the budget as the critic for Education, Highways and Public Works, Community Services, the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, the Yukon Liquor Corporation, and the Yukon Housing Corporation and, as well, as the MLA for Mount Lorne on behalf of my constituents.

We're about six months into this new government's agenda and their new mandate. This is their first new budget, albeit 30 or 40 days past due, but here we are, operating on special warrants without the authority of the Legislative Assembly. I think that speaks a lot to the attitude that this government has shown with regard to the public and with regard to the Legislative Assembly that we're standing in today and where we do our work and review the budget prior to the spending authority being issued.

Now, the discussions so far, since the budget was tabled only five short days ago, demonstrate how important, I believe, the next few days are going to be, because we're going to be receiving departmental briefings. That's where we really get to delve into what the spending priorities of the government are. I'm looking forward to a lot of those briefings and getting into the line-by-line debate on these departments.

Now, in the meantime, in regard to my portfolios, there are a number of matters that remain priorities for me and my constituents, and they are going to be the focus of my attention during this sitting.

With regard to education, education is very important to the future of all Yukon citizens, both young and old. I have a history with education, I guess, having gone through a school system and having gone through an apprenticeship program -- so I recognize the need for trades training, not just here in Whitehorse, but throughout Yukon communities -- and my previous involvement with the college.

I had the pleasure just last week to attend the Yukon school council conference, and the Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations made some remarks there, and they rang really true for me.

It will lead, in my words today, to the education reform project. One of the things that the Grand Chief said was that we cannot afford to alienate another generation of First Nations youth from the education system. The other thing he said was, "Failure is not an option."

Now, there is some good news in the education budget, albeit it is coming late again. The Carmacks school is going to be ready for the community to take possession of and the children in the community will benefit from that -- albeit way overdue. There were project delays; there were cost overruns, design changes. If you look at the projects of this government over the last four and one-half years, it is pretty typical of projects that they have taken on. It's not on time and it's not on budget.

At that same meeting I attended, the minister spoke about various priorities of the government. I am not going to delve into all of them, and I think that they are priorities, but the priorities need to be reflected in the budget. There needs to be a commitment to address those priorities. One of them was infrastructure needs. When you look at the infrastructure needs of

education and what this government is doing, they are pretty much focusing on a campaign promise made about a new school in Copper Ridge and trying to weigh the infrastructure needs in Riverdale and Porter Creek. There is no mention of infrastructure needs in the education system in communities. There are a couple of minor projects listed in the budget, including the completion of the Tantalus School in Carmacks, but so often it seems that rural communities get left out, and there are needs in those communities.

With regard to the education reform process, it's a bit disappointing to hear. We had this conversation in the fall about the education reform process and what was the mandate and what needed to happen, and that there were options papers that needed to be made public. Those options papers haven't been made public, and now we hear, yet again, that we're going out for more consultation. I think that the minister needs to check the temperature in the waters out there to see if people really want to be consulted again on something they've already been consulted about. They have given their input. They have given the direction.

What I understand -- and I mentioned this as well last fall -- is that there are three issues that are imperative and have to be resolved for the education reform process to move forward. There is governance of education. It is the participation of parents, communities, school councils and school boards in the governance of the education system. It is their participation in the administration of the school system. The third one is language. The minister also indicated that language was a priority and that they are putting money into it.

These issues have to be resolved through the education reform process. We can't continue to consult and consult and not get any product, which is what we have seen on so many fronts. We have seen it with the *Children's Act* review; there is no product. So far, on the *Workers' Compensation Act* there has been no product; there is no legislation tabled in the Legislature and it sounds like it is a long way off.

I would expand on what the Grand Chief said. I would say that we can't afford to alienate the First Nations community or any community from the education system. Again, failure on this file is not an option. We can't afford that. It won't be to our advantage as a territory and as a community.

With regard to my duties as Justice critic, I guess the good news is that the corrections consultation process appears to have wrapped up. There are many recommendations that we have been making on this side of the House over the last four years. We were giving the Minister of Justice some ideas at that time to improve the corrections system. I think that the bad news is that the construction of the correctional facility is being delayed yet again.

There was a lot of consultation done, and there was lots of input around the construction of a new facility. There was lots of input around the need to reform the corrections system through restorative justice projects, but we continue to house inmates and we force corrections employees to work in a sub-standard, Third World facility and conditions. Now I agree there needs to be more programming. I am going to be looking in the budget -- both in the departmental briefing and when we

get into line by line -- for evidence that there is going to be more programming available and that it is going to meet the need of all Yukoners who need programming in corrections and in addictions treatment. You can have all the programming you want, but if it doesn't meet the needs and address the concerns of the clients you are trying to serve, they are going to end up in that correctional facility. It has to meet their needs. So we are going to be looking in more detail for some indication of progress and commitment by this government on that front.

We had a bit of a go-round about Highways and Public Works, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Department of Highways and Public Works today for their prompt reaction time. It is my understanding that at 8:00 this morning they were pumping out the lakes on the old Annie Lake Road. I trust that the Minister of Highways and Public Works will do everything in his power to ensure that this isn't an annual event on the Annie Lake Road where we have to pump the road out so that we can get vehicles in and out and my constituents have a safe road to travel on.

I talked to a constituent last night who was saying it was affecting their vehicle and that they were just about involved in an accident because of driving through the mud puddles -- it affected their brakes. So I would like to thank the minister and his department for a prompt response on that. Hopefully the Minister of Health and Social Services can be as prompt with the issue I raised today.

Now, when it comes to Highways and Public Works, there was a report from the Auditor General. It highlighted a lot of things that need to be addressed in the Department of Highways and Public Works. There are a lot of roads in the territory. Communities and the citizens of this territory depend on those highways to travel between communities, and it is important for business and commerce that those roads exist, and they need to be maintained for public safety as well. But there were some concerns raised in the Auditor General's report, and it goes to long-term planning and funding for maintenance and rehabilitation of the assets that we need for business and commerce and for our citizens to travel on and be safe.

There were concerns that -- like I raised with the Carmacks school -- many of these projects, whether they were for highway construction or airport terminals or runway surfacing or community centres or school replacements, have gone over their original targets for total spending and most of the projects were not completed on schedule. Now, I come from a construction background, and I understand what it's like to have design changes or change orders, but not to this extent. With proper planning and thinking ahead, you can do a much better job. Again, when it comes to property management, there is no long-range master plan for space to ensure that it can identify and meet accommodation needs -- and another one of the problems is that the government does not pay more than it should for space. That's a budgetary issue, because I'm not reaching into my pocket and taking out the money. The minister isn't reaching into his pocket and taking out the money. We're spending the taxpayers' money -- the people who are depending

on government to provide services and to have a place to go where they can receive those services.

There was also a concern raised about sole-source contracting leased space, because a high percentage of the government space is leased. The majority of recent leases were entered into on a sole-source basis. We've been around that for the last four and one-half years -- this government's practice of sole sourcing contracts and not getting the best value for Yukon citizens. The Auditor General even says most of these are just rolled over -- renewing the lease which can often be the costliest solution in the long-term. Decisions to lease were not even properly supported or documented. That leads to the fact that some government-owned buildings -- these are buildings that are owned by the public -- are seriously deteriorating due to aging and lack of adequate maintenance. I think that that isn't looking after the public's interest, and that the minister needs to take that into consideration when the budgets are planned. There needs to be better planning. The minister needs to give some direction. I know that he may have had problems with squirrels in his house because he wasn't looking after it, but the reality is that these are the public's assets and the minister needs to look after them.

I have critic duties for Community Services. Community Services is a big department, and I am not going to be able to cover a whole bunch of information at this time, but there are a couple of things that have come to light. It is good to see, and I hope that the agreement with the municipality of Whitehorse with regard to land development and how it is planned here within the city boundaries works out. Right now I know there is a shortage of lots; there is a problem with land availability and hopefully that can be resolved. We need to have good planning processes, and the government is still responsible for that planning outside the City of Whitehorse. I know that in the Hamlet of Mount Lorne there are still issues with regard to planning and listening to the concerns. I have attended numerous meetings around land development in the Hamlet of Mount Lorne, and I know that there are issues in other areas of the Yukon.

And it's good we are getting lots of money from the federal government when it comes to things like the Canadian strategic infrastructure fund and the municipal rural infrastructure fund. There seems to be lots of money. But it is about equitably sharing it with Yukoners, and finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are seeing some progress, we are seeing projects to address sewer and water needs in some rural communities of the Yukon. But there are some rural communities that are still out there much in need of upgrades to their sewer and water systems. It's not just because you need it; it's because it's about health. It's about the health of the community.

I don't have critic responsibilities for Energy, Mines and Resources, but I attended the chamber lunch and I read some of the notes from the Premier's speeches in Toronto telling Yukoners what a great place the Yukon was to come to invest in, and that the whole north was a treasure trove of resources that, you know, investors from Outside, from other countries and other jurisdictions should come and exploit.

I see members on the other side nodding their head in agreement, that that is a good idea. Well, you know, I haven't

heard so much talk about treasure since maybe around Christmastime. I was watching a movie, that had Johnny Depp in it. I think it was called *Pirates of the Caribbean*. When I hear people talking about treasure, treasure is something that pirates come to get and they take it away and put it somewhere else and bury it with little benefit to the people whom it belonged to in the first place. We need to ensure that when we are investing in our communities and when we are encouraging people to come to this territory and work here, they respect that and don't take away what it is that we cherish, whether it is our mineral resources or our environment. We need to ensure that.

We need to ensure that there needs to be evidence in the budget that shows it is going to happen and that Yukoners receive a fair shake and a fair return on what they hold so near and dear, which is the land, the resources, the wildlife and the society we have. We want to see things improved. We don't want to see it taken away from us and our rights eroded here in the Yukon.

I know that the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board is not a department in the budget, but I would be remiss if I didn't talk about it. It has been four and a half years since I wrote the previous minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board about the act review and about trying to get it going and so on. Here we are, four and a half years later, and it would appear that it is still not complete. There has been much work done when it comes to the *Workers' Compensation Act* review. There has been much discussion. On the good side of this long, drawn-out process for the *Workers' Compensation Act* review, I would say that people have talked and come together. They have achieved some consensus. They have given really good advice to the act review panel. They have helped the panel out immensely with their work, I believe. They have essentially formed a partnership to try to move forward to address the concerns of employers, employees and injured workers to make workplaces safe.

Making workplaces safe reduces the cost to both the system and to employers, but what concerns me is the length of time that it is taking to get these changes made.

As I pointed out during Question Period today, there is a matter of some urgency here. Drive by the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board Building and read the numbers. People young and old -- youth are more at risk than any, probably, and are being injured on the job daily. We need to do something about that. We need to do something positive to stop that. It's not about the cost; it's about people getting hurt and changing their lives, ruining their lives. I see constituents on a regular basis who are still struggling because of injuries they received at work. Because of the length of time that it has taken to review this act, from what I can gather, the indications now are that changes to the act will not come forward until the fall of 2008. Well, that's totally unacceptable, but the stakeholder group has given the minister an out, and the bad news is that I don't know if the minister has responded. The stakeholder group has offered to participate in helping draft these changes. Now, there were a whole bunch of issues that need to be brought forward in the *Workers' Compensation Act*, but the stakeholder group has basically asked the minister to consider a

consensus view of the stakeholders, which is both the Yukon Chamber of Commerce and the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Labour and the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board to immediately notify the act review panel that no further additional costs be incurred directly by the panel or via request to the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, because the reality is there isn't a line item in the budget. This is coming out of injured workers' money. It's coming out of the employer contributions to the system.

It costs money to continue this process. The process is complete; there has been a consensus. We don't need to do any more work. Let's get on with drafting the legislation. The other issue that I hope the minister is going to respond to very shortly to the stakeholders -- and I hope to hear it myself as well -- is to take this two-step approach and bring forward the nine issues that they have identified as being really important and matters of urgency. So I hope the minister will do that because, on a budgetary note, I think that when you're taking employers' assessments and money that's meant for injured workers and you're spending it on a process that's basically complete and asking for more information that doesn't really need to be asked -- let's just get on with the process. It's too bad we couldn't get on with the process with the *Education Act* review, the *Liquor Act* review and the *Children's Act* review.

This brings me to the Yukon Liquor Corporation. It was interesting to hear the minister responsible in his response, and I'll address some of his comments. The good news, I guess, is that the Yukon Liquor Corporation is still there and that people are still employed. The bad news is that, as was tabled today by my colleague, the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, statistics show that the Yukon has the highest consumption of anywhere in Canada when it comes to liquor. The minister and the department seem to like to say, "Well, you know, it's because of the tourists."

