

Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, May 2, 2007 -- 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House that Motion No. 103, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane, has been removed from the Order Paper, because the action called for in the motion has been taken.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

Introduction of visitors.

Are there returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a document dated March 16, a letter sent to the education reform co-chairs, signed by Chief Joe Linklater, Chair of the Chiefs Committee on Education; Liard McMillan, Chief of the Liard First Nation; and me, Minister of Education.

Speaker: Are there any further documents for tabling?

Reports of committees.

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Notices of motion.

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow the law by actually producing the state of the environment report that is required under the *Environment Act*.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?

Is there a statement by a minister?

Hearing none, that brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Air quality in government buildings

Mr. Mitchell: I have some questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Last week, we heard in this House how the Thomson Centre will not be reopening on schedule, thanks to recurring problems with mould. The minister didn't bother to tell workers or the public about this health hazard. He kept this information from the public.

Can the minister tell the House whether there are any other facilities that also have mould problems?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would point out to the member opposite that air quality monitoring is something that is done in all government buildings on a regular basis, as per the policies. I'd again remind the member, as I've reminded members in this

House, that any employee, whether of government or the private sector, has the opportunity to complain to occupational health and safety branch and ask for action if they believe that there is an issue related to air quality or anything else that might be threatening their health, and occupational health and safety branch will follow up with that.

Mr. Mitchell: For the minister's information, the children's receiving home run by the Health and Social Services department is having the same problems. It's quite disturbing that this minister seems to think these health risks should not be disclosed to the public, especially to workers who have to put up with these unsafe conditions every day. It is my understanding that Property Management Agency has recently looked into the situation and is deciding what to do next. This is an important matter that the minister should be on top of if he's doing his job.

When did the minister know about this health risk and when was he planning to tell the public about it?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I would urge the Leader of the Official Opposition to be a little more correct on the facts that he brings forward and to represent to the public, in fact, that air quality is dealt with by the experts. I'm not an expert on air quality, nor is the member opposite. These matters are reviewed and it is determined by the experts whether there is in any way, shape or form a risk to employees. If there is a risk, appropriate action is taken and will be taken.

Mr. Mitchell: This Health and Social Services minister's defence is as weak as the Vancouver Canucks in the third period.

It's my understanding that this problem actually began last summer and that mould tests were done at that time. Perhaps the minister could start by making the results of those tests public. Over the winter the problem became worse after some pipes broke and caused extensive water damage. Employees have been off work and now more tests are being done.

When did the minister know about this problem, and why was he hiding it from the public?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I would urge the Leader of the Official Opposition to be a little less inflammatory in his questions and a little more constructive in debate.

These matters are followed up on when an issue is made apparent. Occupational health and safety branch follows up and/or the Yukon government's internal air quality monitoring occurs on an ongoing basis. If there is any risk to employees, we immediately take action to address it. I would remind the member opposite that the experts in air quality have reviewed this, and neither he nor I have the qualifications necessary to make that determination.

Question re: Childcare funding

Mr. Mitchell: I have a question for the Minister of Finance. This minister has been quite busy lately bragging about the largest budget in Yukon history. There is all of this money on hand and yet the budget contains no increases for our childcare system. The minister is sitting with \$85 million in the bank, and he doesn't think Yukon families need it. Maybe the Premier should get out of his corner office and go visit some daycares to see how badly this money is needed. Our childcare

system is in dire need of a cash infusion. We have heard over and over again from parents and daycare operators that the system is running on empty. The time for study has long since expired.

When is this government going to start providing adequate funding to ensure that Yukon's children and parents can access daycare?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, I must remind the member opposite that this government has stepped forward far beyond what any other previous government has done -- and I must emphasize the Liberals previously. In the last mandate the Yukon government increased the funding provided to childcare some \$900,000 annually, raising last year's total to \$5.3 million of public money being invested into supporting childcare through the direct operating grant and the childcare subsidy.

We have already given the largest single increase that any government has given, and we committed in our election platform to continue to work with operators, as we did last time in our four-year plan, and in a new five-year plan, to address the needs within the system. The work is ongoing. I am waiting right now for a report back from both the department and Yukon Child Care Board, and once we have received that, we look forward to immediately engaging in our five-year plan.

Mr. Mitchell: Later today we are debating a motion that urges the government to provide new incentives to increase the labour pool. One of the targets is stay-at-home parents who are unable to take on work due to the cost of childcare.

There is a simple way to help those parents re-enter the workplace. The Premier can dip into the \$85-million surplus and help these people out right now. Why are we waiting? Why is this not a priority? This budget announced \$10 million to build power lines but nothing new for childcare. This government continues to have a blind spot when it comes to this issue.

Will the minister quit short-changing the daycares and start spending some of the \$85 million he has sitting in the bank?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, the Leader of the Official Opposition is not reflecting the facts. He is failing to recognize that the Yukon Party government, in our last mandate, stepped forward beyond what previous governments had done. I would point out that the Liberals, when they had a chance to deal with it, did not address the financial challenges within the childcare system. As a result, last time we had to take the first step in addressing and rectifying the years of neglect by Liberal and NDP governments.

We have stepped forward. In our last mandate, we provided an increase that is now totalling \$900,000 per year, raising the total level of investment to \$5.3 million in the last fiscal year, or an average investment of public money of \$5,462 per child. It is the second best funded system in the country. Despite that, we are committed to, once again, working with the childcare operators, with daycare workers and with parents to move forward in the development of a five-year plan to address the needs and pressures within the childcare system.

Mr. Mitchell: The Government of Canada is sending this Yukon Party government almost \$600 million a year. The Premier takes this money in and then refuses to spend it on childcare. Many parents are young and just establishing them-

selves. They have mortgages, car payments, student loans and other demands on an income that is still on the low side. They can't afford up to \$1,500 a month, for example, if they have two children in daycare. With so much money on hand, we must ensure that no child is denied quality daycare because his or her parents could not reasonably afford it.

Will the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services stop this perpetual state of study and commit to substantially increasing the amount of money going into our childcare system right now?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I must remind the member opposite that this is not a case of perpetual study. We are going through the exact same process we did last time -- with the four-year plan in the last mandate. We are doing due diligence first. Right now, I am waiting for feedback from the childcare community through the Yukon Child Care Board. We look forward to moving forward based upon that. We have already proven that we deliver when following this process. We look forward to again engaging, through the five-year plan, in addressing the needs and the pressures within the childcare system.

Again I must remind the member opposite that due diligence is important. It was very clear in the last election campaign that only the Liberals were advocating an immediate, arbitrary increase, with numbers they pulled out of the air. Both Yukon Party and the NDP were committed to doing the due diligence, to working with the stakeholders and determining the needs, and then making the necessary investment.

Question re: Non-governmental organizations funding

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. For the past few days, we've been directing the attention of the House to the financial plight faced by non-governmental organizations that rely on Yukon government funding. Many of these groups have to wait until the budget is passed before they receive their funding. That is going to happen much later than usual this year.

Now, the Premier is also very proud of the position that the government is in, with regard to cash flow. In his comments yesterday, the Premier refused to acknowledge that it's a cash flow problem, not a question of funding levels. Some of these NGOs are laying off staff or shutting their doors because of the uncertainty they face. Now that the Premier has had time to reconsider his position, what does he intend to do to help these important community groups deal with the cash flow problem that he himself helped create?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, the government hasn't created a cash flow problem for anyone. That's exactly why the special warrant included the necessary resources for many of our NGOs. If there are those NGOs out there who feel that they have a situation that they can't manage, I would ask them to come forward, and we will help them manage that situation. But I can assure this House that that is not what's taking place in today's Yukon. I would hope that the members opposite recognize that what they are saying does not meet with the facts or fit with the facts.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, the Yukon government is not the only one that's contributing to this chaos. Some of the NGOs that rely on the federal government are also having problems with secure financing. We've seen examples of that recently. Some of them are awaiting funding from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation that won't be in place until much later this fall. These groups help people deal with the terrible intergenerational effects of residential schools, and I believe there are four projects funded under the Aboriginal Healing Foundation in the Yukon.

One of them is actually in the Premier's riding. Last November, they asked the Premier if he would help them by providing bridge funding until their federal funding comes through. They have been told that a response is coming, but nothing has arrived. Will the Premier be providing any assistance to these groups, so that the vital work they do isn't interrupted while they wait for their federal funding?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Our area of obligation is evident and present. The Yukon government is living up to that obligation. We are providing, in various areas, support for the Liard First Nation, as we are for all First Nations in the Yukon. And, at this time, we are working with Canada on the issue of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, but these decisions are vested in the federal government's purview. We will continue to press the federal government on the matter. In the meantime, the Yukon government must focus in on its area of obligation. That's what we're doing, and we are delivering.

Mr. Cardiff: There is a precedent for this. This government provided bridge funding for community justice groups that were in the same boat recently. Why can't the Premier do it for these other NGOs that are helping First Nation people who are on a healing path that could improve their lives immeasurably?

We're not suggesting that the federal government should be let off the hook by any stretch. What we're looking for is a practical and compassionate response from the Minister of Finance. Now, if the Premier won't provide bridge funding, perhaps he'll consider an option that would have virtually no financial impact on Yukon taxpayers.

Would the Premier agree to provide low-interest loans or, at the very least, would he authorize a loan guarantee so that these groups don't have to suspend their operations while they await Aboriginal Healing Foundation money to come through?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, the precedent in the justice area that the member speaks of -- that decision took place because there was the guarantee from Canada that the resources were available. That's how we must operate and conduct our financial business in all matters. It's not about guesswork or loans or anything else.

Now, the member is trying to create a perception here that this government does not demonstrate compassion. I challenge the member to take a look at the Health and Social Services budget in operation and maintenance and explain to Yukoners how a 53-percent increase in social services and health care, in family and children's services -- across the spectrum of our social safety net. A 53-percent increase -- how does that not demonstrate compassion?

Question re: Employment equity policy

Mr. Edzerza: I have a question for the Minister of Justice. Although the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission may have more direct knowledge of this subject, it is a fairly complex issue, so I ask for the minister's full attention.

Is the minister aware that some parts of the Yukon government's employment equity policy may be in conflict with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*?

Hon. Ms. Horne: I am not sure this falls under my department, but I will check into it and get back to the member opposite.

Mr. Edzerza: Mr. Speaker, the employment equity policy was adopted in 1990. It authorizes the government to take affirmative action targeted at three specific groups: women, aboriginal peoples, and peoples with disabilities. Section 6(4) of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* permits this type of affirmative action if the rate of employment is lower than the Canadian rate of employment. It is no secret how this government constantly boasts about the Yukon's unemployment rate and claims all of the credit for it.

Has the minister sought any legal opinion about the status of the employment equity policy now that our unemployment rate is significantly lower than the national rate?