I have news for the minister. The Yukon isn't the only place that has tourists. The last time I was in Vancouver there were lots of tourists -- I was a tourist. When I was in Victoria I was a tourist. There are lots of tourists in Toronto. There are tourists that go to Prince Edward Island. Do you think they don't drink when they're there? The tourists don't have a huge impact on liquor consumption in the Yukon; I can tell the minister that. If they would do the work and provide the statistics based on volume of how much is consumed -- and it's at the tip of their fingers. They like to do it on an annual basis. You could do it on a monthly basis; you could do it on a weekly basis. You could probably do it on a daily basis.

We could probably do it on a daily basis. It's all in the till. You would know if there is a problem. It takes me back to alcohol and drug treatment programs and training of addictions workers here in the Yukon, which I think is an important thing. It was interesting to hear the minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation talk about the smoke-free places act. Sometimes we want consultation and sometimes we don't. Well, sometimes they want consultation and sometimes they don't.

What bill was tabled in the Legislature yesterday? It was changes to the Yukon *Liquor Act*. There was a whole process

laid out quite a few years ago. I believe it goes back to not the previous government, but the government before. There was a review of the *Liquor Act*. The previous Yukon Party government refused to bring in the changes that were recommended in that *Liquor Act* review. There was huge consultation. It went out to the community. There were all kinds of recommendations made, but with absolutely no consultation this minister is bringing forward an amendment to the *Liquor Act* basically so that we can all enjoy single-malt whiskey.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Cardiff: The Member for Kluane is right. Some of us would enjoy it; some of us would not. A lot of us shouldn't.

The fact of the matter is that the amendment is simple. It is to allow for a distillery in the Yukon. So, when it suits their purpose, with no consultation they can amend any act. I introduced a motion the other day to go out and consult on the *Landlord and Tenant Act*. Read the newspaper and drive around. We have people living on the streets. We have people living in substandard housing. We have landlords who have a problem collecting rent and a problem with renters not looking after the property appropriately. We need to be able to resolve that. We need to be able to deal with these issues. That's not a priority for this government, but, hey, with no consultation we can amend an act so that we can have a distillery in the Yukon. It makes sense to me.

It makes sense to me. I know my time is getting short. With the Yukon Housing Corporation, I guess the good news is that there are a bunch of seniors who are going to be able to get nice housing. It's a great building. I've toured the building, and I am happy for those people. I think the unfortunate part is that many of those seniors indicated that they would rather be downtown and close to services. Through the poor planning of the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation now they are living up the hill where there are virtually no services. There are no banking services; there are no shopping services; no grocery stores. I think that that is kind of sad.

While I am happy for the seniors, I think that the minister and the Housing Corporation could maybe do a little bit better job, because the needs of single parents, the needs of youth who are on the street or who don't have a home to go to, are just as great as the needs of seniors.

The minister talked about women who are escaping violent situations. They need to be given priority too, and I agree with that, but we need to have housing available. There has been a lot of talk recently about youth and homeless shelters. There have been a lot of studies done. I think it is time to stop studying the matter and to do something. I have done work on this file myself, and there is money available through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. If the two agencies were to work together, maybe we could have a shelter here in Whitehorse for homeless youth.

I know I have to conclude soon. It is great to be able to be here and to respond and to go over these things. There is a ton of other issues I could bring up, but one of things that I think needs to be addressed in this sitting and over the term of this government is decorum, I suppose.

But I do have a problem with the government, and it's the lack of respect that they show for individual Yukoners' needs.

Go back to yesterday, when I raised a concern of a Yukon constituent -- and I'm glad that it was addressed. But it was the way that it was dealt with here in the Legislature. If you want to improve the decorum, then we need to change the way we talk to each other. I don't appreciate it when the concerns of my constituents about their roads and the ability of an expectant mother to get to the hospital or about septic pump-outs overflowing in people's yards -- those are health concerns. Those are real concerns of Yukon people, and they are trivialized through a poor attempt at humour.

The minister said that flooding happens every year. Well, it's not flooding. This is poor road design and lack of proper maintenance. If it were flooding, I would have called emergency services. I wouldn't have talked to the minister. If it were a flood, I'm sure Emergency Measures would have been out there dealing with it.

Then you have the issue that I raised today, and I'm glad to see that the minister wasn't quite as terse in his response to me today about this issue, which is very, very important -- not just to my constituent, but it's very important to people who are in those situations where they have shared custody and they're concerned about their safety and their child's safety during a custody exchange. Quite frankly, the responses in the letters that the minister sent back were not acceptable. I felt that they were dismissive and that there wasn't a sense of urgency, and there was a sense of urgency and there still is a sense of urgency.

In closing, I'd like to contrast that with something that was addressed for my constituents and give some kudos to the new Minister of Justice. Hopefully she can teach the old ministers a new way and hopefully they don't teach her the old way. Because on a very important matter to a constituent of mine and to many others who are going to be faced with this situation, I requested that they look into the situation at the coroner's service, whereby the facility that was being used to view bodies going out for cremation or for an autopsy was substandard, and it was disgusting.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Justice for the prompt change in that service, and I'm sure that all Yukoners will appreciate that. I know that I do, I know that my constituent does. It was nice to see.

There are many, many other issues that I would like to talk about, but I see that I have used up my time and I thank the members here for sitting and listening. I look forward to getting into debating the budget further in the near future.

Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Horne: I rise in support of this budget today. It reflects our direction and our goals: building Yukon's future together. A clear vision for a bright future is what we stand for, and this budget reflects that vision.

Last autumn Yukoners were given a choice as to the direction their government would pursue. Yukoners saw fit to return this government to office. I was honoured by the constituents of Pelly-Nisutlin to be selected as their representative to carry

out this government's vision. As I have listened to the budget debate unfolding, I have been reminded of the importance of having a government with a clear vision. My honourable colleagues across the floor have a very different vision for the Yukon. I would like to take a few moments to speak to the dichotomy developing in the debate.

The comments made by a representative of the New Democratic Party in yesterday's debate regarding women made me appreciate the respect and equality with which I am treated in the Yukon Party. Speaking of gender equality, I would like to point out to the Member for McIntyre-Takhini that I was a single mother when I raised my eldest daughter. It was not easy, but I did it. I did not wait at home for Papa to return to take care of me. It made my daughter and me stronger. I know many single mothers who are self-reliant and very proud.

Mr. Speaker, the best way to prevent people from being exploited is to empower them by creating an economy that is robust and vibrant as is Yukon's. There is a demand for people of all skill levels, including entry level. People who have viable, healthy options are less likely to stay in unhealthy or unrewarding situations.

I believe that a house and a job is the best solution to unemployment. To say that we have done nothing to address poverty or homelessness is incorrect. Today, we have a job market that is accessible to people of all skill levels. Today, we have jobs looking for people. Five or six years ago, people were looking for U-hauls to move south. I suggest that we should have installed a gate to stop the exodus, and not be now selling the Yukon to visitors and investors.

I also heard some comments in yesterday's debate relating to First Nations that I found mind-boggling. I am so very proud of my Tlingit heritage. I am proud that the Teslin Tlingit Council was the first to settle land claims. We are not governed by the *Indian Act*. We are a self-confident, self-governing First Nation. We have the power to control our lives and that is a responsibility for which I am grateful.

Mr. Speaker, there is much more I could say on that issue, but I will now move on to other matters in the budget. As the Commissioner identified in the throne speech, this government is committed to the following: achieving a better quality of life by building healthy, safe communities with skilled and adaptable people; protecting Yukon's pristine environment; preserving our wildlife and studying the impacts of climate change; promoting a strong and diversified private sector economy by developing Yukon's vast natural resources, wilderness tourism potential, agriculture, arts and culture, information technology and film and sound, as well as the traditional industries of outfitting and trapping; and practising good governance with strong fiscal management and a climate of cooperation, collaboration and partnership with our First Nation governments, our two sister territories, our provincial counterparts and the federal government. Mr. Speaker, these items are a continuation of the work that was initiated by this government in its first mandate.

I would like to take a few minutes and go back to 2002 when we began. In 2002, the government was in a difficult position. Many Yukoners were leaving to other jurisdictions for

economic reasons. Those who remained faced a series of challenges, including a collapsing job market.

The Liberal government of the day was too preoccupied dealing with its own internal difficulties to offer solutions in the Yukon. When we took office we set about re-energizing the Yukon. We committed to do better by working together. We committed to building Yukon's future together. We felt that an atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration would be more effective than one of confrontation. This was the attitude that we brought to government: by working together we are able to do better for our economic fortunes. That meant working together with our First Nations, municipal, industrial and commercial partners, and that work has paid off. We were able to invest in several important capital projects that not only stemmed the exodus of Yukoners but brought many new residents to the Yukon. This strategy had two important results: first, it meant that we would have new or improved infrastructure in each of the communities I represent -- Faro, Ross River and Teslin -- and, second, it meant that we retained in the Yukon the people and skills that the private sector would need when they were ready to invest here. This approach demonstrated our clear vision for a bright future -- and they have invested.

In addition to new commercial and retail investments, industrial investors like mining companies have begun to invest here again. In 2003-04, the Fraser Institute ranked Yukon 33rd out of 53 jurisdictions for investment climate for mining companies. That same organization recently ranked Yukon 11th out of 65 jurisdictions surveyed. Mining companies are able to do business here with legislative and regulatory certainty. It is my hope that more economic opportunities like those that come from being involved in the mining industry will be available to Yukoners, especially to those in my riding.

Mr. Speaker, the Town of Faro has a long and rich tradition as a mining town. I admire the hearty, innovative souls that live there. I am so proud to be their MLA. I am extremely proud of Faro. They have worked tirelessly since the mine shut down, to find ways to keep their community alive and vibrant. They epitomize the true northern spirit. I know of how much poorer we would be as a territory if Faro did not exist. The Yukon indeed has a community to be proud of.

I want to see more people able to work in resource-based industries like mining and forestry. At the same time that we have helped resource-based business find reasons to invest here, we have also increased our protected areas. The land is very special to all Yukoners, and we who are First Nations care very deeply about the protection and preservation of the land that we negotiated into our final agreements. Protected areas identified and established within a traditional territory of a Yukon First Nation under a final agreement are called special management areas. They can be Yukon parks, habitat protection areas, national parks, wildlife areas or other types. The level of protection is defined in a management plan developed for each particular area with management by the Yukon government, First Nation governments and renewable resource councils depending on the area and jurisdiction.

The key to increasing protected areas in Yukon was to use the mechanism for protecting land that was negotiated through the land claims process. By adopting just one process instead of a hodgepodge of conflicting and competing processes, we are able to protect more of Yukon's environment that encompasses the opinions of all concerned.

This approach is advantageous for citizens, companies and all governments involved. Citizens, companies and governments know that, in certain areas, different kinds of activity will be permitted and they can plan and invest appropriately. Bringing certainty is a good thing, and it is advantageous for the flora and fauna, which is what we wanted to protect in the first place. I applaud this government for finding the balance between protecting the environment and responsible development. That requires a clear vision for a bright, sustainable future.

Before I leave the subject of economic development, I would also like to mention a couple of small steps this government took that may not have meant much to people in Whitehorse but were greatly appreciated by those of us living in rural Yukon.

The first was to enhance the funds available for FireSmart. In addition to reducing the fuel loads around our communities, which the 2004 fire season proved we needed to do, FireSmart also provided much-needed winter employment. It may not sound like much, but it helped keep Yukoners here in Yukon. I thank the Premier and the Minister of Community Services for identifying that money as a priority. That speaks to a clear vision for a bright future, supported by this government.

I would also like to note the highway equipment rental contracts work that was done in the Watson Lake area. Because the Campbell Highway does not pass through Whitehorse, I have found that some people do not understand how important it is. I appreciate the work this government did in going out and getting the community involved in rebuilding the south end of the Campbell Highway.

Mr. Speaker, aside from a broken economy, we had deeper, more important issues. We set about working together to bring our communities closer. Due to a lack of funding, worthy community projects were not being undertaken. By investing in the community development fund, we have been able to help communities come together. That is what we mean when we talk about building Yukon's future together and a clear vision for a bright future.

We have committed to providing a better quality of life by building Yukon's future together with our partners in education, health, arts and culture, and sports and recreation. I'll talk more in detail about our efforts with respect to my ministerial responsibilities with Justice.

We are moving forward with our education reform project. I am reminded of a quote by Aristotle, who said, "All who have meditated on the art of governing ... have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the education of youth." Throughout history, people everywhere have recognized the importance of education. We have a clear vision for a bright future. Our commitment to education speaks to that. The focus in education has shifted from teaching to learning. We recog-

nize that different types of students respond better to different teaching methods. Some are abstract and others are concrete learners. Some learn better by first understanding the high-level overview, while others learn better by doing. We recognize that some students, for various reasons, require a different learning environment than most other students.