Hon. Mr. Hart: The government is following all arrangements that have been agreed to in the collective agreement. We are dealing with all situations in allowing employees the opportunity to work for the government.

As the member indicated, we have an emphasis on gender hiring as well as First Nation hiring. We tabled a report recently that indicated just how we are meeting our objectives with hiring First Nation employees here in the government. We are following that process and we are staying within the law as per the public service agreement and our collective agreement with the union.

Mr. Edzerza: The mobility rights clause in the *Charter* appears to trump this government's ability to take affirmative action on behalf of two of the targeted groups -- women and persons with disabilities. That may not be the case when it comes to aboriginal peoples where rights or freedoms that exist through land claims agreements supersede the *Charter*. This raises other issues we don't have time to get into today.

So let me put a final question to the Minister of Justice, or perhaps the Premier would prefer to answer. If our employment rate does put the employment equity policy in conflict with the mobility rights clause, how does the government plan to respond? Will it ignore the *Charter*? Will it challenge the *Charter*? Or is the government considering the *Charter's* notwithstanding clause in this matter?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The government has no knowledge of any contravention of the *Charter of Rights* or any other law when it comes to employment equity within the government. I'm sure the Public Service Commission is monitoring this question very closely.

I would submit to the member opposite that if the member has evidence of such a matter taking place here in Yukon, he should not only table the evidence here but, more appropri-

ately, take that evidence to the responsible agencies and department. That's the appropriate approach to this, if -- and I stress "if" -- the member has such evidence in his possession. I can also assure the House and all Yukoners that the government would never move forward with any initiative that would contravene the *Charter of Rights* or any other legal statute, because that is wrongdoing.

Question re: Environment report

Mr. Elias: I have a question for the Minister of Environment. The environment is a top priority for Yukoners and has been for many years. They are concerned about how our environment is faring. They want to know about the issues and how development is impacting Yukon and they want to be involved. One of the ways that Yukoners keep on top of these things is the Yukon state of the environment report. It provides early warnings and analysis of potential problems for the environment and allows the public to monitor progress toward the achievement of the objectives of the *Environment Act*. This is a report that is required by law under Yukon's *Environment Act*.

My question for the minister is this: why has this report not been produced, as required by law, since 2002?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Notwithstanding the report, I'm sure the Department of Environment is well aware of the obligations of the department in this regard. As far as tabling the report, when there's a report available and ready, that possibly could happen here in the House. That's not something I can give a date to today, but I can shed some light on the state of the environment of the Yukon here and now.

We have YESAA implemented. YESAA is our instrument for environmental assessment on projects that the member alludes to, on access to resources and land. I can also shed some more light on the fact that the Yukon is second only to British Columbia in overall land base under protection and conservation. In the member's own riding, 8,000 square kilometres of Old Crow Flats are under protection, and most of that is permanent. We are implementing a climate change strategy. That sheds some more light on the state of the environment in the Yukon. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, report or no report, the state of the environment in Yukon and the environment itself is in good hands.

Mr. Elias: I'd like to suggest that it's the minister's responsibility to follow the law, not the public servants'.

I can answer my own question. The report has not been done, because empowering the Yukon public on the state of their own environment is not a priority of this government. Yukoners care and want to know, especially in a time when their environment is rapidly changing around them. The last copy of the report was released in 2002 -- five years ago. This Yukon Party government has never published a single report in the five years they've been in government. It also means the government is not following the Yukon's *Environment Act*, which says, "The minister shall..." -- it doesn't say "may"; it says "shall" -- ...submit to the Legislative Assembly a Yukon state of the environment report within three years of the previous report."

Mr. Speaker, the report answers four basic questions: what is happening in the environment, why it is happening, why it is

significant and what we are going to do about it. When will the minister table this long-overdue report?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The minister and the government are much more focused on actually going to work on our environment than tabling pieces of paper and reports; however, I will look into the matter as far as the very benign legalities around this particular issue are concerned.

The member opposite is missing something of great significance. This government has placed a far greater emphasis on the environment than any past government. When the member says that Yukoners want to be involved, what does he call the first ever Yukon Environmental Forum, which was held in this territory? What does the member suggest the climate change strategy is all about and the work we're doing on the strategic action plan? What does the member suggest about modernizing our biophysical database, so that Yukoners will be more informed about their environment? How does the member respond to the fact that the Yukon is second only to British Columbia on land base under protection? How does the member respond to the fact that the Yukon government is forging ahead with research, development and a centre of excellence in that regard? How does the member respond to the fact that we are a member of the International Polar Year and what we contribute globally in that regard? We are a member of the circumpolar community and make a contribution in that regard. Yukoners are well aware of their environment and the state it is in.

Mr. Elias: I won't get into which laws we should be abiding by or not, but what is missing here is the empowerment of Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget has \$20,000 set aside for the state of the environment report. I also checked last year's budget. It was on the same page; it was the same line item and yes, it was budgeted. I also checked the 2005-06 and the 2004-05 budget. Every year, the money is put in, and every year it doesn't get spent, because the government has other priorities.

Does the minister not understand that putting a dollar amount in the budget does not, in fact, create a report? Good fiscal management suggests that one actually has to do a report. I am sure the scientists, technicians and many Yukoners are ready and willing to do the work. They just need direction from the minister.