We set about improving the range of services we offer for learners. Among the highlights for me is the Individual Learning Centre, where young people can get the kind of help they need to succeed. I am fortunate that both my daughters are exceptionally bright, but I can tell you that their learning styles are as unique as their personalities. By working together, by building Yukon's future together, we can offer a clear vision for a bright future. And that is so very important when the topic is education.

In my home community of Teslin, the governments of Yukon and the Teslin Tlingit Council work together to provide a positive supportive educational context for our children. I recently met with representatives of TTC who shared with us how generously the local First Nation TTC contributes funding to provide support in addition to that provided by YTG. It verifies how important they consider the education of our youth. For example, TTC financially supports the elder in school, youth guidance counsellor, and youth shuttle bus service. All told, this represents over \$1 million. YTG, of course, shoulders the load for providing teachers, acquiring learning supplies and operating the school building. I applaud this partnership and I am proud of the TTC.

Due to our government's commitment to education, many of our young people have gone on to pursue post-secondary studies. I am given to understand that 14 students from Teslin are in continuing education this year. Good on them.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to talk about our clear vision for a bright future in the area of health and social services for a few minutes. I have been working with the Minister of Health and Social Services to address my riding's concern about elders and seniors being removed from their homes and communities. It is no secret that I want to see this government review whether or not there is a need for a seniors facility in Teslin. We need to enable seniors and elders to live in their own home communities for as long as possible. I am adamant in saying that we need to continue to ensure that seniors and elders are able to remain in their homes as long as possible by increasing home care and other services. When they do need to move out of their homes, I want to see housing that enables seniors with different medical needs to continue to live together for as long as possible as a couple.

We are building Yukon's future together by offering a clear vision for a bright future in the area of promoting arts and culture. We are doing this through several initiatives. As I noted previously, we have found a balance between building our economy and protecting the environment. Again, as I noted earlier, prior to our taking office, we had multiple processes that overlapped and sometimes conflicted with each other to protect and preserve the Yukon. One of the things we did was to bring regulatory and procedural clarity by following the process envisioned in the land claims agreement to safeguard

Yukon's wilderness. More of Yukon wilderness is protected than when we took office.

First Nations negotiated in our final agreements a process to protect our land. Instead of following what we agreed to at the negotiating table, previous governments decided that they knew best and implemented a different process. I was delighted when this government acted decisively early on and decided to scrap the Yukon protected areas strategy and, instead, followed the process outlined in our final agreements.

By using this process we are able to protect the Norden-skiold Wetland Habitat Protection Area, which is south of Carmacks. This valley is a major wetland complex and an important waterfowl staging area. An area of 76-square kilometres of the complex was identified as a special management area under the *Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation Final Agreement* and will be designated a habitat protection area. We can thank this government for this initiative being put in place.

This government demonstrates its respect for First Nations by following the terms and conditions we agreed to at the negotiating table instead of inventing a new process. I, for one, appreciate that approach.

A few minutes ago I spoke about the steps we took to improve the economy. I would like to come back to this topic for a few more moments. With recent growth in population, rising global demand for energy and minerals, breathtaking wilderness tourism potential and blooming arts and culture, Yukon is poised to develop a strong, diversified, private sector economy.

I am also pleased to see that this government is working on the Campbell Highway. I look forward to seeing more work on this road to improve it. By making the road better and safer, we will encourage more activity in the area, and that means more gas sold at the pumps, more groceries sold at the stores, and more people living and working in my riding. Because of the importance of the Campbell Highway in my riding, I will continue to work with the Minister of Highways and Public Works to see this highway improved.

Practising good governance is more than just a laudable ideal. It is the foundation upon which the rest of society is built. One of the features of good governance is that government listens to the people it represents. It is clear that we as a government are on track when it comes to consultation. The opposition complains that we either do not consult or that we consult too much. Yesterday the Member for Copperbelt held that we had stopped listening. During Thursday's Question Period, the Member for Whitehorse Centre urged us to move forward without consultation on legislation, but only on regulations. Again, in yesterday's debate, the Member for McIntyre-Takhini complained that this government does too much listening and that we do too much consultation. Today, the Member for Kluane complained that we don't listen to Yukoners. It is comments like the ones made today and on prior days that demonstrate the very different visions for Yukon that our party has compared to the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, not only have we done a great deal of consultation but we are going to do more. We listen to the Yukoners. My Chihuahuas, especially Kazoo, are very happy that we are working on the *Animal Protection Act*. They look forward to

learning more about this important legislation as it develops and is reviewed.

In our last mandate, we were clear that by working together we would do better. From time immemorial, good governance has been marked by providing safety, security and stability for its citizens. Under this government's watch, we have worked to ensure people's safety, security and stability. We are committed to ensuring people are safe in their homes, their communities and their travels. We have money available for homeowners to undertake improvements to their water supply systems.

We are committed to making our communities safer by implementing several new initiatives. As I have said previously, when I was preparing for this portfolio I read a great deal about the impact of substance abuse on Yukon communities. I feel comfortable in saying that, in my mind, the single largest contributor toward criminal activity in the Yukon is substance abuse.

Mr. Speaker, 2007-08 will represent the first full fiscal year that our safer communities and neighbourhoods office has been in operation. We have enjoyed great success to date with this program. It empowers the communities and is an appropriate avenue to deal with undesirable activities in our neighbourhoods. I am so very pleased to see that the street crime reduction team is up and running. I am elated to help address the problem of substance abuse in our communities. Drug and alcohol abuse has a devastating impact on our communities. By reducing the availability of drugs in our communities, we reduce the harm they do and that's a very good thing.

Mr. Speaker, we are making Yukon roads safer and better. Extensive work has already been undertaken to improve the Robert Campbell Highway, and I am pleased to hear that we envision more work on this highway in the future. As I said previously, I am pleased to see this government working on finding ways to help keep people in the communities working on local projects.

In conclusion, I applaud this government for bringing forth this budget. It reflects the values and priorities of this government. It speaks to the areas that we committed to address. We committed to achieving a better quality of life by building healthy, safe communities with skilled and adaptable people. This budget delivers on that commitment. We committed to protecting Yukon's pristine environment, preserving our wildlife and studying and mitigating the impacts of climate change. This budget delivers on that commitment. We committed to promoting a strong, diversified private sector economy by developing Yukon's vast natural resources, wilderness tourism potential, agriculture, arts and culture, information technology and film and sound, as well as the traditional industries of outfitting and trapping. This budget delivers on that commitment.

We committed to practising good governance with strong fiscal management and a climate of cooperation, collaboration and partnership with our First Nation governments, our two sister territories, our provincial counterparts and the federal government. This budget delivers on that commitment.

Mr. Speaker, we stand for building Yukon's future together -- a clear vision for a brighter tomorrow. Imagine tomorrow.

Thank you.

Mr. Inverarity: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to respond to the 2007-08 budget. First, I'd like to thank my wife Mary for continuing to support me, and thank my children for making me such a proud father. It has been an honour to sit in the House here.

I'd also like to thank the residents of Porter Creek South. Their positive feedback has been excellent. I am particularly pleased about the support and cooperation that is going into the development of the Verslucce Meadows Park. This project benefits all of Porter Creek and it could form the basis of a much larger integrated city park. As a minimum, it will be a legacy left to the residents of Porter Creek that they will be very proud of.

I'd also like to thank the honourable members for Porter Creek Centre and Porter Creek North for their continued support on this particular project. I think it's something that we can all be proud of.

This brings me to a larger issue of land use planning, not only in Whitehorse but throughout the Yukon. I see this government circumventing YESAA board rulings on the Lake Laberge area. I see agreements with the City of Whitehorse to assume responsibility for land disposition within the city boundaries. These unilateral decisions are not being debated here in the Legislative Assembly and I feel that this government is abdicating their responsibility to ensure adequate land use planning throughout the Yukon and, in particular, ensuring the City of Whitehorse is not solely focused on lot creation.

I recall the first time that the Alaska Highway pipeline project was announced. My wife and I bought our first home up in Hillcrest. We bought it on our lunch break because the boom was coming. I recall that the development behind there, the Granger subdivision, was going to be filled in five years with all the influx of people. It has taken almost 30 years to complete this development area.

So I offer a word of caution about growth. As a city, Whitehorse needs to ensure that if we are to continue being strong, we should have a long-term land use plan. We need room to grow while keeping our communities healthy and I believe that the Yukon government has a role to play in this development.

We should not abdicate our responsibility but ensure that good judgement is exercised when making decisions about spending public money for the benefit of all Yukoners.

I recently received a letter from the Porter Creek Community Association regarding the Pine Street extension development. The association reconfirmed their position that they are against the development in the McIntyre Creek area and had assumed that this project was all but dead. The allocation of \$6.5 million in this budget for planning and development of the Porter Creek lower bench and the Pine Street extension came as a complete surprise. As a matter of fact, the Porter Creek Community Association is still awaiting the results of the community consultation by the Department of Community Services regarding the Pine Street extension. These consultations took place about a year ago. If the results are ready, I wouldn't

mind seeing them myself. I believe that all Porter Creek MLAs have spoken out against this extension development. I now see that the minister is backing off from this particular issue. I say, shame on them.

With respect to the development plans for Porter Creek, it has occurred to me that no one has asked the question: what are the socio-economic impacts going to be from the development of Whistle Bend? I dare say that putting 10,000 people in Whistle Bend is going to significantly impact the existing residents of Porter Creek. I would recommend that this government look at working with the Porter Creek Community Association to develop a strategy to cope with this magnitude of growth. I suggest that this government do more than just imagine the problems and what they will be.

Yesterday, the Minister of Economic Development talked about Imagine Yukon. Well, I can imagine a McIntyre Creek corridor park that traverses the city. I can imagine a park that would allow both citizens and wildlife to pass through from Fish Lake and Jackson Lake to the Yukon River and beyond. I can see a park that would be as great as Stanley Park in Vancouver. All it takes is a bit of imagination and some courage.

We're all still waiting for a recreational land use policy from this government that will benefit all Yukoners in the area of recreational lot development.

Mr. Speaker, let me speak just for a bit about justice. The Hon. Minister of Justice spoke at length about the need to plan and deliver a socially responsible justice strategy, and not just a big-box warehouse for her clients. The honourable minister has often referred to the inmates as "clients", as though they are customers of the government that receive public services. While I am prepared to acknowledge that rehabilitation is a laudable goal and totally support rehabilitation for those individuals who want it, the reality, unfortunately, is that many inmates are hardened criminals. I feel that perhaps the minister needs to talk to the staff at the jail and get a sense of the risk that they face on a daily basis, working with frustrated criminals in overcrowded conditions.

I appreciate all the efforts being made to keep individuals out of jail. The honourable minister should consider, however, what will happen to those individuals who are sent there today. Will they receive rehabilitation services, or simply be forced to do time in a condemned building while this government talks about more planning? This budget allocates more than \$3 million to plan for a new jail. Quite frankly, I think most Yukoners see this as just another ploy to stall on this issue. After all, governments don't get elected on building new jails.

One thing that I would like to know is the status of the discussions with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and other First Nation stakeholders who have a role to play. This government seems reluctant to deal with important issues like where is the new jail going to be located? When will it be built, and how much will it cost, in total?

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the safer communities and neighbourhoods program, I believe that the all-party support for this initiative will benefit all Yukoners, as it should. I know that in the Porter Creek area, at least one drug house has been

closed down, if not more, and I would like to congratulate everybody for accomplishing this particular task.

It has been brought to my attention that the Yukon government needs more treatment facilities. Some people call these halfway homes for people completing drug and alcohol programs. These homes should be designed for longer stay residents -- say six to nine months -- and act as a transition home so that residents can be placed in them and develop life-long learning skills and put together a return-to-work program. My suggestion is that the government look at assisting people and organizations that want to set up these places, if not with monetary support, then at least making it easier for them to get going.

I would like to speak briefly about economic development, and the important word here is "briefly". The fact is that I can't say much about the Department of Economic Development because there is no vision here. I find it disturbing that the government received seven percent of its revenues last year from tobacco tax and over 10 percent from liquor sales, while resource revenues amounted to only one percent.

If I try hard enough, I can imagine economic development issues that might result in a 100-percent increase in the resource revenues of this year, and that would raise it to two percent.

I see that this department has allocated \$15.8 million in this particular fiscal year and I would like to see what the return on investment is going to be for this \$15-million investment in economic development.

What I find particularly galling is that the monies allocated for regional economic development programs are down by three percent, and that the economic development strategic industries programming is down by 31 percent. I will state here again for the record that I believe resource-based economic development has its place in the Yukon economy, but what we really need is a clear vision of wide-ranging economic developments that benefit all Yukoners for the long term.

I imagine a Yukon that has a broad-based economic strategy, one that is not dependent just on resources that are shipped out as raw materials. I see an economy that starts with raw materials, be it iron, copper or even the natural beauty of the Tombstone Mountains. I see these raw materials processed here in the Yukon and manufactured into things like wire and goods and other products that are manufactured here in the Yukon by Yukoners. I imagine a Yukon where tourists travel to see our pristine land. I see miners, outfitters and the ecotourism industry all working together for the benefit of keeping our environment healthy.

So how does this dream become a reality? Well, one of the first steps is to develop a community-based economic development strategy. Rather than cutting budgets, perhaps invest in new ways so that local tourism manufacturers can grow and sell their products abroad. Perhaps we can develop small business incubators that assist small businesses by sharing manufacturing and packaging facilities.

We have been asked to imagine and say what can be done. There are some concrete ideas for economic development. I have more if members want them, and I am prepared to share

them. Remember that the goal here is to make the Yukon a great place to visit and a better place to live.

Finally, I would like to discuss something that is always near and dear to my heart, the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. Over the last few months, there has been a lot of discussion about workplace safety. Local businesses have talked to me about the high premiums that they have paid. The sign on the front of the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety building shows over 425 injured workers to date, but, according to the chairman, this number is not relevant. The chair claims that only time-lost injuries are relevant. I believe that both are relevant, that all injuries are relevant. I am concerned that the chair seems to be placing the blame for escalating workplace injuries squarely on the backs of workers and seems to be expecting employers to cough up the bucks to pay for whatever it costs. It appears to me that everyone else is to blame. However, last year administration costs rose over 25 percent and I find it upsetting that the chair's honorarium is higher than any other board chair in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, I am as concerned about worker safety as I am about the cost of maintaining the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. We need to be as much a part of solving this problem as workers and the employers. I grow frustrated watching workplace injuries going up on a daily basis and the employment assessment rates skyrocketing. I would urge the minister to take responsibility for the boards and seriously start to produce some positive results.

In closing, the government had asked me to enter into a meaningful debate over the budget and that I offer constructive input. I believe I have.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: It's my honour and my pleasure to rise here today as the MLA for beautiful Southern Lakes and as the Minister of Education, to respond to this budget. I rise in support of this budget. This budget continues to implement the Yukon Party's vision, its priorities and its principles. This budget follows the direction that the electorate endorsed.

In 2002, we committed to the goals of building a sustainable economy, improving the health of Yukon communities, and achieving a better quality of life for all Yukoners. Some of the specific objectives included taking steps to put our fiscal house in order, to build a sustainable and competitive Yukon economy, to focus on strategic industries and projects, to build healthy communities and to implementing our social agenda, to formalize a government-to-government relationship with First Nations, and building partnerships. We took action on each and every one of these significant programs and made significant progress.

During the last election we committed to continuing down the path that we had started: to build on our accomplishments. We told Yukoners that if re-elected we would work toward achieving a better quality of life by building healthy, safe communities with skilled and adaptable people; we would protect Yukon's pristine environment, preserving our wildlife and studying and mitigating the impacts of climate change. We would promote a strong, diversified private sector economy by

developing Yukon's vast natural resources, wilderness tourism potential, agriculture, arts and culture, information technology, and film and sound, as well as the traditional industries of outfitting and trapping. And we committed to practising good governance with strong fiscal management, a climate of cooperation, collaboration in partnership with our First Nation governments, our two sister territories, our provincial counterparts and the federal government.

During the Premier's Budget Address, he identified specific, key initiatives that relate to each and every one of these areas. He brought forward initiatives that we as a government will put into place to live up to the commitments that we made to Yukoners and to those that they now expect of us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the electorate appreciated and recognized what we did in our first term, and they told us that they wanted consistency. I appreciate that the members opposite are promoting the ideas that they put forward during the election campaign, but we were elected to implement our platform, and not to implement the platform of those who weren't supported by the democratic process. Mr. Speaker, this budget further demonstrates our practice of managing our financial resources. We will live up to our responsibilities as a government to invest in appropriate infrastructure and to contribute to the social and cultural fabric and growth of our community.

Mr. Speaker, some people feel that it is the duty of the opposition to oppose everything. I think we have all agreed, and through many discussions that I have had with members of the opposition that there is an effort there -- and a concerted effort by some -- to do more than simply oppose. We saw the benefits of what could happen when we worked together in the last Assembly. There were numerous different motions that were tabled in this Assembly that we could all agree to, and those motions helped to steer the direction of the government and encourage the government to take action on specific items. I think there were many different occasions when we could agree on initiatives that were in the best interests of Yukoners. We have seen the benefit of when we can work together in non-partisan areas of importance, such as the Public Accounts Committee, or if we take a look at the safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation, we all agreed that it was a good direction to go. I believe there was unanimous support for the legislation. We all found that by working together we could work in a better way and accomplish more.

I appreciate that there have been some constructive comments from the opposition, but in the debate so far there have been several instances of statements by members in the opposition that I feel have been inappropriate, inaccurate and downright insulting.

I am not going to debate those particular statements. We all agreed that we should try to raise the bar. Let's just say that there are statements that I feel have been inappropriate in our Assembly and I will do my best to live up to the expectations of Yukoners that they have for this Assembly.

In listening to many of the speakers from the opposition, I am again concerned that their criticism lacks any specific or consistent focus. Once again we have heard them say, "You study too much", "You don't study enough"; "You spend too

much money", "You don't spend enough money"; "You get too much money from the federal government", "You don't get enough money from the federal government". It's that type of inconsistency -- especially this new approach to consultation. Some of the comments that have come out so far are outside of our responsibility as members of the Assembly. We were elected to represent a group of people; we certainly have to take into consideration their thoughts, views, opinions and beliefs on the issue. We certainly need to discuss issues with them in order to make informed, appropriate and considered decisions.

I was encouraged to hear some of the members speak about the items in the budget that they can support. Despite statements to the contrary from others, though, I am sure that they are all items in the budget that we can agree with.

In the line of working collaboratively with the members of the opposition, I would once again offer each and every one of them the opportunity to sit down with me to discuss their vision of education, their concerns and, indeed, some of the concerns in their community. Soon after I was made a minister, I spoke with the leader of each of the opposition parties and I was glad to see that a member of the opposition has taken me up on that. We have had an opportunity to sit down, discuss the issues that were important in his community, and I appreciate that. I need to get that kind of feedback. I believe that as members of the Legislative Assembly, we have to represent our constituents and bring forth their issues and concerns. We can do that in here during budget debate, we can do it in Question Period, but we can also do it with a conversation, a letter -- it doesn't always have to be on an adversarial footing.

It is unfortunate that our Assembly is structured this way, where we are two sword lengths apart, but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I work on an open-door policy. If a member of the opposition would like to sit down and discuss an issue, I would be more than willing to do that. I can't say that I will agree with everything, but I think that having a discussion is a good start to working out the issues. We do have different philosophies on things. It is the nature of our political system. That is partly the nature of our affiliation with different political parties, but if we start with what we are all interested in accomplishing, sometimes we can put our positions behind us and work in the best interests of Yukoners.

With regard to this budget, I am very encouraged to see that it is very progressive in addressing a lot of the issues and concerns brought forward by the folks from beautiful Southern Lakes. I see this budget as consistent with the government working with communities to respond to identified needs. For example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we are all aware of Carcross. It is a great little community on the south Klondike Highway. It has a lot going for it, not the least of which is the tremendous beauty of the area and its relative access to tidewater in that the highway to the coast goes through the community. A tremendous number of tourists travel along that highway.

For people who want to come and explore the Yukon, Carcross has tremendous tourism potential. I am pleased to see that this government has worked progressively -- and will continue

to do so -- with the First Nation in the community, with private enterprise organizations such as White Pass, with the chamber of commerce there and with the South Klondike Local Advisory Council and the citizens of the community to prepare the community to take advantage of the economic opportunities. The train has returned to Carcross; there is bus traffic coming through, and so I think that we have tremendous opportunities in Carcross to take advantage of the tourism economy. I am glad to see that a lot of initiatives are underway to turn that into a reality.

As well, in Carcross we are working on significant issues such as the waterfront development project and regular street and road maintenance, and we are working with the community on education and training initiatives. In Carcross in particular, we have an initiative going on now to prepare individuals to take advantage of highway work opportunities, which is consistent with the work that we have going on on the Tagish Road. There are significant roadwork programs going on in the area and it only makes sense to do the training program in the community to prepare locals to take advantage of local opportunities.

In the community of Tagish, this budget includes additional funds for roadwork and street work and for working with the community associations. It has been my pleasure to work with the Tagish Local Advisory Council and the Tagish Community Association to ensure that some of their issues and concerns are being addressed and to ensure that they are working well with the government.

Just to highlight one issue, I am sure all rural MLAs will appreciate the importance of the foot-care clinic. This is a clinic that goes on in most communities and it's of particular interest to seniors, elders and those with disabilities. We had an issue in the community of Tagish where people were concerned that the department wasn't being as responsive to some of their needs as they should be, and I was very gratified to receive a thank-you letter from the community last week and a note asking me to pass on thanks to the Department of Health and Social Services in responding to the community's needs and in making the changes to the program to better serve the residents of Tagish.

It's not the biggest initiative in the world, but it is one of those projects that we all get very involved with. When people come to us with issues and concerns, we have a responsibility to react and ensure that they are addressed. I am very gratified to see the Department of Health and Social Services has responded to the issue and has made changes to address the situation.

One of the major concerns in the community of Marsh Lake is access to safe, affordable, potable water, with a source of bulk water for home use and a source of water for fire-fighting. I am gratified to see that there is money in the budget to address that.

As well, we will be working with the community on further enhancements to the recycling centre. Unfortunately there was an act of senseless vandalism in the community and the new recycling centre suffered some damage. But I am glad to see that, once again, the government has come to the assistance

of the community and provided funds for rebuilding the recycling centre and working with the free store.

It is great to see the work that the Department of Community Services and the Department of Environment is doing in regard to some of our solid waste disposal facilities. There has been a significant movement away from burning garbage, which I am quite sure will receive a lot of support from people, and the move toward transfer stations. So, instead of having the dump in Marsh Lake burned on a regular basis, it is now a transfer station. This encourages people to reuse the items that they don't need by putting them in the free store, to recycle those things like paper or pop bottles or plastics or items that can be recycled, and, as well, it also makes us very conscious of what we are putting into the transfer station, which will hopefully encourage people to compost more and be very conscious of their purchases and the decisions that they make, buying stuff only to throw it out. Hopefully we can discourage that kind of behaviour.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged to see that this budget includes additional funds for roadwork, for the Atlin road upgrades, for continued support of very important initiatives in the communities, projects like FireSmart and things like the community development fund.

The community development fund is a great tool that the community has at its disposal to respond to local community needs and obtain some funding to put on projects and services that are identified as priorities in the community and receive some assistance from the government in order to do that.

On the education side of things, which is a portfolio that the Premier has entrusted to me, it is certainly my privilege and honour to work with people in that department. I have had the opportunity to meet with almost all the people in the administration of the Department of Education in the building on the other side of the Yukon River. I have been very impressed with the professionalism, dedication and passion for education. Mr. Speaker, I have been to many of the schools in the territory, and I am impressed with the vibrancy, energy and community involvement. I have met with many of our partners in education, including First Nation governments, school boards, school councils and groups involved in post-secondary education, and with NGOs such as breakfast for learning, Skills Canada and Yukon Work InfoNet. I am gratified to see that so many people in our community are involved in education.

Mr. Speaker, the vision for the Department of Education is for all Yukoners to have the knowledge, skills, opportunities and abilities to participate effectively in their work and their communities, and to promote a love of lifelong learning. That is the broad, overall vision for the department. It will work toward that vision by executing its mandate, which is that the Department of Education is committed to working together with our partners to deliver the most accessible, responsive and best quality education possible. This includes programs and services that reflect the cultural, economic and natural environment of the Yukon.

The department strives to improve the success rate for all Yukon students and adult learners to enhance transitions be-

tween education, training and work, and to obtain meaningful partnerships with all users of the public education system.

During our debate, and once we get into the Department of Education in greater detail, I will also be asking and looking to my colleagues across the floor as to whether they endorse that vision of education or not. I think I would like to get a sense of if they can endorse that or not or if we are in agreement with that, and use that as a footing of where we can go further with our discussions.

The primary responsibilities of the Department of Education are: to provide kindergarten to grade 12 education throughout the Yukon; to provide support and resources for the Individual Learning Centre, the Francophone School Board, distance education, home schooling and students with identified special needs; to promote and support adult training, education, labour force development, adult literacy and immigration; and to provide and administer student financial aid and youth employment training.