Will the minister assure this House that the report he has so consistently budgeted for and never actually produced will get done this year?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, the government will focus on actually working on the environment in tangible ways. I think the member opposite is reducing the focus on the environment by simply relegating the environment to some obscure report. The member opposite has an opportunity to get involved in the environment of this territory, as he should -- as all members should. The climate change strategy is very clear on the direction we're going in when it comes to the environment. The investment we're making in the environment through the department itself is quite a significant increase in our emphasis on the environment. If the member opposite thinks a report is going to save Yukon's environment, I would challenge the mem-

ber opposite to prove that to Yukoners -- that some report is going to save our environment. The work the government is doing is what's conserving and preserving our environment.

Question re: Minto mine power purchase agreement

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on my question from yesterday. Now that he has been briefed, hopefully he can actually provide this House with some information that could be viewed worthwhile. Two days ago, the Yukon Utilities Board acted in the public interest and shot down his power sales agreement with the Minto mine near Carmacks. In addition to striking down several components of the minister's plan, this regulatory board identified other concerns. Now that the minister has spent some time in front of his drawing board, what's his plan now?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Utilities Board came down with its decision on the application put forward by the Yukon Energy Corporation. I certainly talked to the corporation this morning. They are getting in contact with the corporate identity, which is the Minto mines, and I'm looking forward to more dialogue as soon as those meetings are done, which should be at the beginning of next week.

To remind the member opposite, what we set up with the Yukon Utilities Board -- they're doing their job exactly as it was set out to do. They are protecting the ratepayers of the Yukon, which is what they were set out to do.

I will remind the House that four short years ago, the Liberal Party of the day short-circuited the Utilities Board. Of course, the Member for Kluane will remember that, because he was one of the members that demanded a public hearing on the Mayo-Dawson line. Now that the member opposite has joined the Liberal Party and accepted their obligation on that investment for Yukoners, for which the ratepayers will be paying for many years -- these are mistakes that were made by the Liberal Party of the day.

I look forward to the dialogue between the Yukon Energy Corporation, the mining company, and the Yukon Utilities Board to address the issues that were brought forward.

Mr. McRobb: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the writing is not on the minister's drawing board, it's certainly on the wall, and it spells "failed" and "try again" and "time is running out". The board has given the minister until May 9 to file his new plan. The Yukon public would like to know how the minister intends to complete his homework reassignment on time.

One part of the minister's plan was to buy the old diesel generators at the mine site -- which, by the way, we don't need -- and charge that cost to all electrical ratepayers in the territory. What's his new plan? Will he still insist on buying those old diesel generators?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I remind the member opposite that the Yukon Development Corporation/Yukon Energy Corporation are arm's-length corporations, and they make the business decisions. I'm not going to debate the pros and cons of the application on the floor here.

I look forward to having the Development Corporation, Minto mine and the Energy Corporation look at that decision and come back with answers to some of the questions.

As far as the dates that are set out, the dates are not set in stone. If, in fact, this application can't happen on May 9, as the Yukon Utilities Board would like to see, we will have to move that date forward, understanding that we also have a part 3 application going ahead on May 15 on the other part of the Carmacks-Pelly line. So the Yukon Utilities Board has a busy schedule ahead.

I look forward to the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation getting together to resolve these issues.

Mr. McRobb: Well, we know it's a pretty short arm these days, and it doesn't sound like the minister's plan to re-submit his homework is likely to earn him higher marks. The reason I'm asking these questions of the minister is because they are in the public interest and he is at the top of the heap in terms of being publicly accountable for this Crown corporation. The public needs to know how he intends to proceed with this critical link in the chain to connect the Minto mine to the power grid.

The regulatory board has struck down the essentials of his plan and has ordered a new one to be submitted within a week. Again, to the minister responsible: how does he intend to get it right this time and ensure his new plan will respect the interest of the territory's electrical consumers?

Hon. Mr. Lang: Again, correcting the member opposite, I am not setting the dates as the minister. The Yukon Energy Corporation is an arm's-length corporation. The Yukon Utilities Board is being utilized the way it should be utilized. I respect the decisions that come from the Utilities Board, and I can assure the members opposite that we will be using the Utilities Board to do the job that was assigned to them -- not like the Liberal government who short-circuited the Utilities Board on their decision-making apparatus to put us into the position we are with the Mayo-Dawson transmission line. The Mayo-Dawson line was spearheaded by the Liberal government of the day, and it is still costing us resources. Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Utilities Board has been put to work to do exactly what they have done. They are protecting the ratepayers of the Yukon, and we will respect that.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 28

Clerk: Motion No. 28, standing in the name of Mr. Nordick.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Klondike

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide new incentives to increase the labour pool for entry-level jobs in the service and retail industries in the short term:

(1) for seniors who might wish to take on part-time or full-time work but are discouraged by the higher rates of income taxes they would then pay;

(2) for stay-at-home parents who are unable to take on work due to the cost of childcare;

(3) for those on social assistance who would like to supplement their income to help meet their needs; and

(4) for students, where the cost of introducing these new entrants to the job market may be prohibitive to employers.

Mr. Nordick: Mr. Speaker, in today's economic situation of record low unemployment rates -- most recently reported at 3.2 percent -- companies need to find workers, especially at entry level, in the service and retail industries. This is a good problem to have. There is naturally a lot of turnover in these positions as workers look to improve their wages and working conditions at long-term careers, and these types of jobs are not the norm. They are often shorter term positions. To address the high turnover and shortage of workers, we need to provide new incentives to increase the labour pool available for these jobs.

By providing the right incentives, we can increase the number of workers from groups such as: (1) seniors; (2) stay-at-home parents who are unable to work because of childcare costs; (3) those on social assistance who would like to supplement their income; and (4) students. People in these groups might not enter the labour force for various reasons.

One such reason for seniors not entering the labour force might be a disincentive in the tax regime such that seniors may take home only a small fraction of the money that they actually earn because of a higher tax rate on the marginal income that they would earn. Another reason may be the lack of familiarity or lack of confidence in their ability to re-enter the workforce. By providing a training program specifically aimed at senior workers, we can increase the number of seniors who will be willing and ready to re-enter the workforce.

The program that I am speaking of is called the "targeted initiative for older workers". This is a program for 55- to 65-year-olds that will be delivered by Yukon College. The project will begin this month, May 2007, and will run for two years in Whitehorse and the communities. The total cost of this program will be some \$650,000. This program will recruit 140 individuals between the ages of 55 and 65 who want the help developing employment skills. The program graduates will be more technologically savvy and will have the basic skills they need to find and retain employment in their chosen area.

The second group of potential workers I mentioned are parents of young children who find it more economical to stay at home, rather than pay the sometimes high cost of daycare services. A young family with one or two or more children can face a high price to have those children cared for by daycare services and may prefer to stay at home instead. Yet these young parents also have the potential to contribute to the labour force. By addressing the costs of childcare for lower-income

families, the government can increase the number of stay-at-home parents who want to enter the labour force -- it can make it possible for them to do so.

To this end, we could continue to complete an administrative program review of childcare services. We could complete the childcare centre and family day home regulations review and complete a new five-year childcare plan to address identified issues of concern. These reviews will ensure the childcare service delivery, including costs, are appropriate for families.

The third group of potential workers I mentioned are those on social assistance who want to supplement their income to help meet their needs. This group of people may also face the disincentive to enter the labour force if their take-home income is not adjusted accordingly to the work that they would do. That is, if their social assistance income is decreased dollar for dollar against what they earn at a job, there will be no incentive to work, as they would effectively be earning no money.

I urge the government to look at how those on social assistance would be more inclined to enter the labour force.

The fourth group I mentioned are students who may be looking for short-term work to help pay for things as they study. Because students are committed to their studies and use jobs to support their studies, employers may not view investing in training students as something that would bring long-term benefits. I urge the government to look into what kind of help can be provided to both students and employers to encourage this group to enter the labour force at the entry level in the service and retail industries.

In addition to the four groups listed in the motion, this government is also targeting immigrants for entry-level jobs in the service and retail sector. Specifically, the Department of Education is allocating \$200,000 for an immigration portal. This portal is an on-line resource to effectively provide immigration information to potential immigrants.

In closing, I appreciate the government's support for this motion. I express my commitment to support and work on this issue and engage more seniors, stay-at-home parents, those on social assistance and students in the labour force. Supporting this motion brings more eligible workers into the labour force, which allows those workers to earn more money and also support businesses and the economy as a whole.

I would also like to point out that on May 3, 2007 -- that's Thursday this week -- we have a Yukon 2007 job fair. Job seekers will benefit from face-to-face contact with prospective employers. People who want to come to the Yukon for the summer are encouraged to consider this event suited to their job search needs. All sectors of the labour market are invited -- tourism, mining, construction and retail. It would be nice to see all members support the job fair and travel through it to see what's out there for our youth.

Mr. Inverarity: I would like to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing this motion forward. I have to say that it is something that has been near and dear to my heart for the last four or five years in my previous position at the Yukon Entrepreneurship Centre.

I think that the individual groups he has identified in the motion are important. I will talk about each of them in a minute and discuss ideas that I have to bring forward to the House that would benefit all Yukoners by increasing the number of individuals who could return to the workforce.

Specifically, I would like to start with the seniors at this point. I know that we have a lot of seniors who have retired early. There seems to be this age gap where people are taking early retirement at 55. Then, between 55 and 65, they may get contracts and do things along those lines, but there is actually a larger group -- and there will be an even larger group -- who are going to be in the 65-year plus range. They may have low incomes.

They may want to, for example, travel as snowbirds to the south in the fall, and then come back here in the spring and perhaps earn a little bit more money. Part of the problem is that many of them are on fixed incomes and perhaps low income. In some instances, I know that Revenue Canada -- and we all love them -- likes to claw back some of their pension money if they earn over a certain amount of money by returning to the workforce.

I think it would be encouraging for us to perhaps work with Revenue Canada to discuss opportunities for seniors so that they can return to the workforce, help us all -- we know about this problem of low employment. Perhaps they can do different jobs and be a real asset in their senior years.

I think I'd like to point out at this point that my father, for example, is still working. He is in the mining business. He was a prospector for most of his life, and he's still trying to put a deal together. This spring he was at the mining Cordilleran Roundup and he turns 90 this July. He's still an active, viable member of society. He's still contributing to society. I don't think that seniors should be cut off work at a specific age or a specific year.

There are some additional things that we can do to support seniors in this area. One example is that, because of their fixed income, maybe we could make an agreement with the City of Whitehorse so they could have free bus service. In fact, maybe we should be looking at free bus service for all Whitehorse residents and maybe in time extend it beyond here as perhaps some of the other larger communities get some sort of rapid transit system.

But it's a small -- I wouldn't say it's a small amount of money, but it would certainly be a small contribution to the ability of seniors to return to the workforce if they so choose.