Some of the Department of Education's strategic goals are: to support the life-long learning process, including the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills for all Yukon learners so that they might participate effectively in work and in the community; to respect and strengthen the partnership of the Department of Education with teachers, parents, students, First Nation governments, Yukon francophones, Roman Catholic diocese of Whitehorse, labour and business sectors and the larger community, including assisting the Yukon First Nation governments in the implementation of land claims and self-government. An additional goal is to facilitate youth access and transitions to work or post-secondary education through the provision of adult education, training and employment programs, and all the while to manage resources effectively and efficiently.

Those are just some of the goals of the department and some of the initiatives that I will be working toward.

In that respect, we will take efforts to create a more responsive education system that enables all students to succeed. We will take efforts to enhance the transition between different levels of education and training in the world of work, and we will take action to further develop and maintain meaningful relationships with all partners in education. Some of the key initiatives with which we will accomplish and work toward these goals will include the expansion and implementation of new First Nation resources and curriculum, and implementation of new mathematics programs at kindergarten, grade 1, grade 4 and grade 7.

Now I know there is a shudder from some of the folks out there that, oh, oh, there is another new math. Well, I think we can all recognize that as the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin commented earlier, it is important to learn how people learn and to be responsive to that and then how we educate. So we have recognized that numeracy is an incredibly important issue in order to build a progressive and educated population. We are looking at better ways of teaching math, ones that aren't so focused on doing it by rote or just doing it because that is how the textbook says it, but by actually understanding why it is important and why it works the way it does.

Also, with the expansion of literacy programs, we will see the introduction and enhancement of such things as Wilson Reading, the reading recovery program, and other programs throughout the territory.

Given the increasing demand in the labour market for skilled training, there will be continued support for skills and trades training throughout expanded programs and infrastructure at Yukon College.

Now, the budget itself goes into some of these areas in much more specific detail. I look forward to the debate where we can talk about the purpose behind some of these decisions and how that is consistent with the vision and the goals of the Department of Education. I do really appreciate the comments made by the Minister of Justice. Her comments on education were very gratifying and rewarding to hear. Indeed the comments that I've been receiving from the members of the school councils, from people of First Nation ancestry, the people in Whitehorse and people in the community -- they have really appreciated the willingness of the department to respond to some of their needs.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this budget to the Assembly. It puts forward a vision for the future. It includes specifics on how we'll work well with others, how we'll respond to needs, how we'll work to diversify the economy, how to protect the environment and how we'll build the necessary infrastructure that we need for this territory to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, this is a great budget and is consistent with what we took out to the Yukon people in our election platform. It is consistent with what the Yukon electorate endorsed. It is one step in fulfilling all the priorities that we've put forward in the platform. It gives us a great building block for future budgets -- and we will have four more in the term of this government -- to accomplish all the objectives that we put forward. I appreciate a lot of the comments from the members of the opposition -- that there are certainly areas of this budget that can be supported, that there are some good directions. Of course there is always room for improvement. We appreciate hearing those criticisms. That's how we respond and how we work with our departments to respond to the needs in the community, to always and to constantly improve on the services and programs that the government delivers.

I'd like to again thank the citizens and the voters of the beautiful Southern Lakes for re-electing me and for putting their faith in me to carry forward their views, thoughts, opinions and concerns. I believe that this budget goes a long way in addressing many of the concerns brought forward by the citizens in the beautiful Southern Lakes. I commend it to the Assembly, and I would encourage all members of the Assembly to support it.

Thank you.

Mr. Fairclough: Hopefully I won't be taking the allotted time that we all have to respond to this budget and the budget speech, but it may turn out that way. First of all, I too would like to thank the many people who supported me in the election. This is my fourth term and it made me feel good that people did have the confidence in me to elect me again, to even

increase the percentage of votes that I received from the previous election. Thanks go out to them.

This is a big budget. There is a lot in it. As pointed out by my colleagues, there are many things in the budget that we do support -- I would like to get back to that -- although there are some disappointing moves that the Yukon Party made before announcing this budget that have people in a bit of a rage, especially those who are elected, because we are the ones that take this information back into our communities. I'm talking about the pre-announcements of the budget. Our leader here was very clear about how he felt about that matter. A lot of the budget was already announced. So when the Premier read out his budget speech, I think the government itself took a lot of the wind out of the sail of excitement in reading the budget speech.

I have proof of that, too, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't too far into the Premier's budget speech that he put two ministers to sleep. Not only that, I think it also included one of the opposition members. That was something to see. The House was quiet, the gallery emptied out and the media went home. For a newly elected government -- a re-elected government -- and their big budget, that was something else. There was no thumping by the Government House Leader. The budget wasn't grabbing the ministers on the government side of the House, members on this side or even the general public. That says a lot. We are already starting to hear a lot about this budget.

I did say it was a big budget. When the Yukon Party first got elected, in the Premier's 2003-04 speech, there were big, bold words: "controlling the trajectory of spending". It was about government spending at the time. It was a big thing. The Yukon Party felt that we couldn't sustain the spending that government was doing then. Things have changed since then. I think we all recognize that, although the Yukon Party thinks they can fool us into believing that things have changed through their doing. I refer to devolution, for example, in terms of how bringing a couple of hundred people over, along with a big budget, reflects what we have today. A lot of federal government money came to the Yukon that way.

The Premier says that he walked away from the Prime Minister, which resulted in an increase of money coming to the Yukon. Well, that was a good thing. We, on this side of the House, would like to see any leader try to get more for the Yukon, but it is no different from the past. What we have is federal government money being spent in the territory and very little outside activity bringing money in.

I believe that was said in the past, too. One of the things that the government said at the time was that -- I'm quoting right from the document -- "Maintaining the expenditure levels of previous budgets would have put the Government of Yukon in violation of the *Taxpayer Protection Act*, causing another election." Well, we've seen some changes made. The Premier says they were forced by the Auditor General to get into full accrual accounting, which means that we now document all of our assets -- schools, bridges and all the buildings and cars -- as a surplus. So it looks a little different on paper now, and you really can't spend more than what we have in our surplus, but it is not really money that we can go out and spend anyway, so

we will never be in violation of the *Taxpayer Protection Act* and never cause a territorial election as a result of that.

Many people bypassed that and don't really look at exactly what occurred as a result of that. The Yukon Party said they were going to work hard for the public. It's hard work -- I heard the Premier say that today -- and a lot of it means bringing proper bills to the House, and amendments. A lot of it is house-keeping, but can anybody recall one of the very first bills that the Yukon Party brought to the floor of this Legislature? I think we all remember it. It was an *Act to Repeal the Government Accountability Act*. They took the accountability act off and it was no more. There were guidelines in there to guide the government to be accountable for what they do for spending and so on -- that's gone. We will be reminding the public about that also. I feel that it was a big, big move on the government's part to do that.

I did not hear from the members opposite. Most of them have spoken already about -- I'll go to the economy -- about First Nations' input into the economy. But, as I've said before, First Nations are bringing a tremendous amount of money into the territory and they are employing a lot of people in a lot of different fields and a lot of them are right out of Whitehorse, and I think that it is really important to recognize that. There are a few things that I would like to say in regard to that.

The Yukon Party said they were going to work hard and they have worked hard; this budget is a result of hard work. A lot of it, when you go back and look at it, is work done by other people -- the glory taken by the Yukon Party on a number of fronts.

I will give you an example. One of them is devolution. Devolution had a tremendous amount of impact on the Yukon. It gave us control of our lands and resources. It was a big thing. More people are working and are employed under the Yukon government than in the past, and previous governments have worked on this and the Yukon Party did not like a lot of what was in there. There were a couple of things that they did not like about it. One was the dollars earmarked for fire suppression. They were going to fix that. The other one was to have control of our north coast. The Yukon Party was going to fix that. Well, when they got elected it didn't happen. They signed off on the devolution agreement as it was. I would say some changes were made, but none of those major ones that the Yukon Party campaigned on and argued about when on this side of the House. That was a big one.

There are a number of others: the safer communities legislation that was brought forward by the New Democrats, SCAN as it was called; Canada Winter Games. But before I get into Canada Winter Games there is another one in regard to economic development, and it is the Minto mine. It is almost as if, when you hear and listen to what the Yukon Party MLAs and ministers are saying, they are the ones that got this mine going.

It was interesting to hear that because I think they conveniently forgot about the amount of work that went into getting this mine recognized and raising money. I remember this mine when the owners wanted to try to get it into production. I was not an elected member of this House at the time but I remember the person that came to do some PR work, to raise money and

awareness of the Minto mine. His name was Lutz Klingmann and he was straight out of South Africa. When he came to meet with the First Nations he didn't know what it was like up here, what the government structures looked like for First Nations, and he talked about apartheid and so on. I think he was shocked to know the amount of knowledge the First Nations had in regard to the industry, government procedures and so on. It took a few months to teach him about First Nations and their abilities. After that, there were very good relationships with this particular outfit. The First Nations worked hard on it, by themselves. Governments at the time, I believe, had a role in this, but it was the First Nations, I think, that really did the hard work to ensure the pieces were put together so that this mine could go into production. They're feeling that today. Even as a result of that, because of all the discussions that have taken place, the Selkirk First Nation has selected land in and around Minto mines, which I would believe down the road will be part of the mine itself, because the ore body is very rich and is of interest to Sherwood Copper.

Another one was Carmacks Copper. I think I've talked to them probably several times about this already, but the hard work took place not with government so much, but with First Nations and the mining outfits. I think they deserve a lot of credit when it comes to promoting Yukon in that manner.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, if I remember correctly, again with Carmacks Copper, they did a pilot project. I don't know if you remember it, but it was just outside of Carmacks, and they wanted to do a heap leaching project with sulphuric acid, and I think they were doing 40 tonnes of it, enclosed -- very miniature -- to see if, in fact, heap leaching could work and to prove that it could work in the cold weather and see how much of the gold and copper they could get out of the ore in cold weather using that technology. They did and it proved successful. They wanted to raise more money. Because they had a good working relationship with the Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation, on one of their trips over to Europe, just because they had that good working relationship, they raised \$10 million and brought that back.

So, when it comes to mining and mine development and the encouragement to go out and explore for minerals, I think the First Nations play a large role in that -- way before this Yukon Party was in power. As a matter of fact, at that time there was another Yukon Party in government.

I just wanted to raise that, and I know that the Yukon Party and the Premier in his budget speech mentioned the Canada Winter Games. Here was another one that previous governments worked on -- the City of Whitehorse -- to try to get it here, first of all. The City of Whitehorse was successful in their negotiations. Of course it needed government backing, not only the Yukon government but the federal government.

I would say it was a success, although I think that the Yukon government could have done more. Members opposite ask what that could be. Because there are other things that could be coming to the territory and we should learn about how we do things here. One thing is that we could have supported our athletes better. We could have jumped on board and put more government money into things like coaching on a number

of different fronts. I know, Mr. Speaker, that you like boxing. I did watch some of those events. But we had an opportunity to showcase northern sports, with the Inuit and Dene games, and those were really good. Too bad they couldn't be recognized and be housed in the athletes village. We had to work something else out. Those are some things we could be more cognizant about organizing here.

Some of the First Nations were talking about trying to get indigenous games here. That is a big event too. We could definitely learn by experience. We could have supported our athletes more, we could have given them warmer clothing -- that would have been nice -- from the Yukon government instead of a thin shell. When we talk to other athletes, such as from the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, they were provided with all that. There were sealskin mitts and insulated clothes and so on -- free of charge. The athletes here had to pay for it. That is something we could learn from down the road.

Something else is why the communities couldn't have been included more. I know that it is not just the Yukon government. It is also the host society in developing and designing this, but there were outlying communities that, I think, could have benefited from this a lot.

I want to talk about a few more things. One of them, I guess we might as well get into right off the bat: the use of special warrants to keep the government going. The Yukon Party was always against this, and it surprises me that, year after year we continue to see the Yukon Party use these warrants so government can continue to operate. What the Premier could have done was simply call back the Legislature even if it sat for a day and did an interim supply so that we could give the spending authority so the government could continue to pay its employees. It didn't happen, and we heard the Premier say it took hard work to get this budget in front of us; it was a result of hard work. Well, I think the hard work should have been done earlier in December. Normally this is how it goes, Mr. Speaker: by the middle of December the government would have its budget done. It would be fine tuned throughout a month and then sent to the printers so that the House could begin sitting in February -- that early. There is no reason why we had to do all that waiting. I know the Canada Winter Games was a big thing for the territory, but it shouldn't have bumped us off that late.