Another area -- regarding grandparents, for example -- is we need to make it a little bit easier for them to be able to perhaps look after their grandchildren. We've talked about this in the House. Individuals may have difficulty trying to get grandparents' rights so they can actually look after their grandchildren and perhaps get the benefits that a social worker might get for looking after them, rather than making it more difficult for them.

There is one untapped market -- and this is perhaps a little bit radical from my perspective. But we get lots and lots of what we call rubber-tire traffic coming into the north. A lot of these people are Americans transiting through to Alaska to see

their far north. Perhaps there is an opportunity for us to work with U.S. and Canada immigration services so that these individuals might stay in the Yukon and work for a month or two to help out. I know when I was working in the airline industry, for example, we would get charter flights of seniors who would come in and build churches over the summer. These are viable people who would assist us in the community. It takes a little bit of creative thinking, Mr. Speaker, but I think we can get around it.

Another point that I would like to talk about -- I guess it is the second one -- concerns the ones on social assistance. I have had an opportunity to work with some of these programs in the past few years and I think the biggest single drawback to a lot of people moving off social assistance is that, as they start to get into the workforce, their social assistance gets clawed back by the amount of money they actually earn. In some instances, they are actually ending up with less money because of the clawback the social assistance program may have. It doesn't apply to everybody, but it does apply to some who are actually trying to get back into the workforce. I think it's an issue that we should address. You know, we talked about social assistance in the House here a number of times, and it is a positive step that would assist us in getting these people back to work if they can.

I'm going to move on to parents who have children and want to work. In thinking about this particular issue, I have come up with two concepts: one is in fact parents who have one, two or more children in their home and the mother or father who is the stay-at-home parent would like to return to the workforce but can't because of the high cost of childcare. The high cost of childcare is just a single component -- one that I think we can control within this House by increasing subsidies to them by allowing the federal amount -- I think it is \$1,200 given to parents -- to be non-taxable, at least the Yukon portion of it. That would be a positive step, but there are other components to the whole issue of returning to work. There is the high cost of gas. I noticed in the paper last night and on the CBC news that the price of gas in Vancouver is over \$1.25 a litre and I thought, what is going to happen to us this summer?

The price was still at \$1.09 this morning when I looked. I expect that we will be higher than \$1.25. Well, that compounds all these social problems that go into trying to get parents to want to go back to work in order to have the two-income family. It means that usually they need two cars, two sets of insurance and two sets of everything that goes on. I think we need to address this issue in some fundamental way.

Another side of this issue is something I want to bring up, because it was addressed to me when I was out canvassing in the fall. It is the issue of two-parent families where the stay-at-home parent actually wants to stay at home and look after their children but can't because of all the higher costs that are out there. They are literally being forced back to work, rather than staying at home. It's important that we also consider them as part of this whole equation. Perhaps there are some incentives that we can have in place to assist stay-at-home parents such as giving them a bigger tax break, for example, or some other

kind of assistance, so that if only one parent wants to work, they can do this and they are not actually forced back to work.

I realize that this is a bit away from the motion, Mr. Speaker, but it is an important issue that was brought to my attention by more than one household in my canvassing last fall. There are individuals who believe in the family unit and that one parent should stay at home. Maybe they want to work out of their home. Maybe there should be additional incentives for people to have their home office and that we should look at those kinds of things. We need to be creative. I think that the Member for Klondike had specified that. Our thoughts and dealings with this whole issue of how to get more people in the workforce need to be more creative and innovative. We need to put on our thinking caps in that area.

The last area that is of particular interest to me regards students getting back into the workforce. I think I have had some experience with what the federal government called FSWEPE, which is the federal students work experience program. I love acronyms, I have to say. The biggest single factor for someone coming out high school or a college program or even university is getting that very first job. It is very important.

They have virtually no references and the technical work experience program that I was involved in provided that. It gave them opportunities to not only learn a particular skill -- and the one I was working in was about computers and some technology and those kinds of things -- but it could be anything across the board. It could be in the retail market or, I suppose, even card dealing if you wanted to be up in Dawson City working in the casino. My point is that somewhere along the line, individuals need that first break. Having a Yukon Territory work experience program for young individuals starting their first job would give them the fundamentals of how to do resumé's, how to do job interviews -- all those kinds of things are very, very important. I think it's something we should look at and would be a real asset to the whole program.

Finally, I think the member talked a bit about foreign workers and foreign worker strategies. I have to say that, over the past few years, this has been something that has been -- I hate to use the term "near and dear to my heart". But we need to look at how we are going to deal with immigration into the Yukon and how we can bring foreign workers into Canada, and not just for what we might call the retail sector or for the hotel sector, but we should be looking also at skilled labour.

I have a friend who was Hungarian and I think it was about a year ago today when the government reduced their workforce by 200,000 employees -- 200,000 people out of a job overnight in Hungary. These were skilled people; they were office people; they were welders; and they had nowhere to go. A lot of them are looking to come to Canada and it's very difficult for them to get reaccredited in Canada so they can work in oil and gas or in any of the other industries we have requiring skilled labour.

Perhaps Yukon College could start a program, work with Immigration Canada and bring them over. We could be a test site for all of Canada to get these individuals re-qualified in a very short period of time, because they have a lot of the skills, they have been working in those industries and we could be

feeding our oil and gas industry, or the oil and gas industries in Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

So, Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to say that we support this particular motion. I think some other members are going to be speaking to it in the House today. I would reiterate the comments about the job fair coming up this week. I think it's important. I know that my daughter just arrived back from completing two years at NAIT in Edmonton. She is looking for a job right now, and is probably going to be attending the fair this weekend.