Like I said, the Legislature could have been called back for a day; we could have dealt with this very simply and moved on and not abused the use of special warrants; not forcing the Commissioner to sign off on warrants to keep the government operating. I think if we wanted to make improvements like the government said, this is one of them. Why not do that? Why not have the sitting start before the end of the fiscal year? Why not make that commitment?

Only unique circumstances would really push us beyond those dates. We were all here taking part and doing our volunteering at the Canada Winter Games but I really believe that we could have done better. We could have sat -- there wasn't a reason why we didn't do it. The budget, in my view, was already complete. The only thing they needed to do was get word from government to change the dates on the material that was already printed up.

It's unfortunate that we had to go through that whole process yet again. We keep bringing that up -- that it's yet again. Part of the problem is that here we are talking about the budget, and we are going to go into June before the final vote on this budget and we are delaying the projects that could have been voted on earlier so we can get people working. Maybe that is part of the problem.

This Yukon Party says that they are good fiscal managers, that they have proved it. I am sure that we are going to go into some debate about the Auditor General's report and how badly projects have been handled in several departments, particularly Highways and Public Works, and where improvements need to be made. I just heard the Minister of Education say that they are looking for that kind of stuff, but the report has been tabled and I am sure that we can debate that now that it has been tabled here in the House.

I do want to talk about some things in my riding and I am hoping that we get around to it.

There are a few big things -- I also want to get into climate change. But in regard to education reform, there are a number of priorities that government has, and the Premier called it a major initiative of the government. How did it result that we had to go to this extent?

Well, if we look at the education forum, if we look back a little bit, I think we can see how we got there, or how the Yukon Party got there. Part of it was that dreadful word the Yukon Party doesn't like to hear. It's about consultation. When you go and meet with or want to make a decision or make some improvements in the communities, you have to consult. If there are issues raised in communities, go and talk with the community about it, the people. I think most of the members opposite have been re-elected, and they can remember issues brought to this floor about concerns in regard to education, say, in the Mayo school and the Carmacks school, about the consultation and the planning process.

When people are not consulted properly on issues that are dear to them, they react, and that's what we saw here outside of this building. There were demonstrations that took place by First Nations, and it should never have gotten to that point. There were two major demonstrations outside of this House. It was so unfortunate that they had to go to that point to try to get government to listen. In dealing with them, respectfully, I don't believe that happened. What ended up happening was a recognition that we had to do something, and the education forum was formed. The education forum committee was formed.

The Yukon Party knew that the *Education Act* was overdue for review. They raised expectations by coming out with this forum, because people wanted to see improvements to the *Education Act*, and this was supposed to be even better, bigger and so on. Of course, I do have questions on that and I hope the Minister of Education is up to speed with it, because when that department comes up, those questions will be asked.

I could bring up more issues, but I just wanted to bring up one issue that the Minister of Justice raised, and it was about the Yukon Party's commitment to protected areas.

I was really surprised about this, because there is no commitment from the Yukon Party for protected areas, other than

following the lead of First Nations that have special management areas. One thing the Minister of Justice raised was the Nordenskiöld special management area that is in the *Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation Final Agreement*. They took credit for it. I couldn't believe it -- they took credit for it. Let me explain a bit about how this special management area was selected in the first place.

Again, it was with a Yukon Party in government. There was no trust for governments at the time. The Nordenskiöld SMA was actually a map notation for Ducks Unlimited. There was a certain amount of protection there already. The map notations are pretty powerful. It is hard to change what's there. The First Nation decided that they would stress the interests and the importance of this area and didn't believe that governments could really protect it. So, they selected land there. It's not just a SMA, it's a land selection. It's huge. That was the result. It was the final agreement that steered this, not the Yukon government.

I am surprised that they are still hanging on to it, because we all know what the Premier's thoughts about protected areas are. I am sure that the members opposite hear about it in the caucus rooms from time to time in chatting with the Premier. He will say it over and over again. This is how he sees it. He would like to log it first, mine it second, drill it third, pave it and then protect it. That's what he keeps saying. That is the way I think that the Yukon Party operates. They dislike the protected areas strategy. That is gone forever. It is not going to be resurrected by anyone. Maybe something new will come along. Those are the lines he uses: log it, mine it, drill it, pave it and then protect it.

Unfortunately now we're relying on First Nations to come up with habitat protection and special management areas to support that.

The Leader of the Official Opposition listed a number of things that we could support in this budget. Over the years this Yukon Party government has put money into my riding that I said I support. Although I am not going to be supporting this budget, there are items in there that I support -- quite a few of them. I'm not going to list them all, but there are some. The immediate ones that come to mind are the extra monies that are going into Mayo for the completion of the Mayo recreation centre. I do have questions about that, because there was already an opening and it was completed. I really want to know exactly what this money is for. I believe it is for improvements and changes to the ice-making equipment.

The \$1.7 million for the small-diameter-pipe water project for Selkirk First Nation -- I was hoping that because Selkirk First Nation and Little Salmon-Carmacks First Nation work together on these projects, they would have the same project for each community. They both need piped water, but only one got some funding to start. I do have questions on that one too, Mr. Speaker, because I believe the project is way overbudget already by \$1.5 million, before they even got started on any of the smaller contracts.

Here's one the community of Carmacks has wanted to see for a long time -- we've gone through many mayors and many governments here in the territory too, and it still hasn't been

done -- and that's the sewage treatment project for Carmacks. Again, this is \$764,000. It's definitely not the entire cost of the project. That, as well, we will have questions on.

Now, my colleagues have voiced their support for many things, and one that we've all agreed to here in the Legislature was the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* in dealing with drug dealing and so on. I believe I talked about this in my riding and my communities when this was debated in the House. Maybe another time we will be debating this and I can go into some detail. But, obviously, the communities are concerned about this -- the different kinds of drugs that are affecting community members and so on.

The \$478,000 for a street crime reduction team -- I was told that there are six RCMP assigned to it. I believe there are two additional RCMP of the six that would be hired on.

The Outreach van -- support for that.

The \$1.1 million to assist museums and First Nation cultural centres is supported by us on this side of the House. I did want to make mention, though, of the Canada Winter Games -- and I'm going to try to find it here. The support that went into the first week to showcase northern culture and so on -- that was, I would say, a fairly big success and many of the First Nations across the territory put their booths together and got some crafts on the tables for sale and so on. I just wanted to talk about one of those items that was made by a constituent of mine and her mother.

They had a jacket made of moosehide. It was a home-tanned hide. It had a lot of beadwork on it. It had beaver skin on it, and someone who came into the tent -- I think he was from Ontario -- tried on the jacket and it fit perfectly and was something he liked. It was his style and so on. The price tag on that jacket was \$5,000 and he bought it -- just like that. I think it surprised the person who made it that it went right away. There were two other big items that sold a lot in that tent: fur hats and moosehide mitts. A lot of those items sold because it was so cold out and we couldn't keep our volunteers warm in those thin orange shells they had. Surprisingly enough, one orange shell that was given to a volunteer was traded for a full outfit from one of the Nunavut athletes, and I was surprised at that because those orange shells weren't that attractive to me. But it is a memory for others who are not from here.

It was too bad that the minister couldn't have made a decision at that point to continue to fund this cultural activity for another week. That tent was always full, Mr. Speaker.

The other things we support are: monies to arts groups; the whole child initiative; \$1.2 million to the fish and wildlife habitat surveys. There are a lot of them.

I just want to bring a couple of things up and I hope you give me a few minutes, Mr. Speaker. One of them is really important, and I know this is important to government too. I heard the Minister of Economic Development say yesterday, "Over the past four years we have channelled all of our efforts and energy into turning the territory around into an economic powerhouse." Under the Yukon Party there has not been one major mine open up, but there will be this summer -- Minto Resources.

There is a lot of activity in the mining sector in and around the Carmacks and Pelly areas, and I wanted to bring this out again. It is no news to the members opposite but it is an issue in the community. Some people say that the amount of activity that is taking place around Mount Nansen/Freegold is equal or greater than the activity that is happening in Dawson right now. I believe that, with the amount of traffic that is going out there. The issue that is going to be facing the community of Carmacks right now is the bypass road, the single-lane bridge that seems to be sloughing in. It is going to be a problem with heavier trucks going across.

We have brought many issues out to the members opposite -- I have two minutes -- and it was not reflected here. One of them that I wanted to mention again is the recreation centre in Carmacks. When are we going to get to stage 2 to complete this? When are we going to move the highway camp away from downtown Carmacks into the lot that is already identified by the Department of Highways and Public Works? I've got issues with the new school and with the old one.

In Pelly Crossing, of course, they have been asking governments to help them deal with the bootlegging issue. It's a big, big problem there. But what they are really looking forward to, for improvements to the community, is the transmission line, and we definitely support that.

If I talk to people in Mayo, the biggest issue that would be discussed there right now is the problems with our education system.

I asked the Minister of Highways and Public Works to look into some simple things for Stewart Crossing, like improvements to the highway to make it safe for the kids, to look at putting in some street lights, and so on.

Here is another one for the Minister of Health and Social Services -- I know I don't have much time. I did ask him to look at making some equipment purchases for nursing stations across the territory, and this issue was brought to me by a doctor. He asked for simple things. One of them was the small, portable ultrasound machines that, if they were purchased and put into the nursing stations, would save government money by simply not having these patients travel. The diagnosis could take place right in the communities themselves. I will bring this up during departmental debate.

Thank you.

Mr. Nordick: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start off by saying that I am in support of this budget. I would also like to thank the people in my riding of Klondike for the opportunity to represent them.

This budget, the first of this mandate, is a significant one. It totals over \$860 million. I would like to acknowledge the time and effort the department has put toward the creation of this budget.

This budget touches on all of our government's four main pillars. One, it will help Yukoners achieve a better quality of life. Two, it will help protect and preserve our environment and help adapt to climate change. Three, it will promote a strong, diverse private sector economy. Four, it will prove that this

government practices good, cooperative governance with strong fiscal management.

Mr. Speaker, I will give a few examples of the many ways we are achieving a better quality of life for Yukoners. One of the ways, with the help of thousands of Yukon volunteers, is that we made the 2007 Canada Winter Games a tremendous success. The games gave the Yukon an opportunity to showcase the north to the south. During the games, I took pride in seeing the people from my riding volunteering and also enjoying the Canada Winter Games. I would like to thank all the volunteers in the Yukon, for without them we would not be experiencing the benefits attributed to the Games today and into the future.

Another example is our government's introduction of two major enforcement action items from our substance abuse action plan. The first was the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*. Since opening the SCAN office, it has received over 65 complaints, resulting in five evictions under the act. This is improving the quality of life of Yukoners, and \$400,000 of this budget will be spent on the SCAN office.

The second action under the substance abuse action plan was the establishment of the RCMP street crime reduction team, which became operational in April 2007. This team of six police officers will make a significant difference and will help Yukoners achieve a better quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, we are going ahead with a new correctional facility, and \$3.24 million has been allocated for this project.

The community wellness court is another initiative resulting from our government's substance abuse action plan. The court will provide a comprehensive treatment plan that will include judicial supervision, substance abuse treatment, drug testing initiatives and sanctions, clinical case management and social services support. There is \$523,000 being provided for the operation of the community wellness court.

I am also pleased that our government is funding Dawson community group conferencing. This restorative justice program is vital for our community. The Women's Directorate is providing \$108,000 to enhance skills development to effectively work with women and children who experience sexualized violence. The Women's Directorate is also introducing a \$175,000 women's equality funding program that will enhance social, legal and economic equality for women and girls.

Our government is committed to providing new incentives to increase the labour pool for entry level jobs in the service industry. We will begin a program in May 2007 that targets initiatives for older workers. This will run for two years. The target initiative for older workers will recruit 140 individuals between the ages of 55 and 65 who want help developing employment skills. We are also targeting immigrant workers. We have budgeted \$200,000 to develop, in conjunction with the federal government, an immigration portal and on-line resource to effectively provide immigration information to potential immigrants. These initiatives will help with the shortage of workers and will benefit the tourism and mining industries.

Mr. Speaker, our government has committed \$270,000 for the school of visual arts in Dawson City. This is a partnership with the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture, Yukon College

and the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation. I am excited to be involved in this initiative and believe that this is a positive partnership that will benefit the Klondike and the Yukon.

We are committed to support NGOs that offer support and services to elders, seniors and other Yukoners. Some examples are \$46,000 for the Options for Independence, and \$103,000 for the Yukon Family Services Association Outreach van to expand services.

We are committed to work with the federal government, First Nations and community governments to upgrade and construct high-quality community infrastructure.

There is \$1 million for the Dawson City sewage treatment plant in the budget; \$792,000 to address infrastructure needs in Dawson City is also in the budget; \$9.7 million is being spent out of the municipal infrastructure fund program; \$7.3 million is being spent from the Canadian strategic infrastructure funding program.

Arts, culture and heritage play a significant role in the social and economic life of all Yukoners. \$500,000 is being provided for the arts fund that supports artists and communities; \$1.5 million is provided for art groups and art initiatives, such as the one in my riding, Dawson City Arts Society, and the Yukon Arts Centre. These are just small examples of the many initiatives our government is undertaking to ensure that all Yukoners achieve a better quality of life.

We are protecting and preserving our environment and wildlife while studying, mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change. We have a climate change strategy with four goals and the climate change action plan is currently underway. \$145,000 is being allocated in this budget for the action plan, which will outline specific actions and initiatives. Increased monitoring, data collection and research on the impacts of climate change on wildlife species are needed and we are budgeting \$1.285 million to meet the need.

Along with data collection and research, we will work with stakeholders to develop an interjurisdictional harvest management plan to address the conservation needs of the Porcupine caribou herd. We are also working with the Na Cho Nyak Dun, Tr'ondek Hwech'in and Tetlit Gwich'in First Nations to conduct surveys to identify new key areas in the Peel River watershed planning region for sheep and moose winter range areas and to improve our knowledge of the Hart River caribou range.

Mr. Speaker, our government is expanding our celebrating Yukon parks program. This will raise the profile and public awareness of Yukon's territorial parks. We will deliver interpretive programs, information presented by uniformed, seasonal parks branch staff. \$750,000 is budgeted for celebrating Yukon parks.

In December 2006, Yukon's unemployment rate was as low as 2.5 percent and the lowest in Canada the month before. Mining exploration in the Yukon has increased over \$80 million in 2006 and most likely will increase in 2007. The mining industry in the Yukon has turned around and this affects all of us significantly.

The Yukon has risen from 21st place last year to 11th place this year for the most attractive places for mining investment.

These are a direct result of the Yukon Party government's third pillar to promote a diverse private sector economy.

Placer mining is the backbone of our mining industry and we have budgeted \$480,000 to fund the final year of the placer secretariat. We will see the new placer regime for the Yukon completed.

While mining is a backbone of our economy, tourism places a strategic part in the Yukon's economy. We cannot ignore the key role that tourism plays and will continue to play in the economy. One of the ways we are promoting tourism is through marketing Destination: Yukon. This promotional campaign helps raise awareness of the Yukon as a quality travel destination to potential tourists from southern Canada, the U.S. and Europe. As well, the Yukon tourism brand promotes Yukon as an attractive year-round destination.

Mr. Speaker, \$500,000 is allocated to marketing projects, trade shows and consumer shows administered by the Tourism Association of the Yukon. Another major initiative is the Look Up North national marketing campaign. This is a \$5-million joint campaign with our sister territories to promote Canada's north as a great place to visit, to invest and to live. \$400,000 is allocated to continue this major initiative. The Department of Tourism and Culture is also providing \$200,000 to the Yukon Convention Bureau for cooperative marketing initiatives.

Rubber-tire traffic provides a major part of the Yukon tourism traffic. The Yukon scenic drives initiative that started in 2004 attracts this important market. People can get travel information from the Web site www.travel yukon.com, which is dedicated to providing travel information.

Four Yukon highways -- the Alaska Highway, the Klondike-Kluane loop, the Golden Circle route, and the Silver Trail are on the Web site. Other highways -- the Dempster Highway, the Campbell-Canol route, and Southern Lakes will be added this spring. Production of a direct mail-out piece promoting Yukon scenic drives will accompany the Web site. \$400,000 is allocated to support the Yukon scenic drives initiative.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the member opposite from the third party, I do want the territory to grow. With the partnerships we have established with the First Nations and industry, we can grow and protect the environment at the same time.

Another interesting project in my area is the construction of the Tombstone visitor reception centre, which speaks to the partnership I just spoke of. Phase 1 of this \$1.8 million multi-year project will begin this year. The visitor reception centre will make the Tombstone one of the premier parks and tourist facilities in the Yukon.

The Department of Highways and Public Works and the Department of Environment are working with the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation to construct the new centre. This initiative will provide construction jobs and generate seasonal positions to operate the centre. It will create park access opportunities for tourism operators in conjunction with the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation.

Airline services are especially important for people to access this great territory of ours. There are a few key airlines that the Department of Tourism and Culture has developed

partnerships with: Air North, Air Canada, as well as we have Condor Airlines flying in from Germany.

To support this important air traffic, \$6 million is being invested in a new terminal building at the Whitehorse International Airport. \$3.2 million is being provided to complete phase 2 of the Whitehorse Airport parking lot.

Likewise, Yukon must invest in upgrades to highways and bridge infrastructure. Some of the improvements include \$1.3 million for production and application of gravel to the Dempster Highway to improve the road surface.

Mr. Speaker, in our 2006 platform, we committed to maintain the community development fund, and \$3.312 million is being provided. Recent benefits from the community development fund in my riding include up to \$14,000 for a jigsaw puzzle art school promotion to promote Yukon as a destination for arts and culture, specifically Dawson City and KIAC school of visual arts. Another example -- the Dawson City Chamber of Commerce received \$19,000 to develop a strategic plan. Another example is the Gold Panning Association received up to \$17,000 to purchase portable bleachers and picnic tables for the World Gold Panning Championships to be held in Dawson City this fall.

In the area of good governance this budget sees \$450,000 going toward the development of the First Nation tourism strategy and associated business support program. The aim of these initiatives is to develop tourism as part of the First Nations overall economic development strategies. As well, \$1.875 million is allocated for community-based heavy equipment operations and road maintenance training.

In closing, I would like to reconfirm to my constituents that planning is proceeding for a recreational facility and a new multi-level care facility for seniors in Dawson City.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Speaker: I await your pleasure, gentlemen and ladies.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I see the tremendous interest from members opposite in debating the budget.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: If a member has the floor, the other members will be quiet. Do we understand this principle? Do we understand the principle, ladies and gentlemen? Do we understand the principle?

We understand.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would like to begin my remarks on the 2007-08 budget by once again expressing my appreciation to my constituents for the opportunity to continue working with them and to continue representing them as their MLA.

In this, the first budget of our new mandate, it is a real pleasure to continue to be part of a team and to move forward in taking a proactive, productive, positive approach to addressing the challenges that we face in the Yukon as a society and as a government, and for coming up with real and positive solutions to ensure that together our territory moves forward and continues to develop into a place that represents the needs and

the desires of Yukon citizens, that provides us with strong health care and that creates the framework for opportunity and prosperity of all its citizens.

As well, in commencing my remarks, I would like to thank the Premier for the opportunity to continue serving as the Minister of Health and Social Services, the minister responsible for the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board and the Government House Leader, and to thank my caucus colleagues for their continued support in our working relationship.

Before launching into my remarks pertaining to areas in which, as minister, I am working with officials on behalf of my constituents and indeed all Yukoners, I would like to begin by highlighting a few areas in this budget that are specific to my constituents.

I would like to thank the Minister of Highways and Public Works for confirming that his department will be continuing the resurfacing of the Mayo Road in this fiscal year. This has been very important to many of my constituents and I thank him for agreeing to that request and allocating the funding for that purpose.

I would like to thank the same minister in his capacity as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources for the continued work he and his department are doing to implement the new agriculture policy and to ensure the successful operation of our new red-meat abattoir. As well, thanks for their continued work helping Yukoners access land and get their own little chunk of this territory we all so dearly love.

I would also like to thank the Minister of Community Services for his and his department's continued support for upgrading the equipment for the volunteer fire departments. In January, it was a pleasure to take part in the delivery to the Ibx volunteer fire department of a brand new \$185,000 fire tanker truck to replace the old pumper truck, estimated to be something like 1978-vintage. In the new one, there is a 300-horsepower diesel engine and a 1,500-gallon fire tank.

As well, I would like to thank that minister for the continued support for the domestic water well drilling program, which a number of my constituents have used. I am very proud that our government has implemented this program and is continuing to invest in providing that program for Yukoners.

With regard to that program, the one area of frustration, on which I would urge the City of Whitehorse to work with us, is to accept the offer made by our government to provide funding to allow that program to be delivered within city limits. It is very frustrating for my constituents in Hidden Valley and MacPherson who do not have access to that service. I know that the minister and his department have done their work in offering the funding and support for an identical program inside city limits. I would urge Whitehorse and all councillors to once again reconsider this and accept it on behalf of our mutual constituents.

The 2007-08 budget is a very large budget, as you know, and in the area of Health and Social Services we have a total budget allocation for the first time of over the \$200-million mark for operation and maintenance. That is specifically \$200.9 million. It is the largest budget for this department in

Yukon history and represents an increase, mains to mains, of operation and maintenance funding over last fiscal year of \$25.28 million. This represents a total increase versus last year's mains budget of 14.4 percent.

The capital budget has also increased to \$12.9 million, just shy of \$13 million, representing a \$5-million increase over last year, or 62.9 percent. I should also point out for members and for those listening, that the total allocation for the Department of Health and Social Services represents a total of merely 31 percent of the total operation and maintenance budget. This is clear evidence of our government's commitment to investing in our health system, our social services, and our partnerships with NGOs.

We are committed to maintaining and enhancing, where possible, the Yukon's health care system and our social safety net. The priority will be placed on investing in initiatives such as our health and human resources strategy, our substance abuse action plan, our five-step FASD action plan, and health promotion activities including an increased focus on nutrition and healthy living and other areas where action today will improve health and social outcomes and reduce both human and economic costs in years to come. We want to deal with problems proactively or, in another manner of speaking, to deal with the costs upstream rather than waiting to address the downstream costs in years to come.

In 2006-07, we created the new \$12.7-million health human resources strategy. Under this strategy we have implemented programs including a family physician incentive program, which provides financial assistance to recent medical school graduates in exchange for five years of service in the Yukon. The total amount for each applicant available in three payments over that time is \$50,000.

Second, the medical education bursary supports Yukon students attending medical school, in the amount of \$10,000 per year. If those students then enter medical residency in a Yukon family practice after graduation, they are eligible for an additional \$15,000 per year.

Third under the strategy is our nursing education bursary. We doubled the financial support of the previously existing bursary to a new level of \$5,000 per year, and made the program available to twice as many applicants. Also under the health and human resources strategy, we have our new health profession education bursary which supports Yukoners training for health professions, including pharmacy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech language pathology and audiology, medical laboratory, medical radiology, dietetics and nutrition and licensed practical nursing. \$5,000 per year per applicant is available under that program.

Next we have the announcement that I made earlier this month of the new nurse mentoring program, which will allow experienced nurses to train newer nurses, assisting in the knowledge transfer and training. This will be complemented shortly by the social worker mentoring program, which will assist in a similar manner in that area.

Future initiatives under our health human resources strategy will include our commitment to working with health pro-

professionals to establish a collaborative practice clinic as a pilot project.

Last year we announced increases to the medical travel subsidy rates from \$30 per day to a new level of \$75 per day for travel outside the territory and we made that subsidy effective on the second day rather than on the fourth day as had previously been the case.

As well, we increased the in-territory subsidy for rural residents travelling to Whitehorse for hospital and specialist services from the previous level of 18.5 cents per kilometre to 30 cents per kilometre. For the first time we made this coverage available to Yukoners living outside of municipal areas, including some of my constituents.

I would like to once again express my thanks to the dedicated staff of Health and Social Services for the hard work they have done in working with me as minister and that they do every day on behalf of Yukon citizens, in keeping our system operating and remaining strong. We truly have one of the best health care systems and social safety nets nationwide. We are in a unique situation whereas most jurisdictions from coast to coast are facing the reality of cutbacks in health services and access. We are in fact expanding that, and we are working at new programs and new complements to our system through which we intend to ensure that the Yukon's system continues to improve over the years and is never forced into the situation that other areas nationwide are dealing with. We want to continue to enhance the services to our citizens, and improvement of access will continue to be a high priority.

I want to thank the staff of Health and Social Services, not only for the efforts they have put in, but the work that is commencing that they are working on now -- the next phases of the initiatives I mentioned earlier -- as well as moving forward on several major new initiatives. These new initiatives include expanding services to families of children with extreme disabilities similar to the programming we put in place to assist the families of children with autism; planning for the future needs of continuing care and home care; development of a new palliative care program in partnership with Hospice Yukon.

Other new initiatives include a comprehensive review currently underway of our social assistance program which includes a review of adequacy and rates; but it goes far beyond that in actually addressing the challenges within the system, focusing on reducing impediments that prevent those on social assistance from entering the workforce such as lack of training and financial disincentives, and focuses on identifying those and ultimately putting the programming in place, through either Health and Social Services or linkages with other departments, such as Education, to ensure that we help those people transition into the workforce and have the opportunity of having a gainful, sustainable employment and to grow and prosper.