So I thank the minister and the House for their time today.

Mr. Cardiff: Let's look at the motion as presented today. There are a number of questions about this motion. The number one question in my mind about this motion is this: where did it come from and what are the reasons for this motion being introduced, debated and on the Order Paper?

Well, the motion was introduced on November 28 of last year. The question that that raises is this: where is the government commitment to these ideas with regard to new incentives? Where are the new incentives that are in the budget that we'll be debating later this afternoon, if we make it through the motions, or tomorrow? We don't see where those incentives are.

The motion we will be debating later today, which is Motion No. 55, is basically a motion that was acted upon. It's about urging the government to take an action that it has already taken with regard to street crime and the substance abuse action plan, but the motion that we're dealing with now is Motion No. 28, and what we'd like to know is why these incentives aren't contained in the current budget that we're debating.

There are some problems with the motion, and for that reason we are not going to support this motion.

We feel that, in some respects, it discriminates against workers. There are some questions about why we would provide incentives only for entry-level jobs in the service and retail sector. What is the purpose of that? Why not provide incentives for people to enter all levels of employment? There are all kinds of other needs out there. We were talking the other day about the need for trades training.

We were talking about affirmative action earlier today. This motion appears to be an affirmative action program by the government for the owners of the service industry and the retail industry, whether it be for tourist operations or fast food outlets, and we feel that it could have negative impacts.

I think what we have to do is look at the reasons why some of these people -- the people who are targeted in this motion, such as seniors, stay-at-home parents, those on social assistance or students -- are not working in these jobs right now. The reasons are pretty evident. Number one, they are low-paying jobs. There are no payroll benefits usually attached to those jobs. There are no pensions, there is no dental plan, there are no health and welfare plans, and the wages are often low. In many ways, it can be very stressful work. It is often in a hectic environment and often there is not much room for advancement in some of those positions.

So, you have to look at why people aren't in those jobs and address those issues. That may not be up to government, but

maybe the government needs to provide incentives for employers, or encouragement for employers, or provide a good example for employers to up the ante. I know that the minimum wage has been increased; we have the fair wage schedule, but oftentimes that is not enough. People need to be able to make a living wage -- something that they can support their families on -- to put food on the table. We are talking about stay-at-home parents, single parents, and people on social assistance. Often those on social assistance would like to supplement their income to help meet their needs and the needs of their families. Often they are not allowed to do that. There are allowed to earn so much, but they are only allowed to earn a very little bit and then the rest of it is clawed back.

There are people on social assistance who would like to enter the workforce -- who are capable of entering the workforce -- because there are some people who are on social assistance not through their own choice. Some of them are on social assistance because of the situation they are in and they may not be employable. They may not be able to do entry-level work. I believe there needs to be an opportunity provided to those people. They should not be penalized for seeking out training and seeking out funding. The government should be providing assistance to those people to get training to get into the workforce.

I think that would go a long way toward improving the situation. The motion, as it reads, "urges the Government of Yukon to provide new incentives to increase the labour pool for entry-level jobs in the service and retail industries in the short term." In my mind, that shows a clear lack of vision or commitment -- it says "in the short term." What about the long term? This problem is not going to go away. We've experienced a shortage of skilled tradespeople.

The other thing is, why is it only in the service and retail industries? What about creating opportunities for some of these folks to get jobs in other areas? You know, there are a lot of other areas where we need to provide encouragement for people -- other than entry-level jobs.

We hear about it daily in here. We heard about it the other day -- dentists. We heard about it the other day -- nurses. We need skilled tradespeople. I think what we really need is a more clear, comprehensive look at what the problem is.

The motion states that the government should provide new incentives. What are those incentives? Maybe someone on the government side, when they get up, can clarify what those incentives are. They need to be positive, and not just for the employer. They need to be positive for the employee and the potential employees as well.

Another group that is mentioned in this motion is seniors who might wish to take on part-time or full-time work, but are discouraged by the higher rates of income tax they would pay. It was mentioned that sometimes some of the pensions and benefits that they have been accruing are clawed back. Why are we encouraging seniors to seek entry-level jobs in the service and retail industry? Seniors have a wealth of knowledge. They have a wealth of experience.

Look around the room. One of these days, we are all going to be seniors. The member for the beautiful Southern Lakes

says, "We hope." I hope that the experience that I've gained through my life and my work in the construction industry and here in the Legislative Assembly will qualify me for something more than an entry-level job. I don't want to be a Wal-Mart greeter in my retirement. I don't want to be flipping hamburgers at McDonald's or A&W to make ends meet when I'm retired. I would prefer to be recognized for the experience and knowledge that I've gained through my life experience. I would feel that it is of value.

I feel that it is a slap in the face to seniors to think that this is what they might like to do in their retirement. I know that I certainly wouldn't want to. They have all kinds of skills and experience. I think we should be using -- and that's the wrong term, so I should retract that -- asking seniors, as far as opportunities for employment are concerned, to use their vast knowledge and skills as trainers, as mentors, as consultants or as paid volunteers.

If you look at volunteer organizations, there are a lot of seniors who, after they retire, get involved in those volunteer organizations and they contribute immensely to our community through their volunteer efforts. That should be recognized, and maybe there should be some incentives provided for them to volunteer and contribute to society that way -- not just to provide incentives for entry-level jobs. Let's take advantage of their vast knowledge and abilities.