As well, we are conducting a comprehensive review of our childcare programs, including the funding arrangements, to meet our platform commitments in that area. Additional work includes the completion of the *Children's Act* review, which I remind members is a landmark process and brand new initiative that has been very successful. It has taken a little longer than expected but has ultimately been very successful in mov-

ing forward with First Nations and resolving areas that have been a source of some dissatisfaction for some decades. We want to ensure that the Yukon system, to the best extent possible, reflects the needs and interests of its residents, including recognizing the issues that First Nation governments have with the programming. We want to work with them whenever possible. We are very pleased that we have been able to do so in this area and look forward to tabling that legislation as soon as it is completed.

Another new area is using the federal investment of \$4.5 million over three years to establish a wait-time guarantee for mammography screening, as per the commitment I made and announced earlier this month. As well, as noted at that time, the funding will enable us to enhance other services for Yukoners, which we will announce at a later date. Breast cancer is a major cause of death nationwide. It is the leading cause of cancer among women. Early detection is key to successful treatment, which is why the mammography screening is so key in ensuring a successful health outcome.

In the 2006-07 fiscal year, I was pleased, as minister, to work with NGOs, including the Yukon Family Services Association, to support the Outreach van for a total of \$109,000 operation and maintenance funding from my department, complemented by \$50,000 in operation and maintenance funding from the Women's Directorate, plus an allocation under Health and Social Services of \$20,000 worth of capital for a new van. This has supported them moving to service six nights a week.

Other NGOs that we have worked with, and look forward to continue working with, include the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Society of Yukon and the Child Development Centre, and relate to the implementation of our five-step FASD action plan and supporting Autism Yukon for the first time in 2006-07 and continuing forward.

Those are but a few of the many NGOs that we work with on a daily basis through the Department of Health and Social Services. I look forward to continuing working with those NGOs and others on enhancing the services that we collectively provide to Yukoners, as well as dealing with them in addressing the challenges of operations. I recognize that dealing with their programming is often very challenging for NGOs. We look forward to working with them to address their issues. We will be reviewing those needs and working with them in other areas where we may be able to complement them and assist, as they assist us in delivering these services to Yukoners in a very cost-effective and, in some cases, a more appropriate and effective manner than we would be able to do through the department.

We recognize there are some areas uniquely suited to NGO delivery, just as there are other areas that only a formal government department structure could deliver and, in fact, I believe we deliver very well within our system.

Although I do not wish to spend a lot of time dwelling on negative comments from members opposite, I think it's important to point out that the Yukon system -- the quality of programming we provide in Health and Social Services, including the work we do with the NGOs, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the partnerships we engage in with other community

groups and individuals -- the level of service that is provided by staff is second to none nation wide. We do provide an excellent system.

Our Health and Social Services staff and social workers deal with very challenging areas under their portfolios and their areas of responsibility, for which they receive very little credit, but are tremendously important to reducing the downstream costs of the challenges people face, whether they be in the areas of family and children's services or dealing with other areas relating to children, mental health issues, or the many other areas under their responsibility. This, of course, is just one small area of the Department of Health and Social Services.

There is the work that is done by our community health nurses and by our staff in dealing with our enhanced nutrition programming in the areas related to chronic disease prevention. This is to name but a few. I would be here all day if I were to name the many areas provided for by the department.

I do want to highlight, particularly in light of comments from members opposite, that while there are always areas in which we can enhance our system, Yukoners should be very proud of what we have here today. It is a great pleasure as minister responsible to work with staff in delivering those programming areas in social services and, of course, on the health side, in expanding and enhancing the programming we have there and improving access to care in a timely manner.

I would like to also touch on some of the other initiatives we are moving forward on, just as an example for members so they can understand some of the work that is ongoing on a daily basis in the department today. These include the new focus that we have put in place within our new office of quality and risk management. This office will lead and direct the development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation of quality assurance, quality improvement and risk management activities throughout the department. The intent of these activities are: to lead to increased client satisfaction, including through improved service provision and a consistent level of service throughout the department; increased value for taxpayers; increased staff morale resulting in better recruitment and retention; and promoting sustainability through waste reduction and better management of risk.

As indicated under the territorial health access fund, we are moving forward on areas including working with the Hospice Yukon Society on the implementation of a palliative care support program. We have created positions for a palliative care coordinator and a palliative care volunteer coordinator and we look forward to implementing this program.

As announced earlier, we have expanded our support for mental health initiatives, including the creation of a mental health rural clinician position, based out of Dawson City, to assist rural Yukoners dealing with mental health issues. We will also be moving forward with implementation under the territorial health access fund of early psychosis intervention. This new program will increase awareness, diagnosis, management, treatment and support for young people with early psychosis. This will include increased referrals, assessments and treatment plans for young people with potential psychotic disorders, including increasing services for clients, families and

caregivers, increasing the capacity of clinical staff to be up to date with knowledge, policy development and clinical interventions, and an increased capacity with clients and families to engage in mutual aid and support for each other.

Under our new healthier eating nutrition program we will be working at supporting healthier eating among Yukoners through a variety of activities, including educational sessions, workshops and materials for the public, health care providers and educators, a media public education campaign, and delivering food safe programs. This will involve enhancing our working partnerships with schools, restaurants, NGOs, increased support for school health initiatives, and promoting community actions such as food co-ops. Special efforts will be made through the rural communities to promote healthier eating among high-risk individuals through referrals, individual counselling, information sessions and workshops, training tools and programs for health providers.

As well, I would like to mention for the members opposite that this includes the support that we have provided to the Anti-Poverty Coalition to assist them in doing a feasibility study of the need for a food bank in the Yukon. We look forward to hearing the results of that. The report, at this time, has not been presented to me.

Other areas under the territorial health access fund that we will be enhancing include improving the support for tuberculosis prevention and investment in emergency preparedness planning, the focus of being ready for a pandemic, whether that be for influenza or some other virus. History and epidemiologists tell us this will occur at some point. This is something we are addressing simply as part of doing our due diligence to ensure that, whether this occurs next year or 40 years from now, the steps are taken to put in place a comprehensive and effective plan to address this challenge when it occurs.

I should also point out that this area involves significant work with the Department of Community Services related to their responsibilities for emergency measures and it involves, in fact, every department of the government to ensure continuity and business plans are there for any type of emergency, so that government is well-prepared to handle it. There should be consistent understanding among all the staff of their responsibilities and appropriate actions related to that.

In this fiscal year, we have created a number of new positions in the Department of Health and Social Services to enhance a variety of services to the public. These include positions responding to increased service demands in the areas of children in care, family support services, adoption, foster care, supported independent living, adult protection, health promotion and community nursing.

As I referenced earlier, partnerships with NGOs are very important to us. Some areas to which we have provided support include four-year funding to the Outreach van, assisting them with their expanded services, an increase to the Foster Parent Association of \$5,000, an increase to the Line of Life of \$15,000, and an increase to CNIB, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, of \$13,000, and increased support to Options for Independence in the amount of \$46,000. And there is our partnership with the Rick Hansen Foundation. It was a real

pleasure, of course, to meet Mr. Hansen and to engage with him in the development of their program that we are assisting him in funding. We will provide them with \$20,000 a year for the next five years as per their request.

Other areas under the Department of Health and Social Services include moving forward with our substance abuse action plan, including the five-step FASD action plan. I would point out for members opposite that in fact all the Health and Social Services initiatives related to the five-step FASD action plan have now been implemented, and we will be working to enhance those areas. Health and Social Services has worked cooperatively under the substance abuse action plan with local pharmacies to restrict the availability of cold medicines that are used in the production of crystal methamphetamine, and that of course was the issue of certain types that previously were available on the aisles that now require a specific request, and that enables pharmacies to track that.

Additional areas related to the substance abuse action plan will include work on our responsibilities related to treatment, and that includes continuing to implement the in-patient alcohol and drug treatment programs that we offer at the Sarah Steele treatment centre, as well as working with First Nation governments, NGOs and other stakeholders to develop more treatment centres and programming throughout the territory. This will include working with the community court that is jointly handled primarily under the lead of the Department of Justice but is supported by the Department of Health and Social Services. The community court is a therapeutic, alternative court that deals with offenders with alcohol or drug additions, symptoms of FASD and/or mental health issues. It is focused on that and essentially it is aimed at providing an opportunity for those who take responsibility for their actions to access treatment rather than be convicted.

The continued implementation of our five-step FASD action plan, as I referred to earlier, includes the five steps that I will outline again for members. It includes: prevention and promotion programs to eliminate alcohol consumption by high-risk parents in order to foster the birth of healthy babies; early diagnosis of FASD before the age of six; supporting people and families with FASD through a wide range of services such as professional counselling and foster homes in order to provide a stable and nurturing home environment; enhancing supportive living arrangements of adults with FASD; and supporting a diagnostic team of professionals trained in personal counselling and social work/health to provide services to Yukon schools in order to provide support for FASD students and their families.

As well, the Yukon is a partner in the Canadian Northwest FASD Partnership, which is composed of the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba and the three northern territories. This is, in fact, a partnership that is rather unusual in the world. It is being looked to by other jurisdictions outside of our borders and overseas. It is a new method of governments working together cooperatively on a coordinated approach to research and to sharing that research across jurisdictions to identify and address fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

Mr. Speaker, I will be rather brief in my remarks as I look forward to debating much of this during the debate in Committee of the Whole related to my budget in the Department of Health and Social Services. I would just like to identify a few remaining areas that I did not address earlier related to the implementation and continuing care of the Watson Lake multi-level care facility, the construction of that facility and, of course, the work that I look forward to in partnership with the officials in the Department of Health and Social Services and the member for the riding of Klondike, in moving forward with the next stages of the continuing care facility, the multi-level care facility in Dawson City.

Another area that I did not address earlier is the continued work that is being done by officials in the department in accessing the Canada Health Infoway programming and funding, which is a system that enables us to implement compatible electronic health information systems that support a safer, more efficient health care system. In fact, the Yukon has implemented more projects under the Canada Health Infoway that either of the other two territories and, in some cases, we have implemented more than some of the provinces have.

The goal of the electronic health record is to implement systems such as better tracking of prescription drugs and, ultimately, the sharing of patient information with those health care providers who need to see that information and to eliminate issues such as relevant information in a patient's file not being passed on. Another problem might seem rather minor to some, but it causes a statistically significant number of problems nationwide -- doctors writing out prescriptions and with the infamous doctors' handwriting, e-prescribing can ensure that, between the doctor and the pharmacist, there are no mistakes made. It reduces the health impact of wrong prescriptions being given. Most importantly, in the other areas of the health record, it will enable us to properly ensure that the full range of information that needs to be shared is shared with the health providers. This will enable the patient to get the treatment they need without having errors such as a lack of identification of allergies or other unknown problems not being passed on.

This is something that is considered nationwide to be a revolutionary step in health care. It will also enable us all to reduce our costs within the system.

Pointing to an example, such as Ontario's investment in reducing wait times, the pilot project they implemented addressed -- I believe it was -- 55 hospitals, and it covered 14 surgeons. Simply by identifying the wait times they had, first and foremost it provided the information to the ministry that they never had before and allowed them to understand what the wait-lists were and where, and where there was capacity in the system for certain surgical procedures to perform more, and where there were wait-lists, and to move patients to where it was needed.

It allowed, of course, the hospitals and health professionals to make that determination themselves through accessing the system, looking at the wait-list or lack of a wait-list, and it resulted in improved efficiency of services. In the specific procedures they focused on, they achieved a 27-percent reduction in the wait-lists for those procedures and received a four-percent

reduction for all other types of surgeries. So it was certainly a very successful program.

I would note that this is just one of the examples that have occurred in provinces since taking action in this area. It is, of course, complemented and assisted by federal funding in this area.

This focus on wait times is something that the Yukon is, of course, a part of. Our commitment, as I said earlier, to a wait-time guarantee will be another step forward in that area. Of the 10 procedures that have been identified and agreed to at the federal/provincial/territorial health table, the Yukon does not provide many. We are not able to do so in the territory, but for the ones that we do provide, we are well within the medically acceptable benchmarks. We look forward to continuing to focus on this, including improving our access to services outside the territory wherever possible.

The reality is and will continue to be for the foreseeable future that, due to issues such as the number of patients, cost and availability of health professionals, the Yukon will not be able to provide certain procedures for awhile. They are provided in a province of, say, three million people, only at one centre. We will be forced to continue our very positive relationship with other provinces, and we thank Alberta and B.C. for this. We gain access to these services primarily through hospitals in Vancouver, Edmonton and Calgary.

Speaker: Order please.

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

Debate on Bill No. 6 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.