As far as students, the motion says "for students, where the cost of introducing these new entrants to the job market may be prohibitive to employers." Well, excuse me -- what are the costs that are prohibitive to having a student come and work for you? I don't know what those prohibitive costs are. Number one, you have to provide some training. On this side, we, the New Democrats, are very supportive of training. We think that training is a good thing, but I don't understand -- it doesn't matter whether you are a student or you are middle-aged or you are a senior. If you haven't done the job before, you need training. I don't see where those costs are prohibitive to having students. They need to make a living too. If the jobs being offered don't pay a decent wage or a living wage, then how can we expect them to enter the workforce? They need to be able to make ends meet too. They need to be able to put food on the table. They need to be able to buy their books. They need to be able to pay their tuition.

Here's an example of the kind of thing that's taking place right now. I have just been provided this. We are aware of a situation involving a young employee who was hired into an entry-level position by a large big box store. After a considerable period of time, this employee was making \$9.25 an hour. This sounds familiar. I seem to have been through this process myself, actually, about 30 some years ago. \$9.25 an hour, yet he ended up having to train two other employees who were hired later. One was getting paid \$10.50 an hour and the other was getting paid \$11.50 an hour. I went through this myself; it's incredible. The store in question is reported to have a policy forbidding employees from talking to anyone about what they earn. We can only surmise that the newer employees were brought in at a higher rate of pay because of the labour shortage that started to show up last year.

The question we have to ask is this: how fair is it to existing employees if they are being paid less than new employees doing the same job, especially when they have to train the new workers who are making more than they are?

I don't see anything in this motion that would address that kind of situation. I sympathize with that situation, because I was in that situation. I recognize that my time is running out and I'll look forward to hearing what members on the other side have to say. What is really needed here -- and the government should put some effort into this -- is a real inclusive labour market and training strategy for the territory that addresses the needs of all employees and all those who want to get into the labour market, regardless of age, social situation or marital status, and it has to address the needs of all those people. It needs to address the needs of employees and employers in every community across the Yukon. That is what we really should be focusing on. I just feel that the motion lacks some clear direction.

Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I'd like to start off by thanking the Member for Klondike for putting forth this motion for members' consideration. I think it is a timely motion. It is an issue that isn't new, of course. It's not new to the entire country. In fact, these challenges of labour market shortages are certainly felt nationally and internationally. Why is that? Well, there are a number of factors behind this particular problem that the entire world is facing right now.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to take us back a few short years. It wasn't that long ago that Yukon wasn't doing very well on the economic side of the scale. In fact, Yukon's population was dwindling. We were losing a lot of our young workers especially -- young families -- because the economy wasn't doing as well as it could have been doing.

We had a very high unemployment rate at the time, mineral exploration development expenditures were at an all-time low, businesses were closing, et cetera. I think that over the course of the last number of years, due to a number of factors -- including perhaps setting a climate that's conducive to the growth of the private sector, among other national and international factors -- we have been able to see our economic situation thrive. We have seen a complete turnaround of the economy here in the Yukon.

Again, I attribute that to a number of factors. The fact is, though, that we have a really buzzing economy right now and we have a shortage of workers to fill the many jobs. I keep reminding myself, however, that while this is a problem and a challenge, I would think having that problem would be much better than trying to live without an economy. I think we've seen that for all too many years, and it is certainly a refreshing change to see a sense of optimism in the Yukon economy among our populace.

We are certainly working hard with the private sector, with respective organizations and First Nation governments to continue to address the economic challenges before us.

Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate hearing the comments from the members opposite. One of the purposes of coming

forward with motions from members, whether on the government or Official Opposition side, is to put forward ideas for consideration. We on this side of the House do not profess to have all the brilliant ideas. In fact, I think we have adopted a number of ideas and constructive solutions that have been put forward by members opposite. That is what this is all about. Every Wednesday, I think we have been able to prove ourselves as collegiate, cooperative and collaborative in terms of putting forward ideas and coming to some kind of consensus. It may take an amendment here and there, but I think, by and large, this Legislature so far has proven to be very effective in terms of our ability to come forward with ideas and move forward with them.

That said, I would like to thank the member from the Official Opposition for some of his constructive feedback. That is what this is all about. It's about addressing transportation, training, childcare and a whole gamut of ideas and issues before us. Again, I think it's great to discuss and, better yet, move forward on some of these issues of importance.

I think that the motion is, as I mentioned, a timely one. It certainly has been under great discussion. I was recently at the annual general meeting of the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon. Of course, tourism is the world's largest and fastest growing industry. As a result, Canada has to become more competitive than it has had to be in the past. It has to be creative in terms of how we can attract and retain new employees in our workforce. It is certainly encouraging the business community and the private sector to be creative and innovative in the way it addresses this issue.

As industry has told us time and time again, it is much more than career awareness. It is much more than employee-retention strategies. The fact is that employees can't do it alone and government can't do it alone. In fact, it very largely takes and requires a partnership. Therefore, government's role in this respect, whether it be on the municipal or federal front or the territorial/provincial front, or even the First Nation governments front, it is really incumbent upon all of us to work in partnership with one another, with the private sector and organizations at large to look at ways that we can retain and attract new employees. It is about providing support for employment, training, school-to-work transition programs. It is about being proactive in our immigration policies and so forth. I just wanted to place that bit of emphasis upon this discussion in light of what is being said, or has been said, here today.

The Yukon government is working on a whole host of initiatives cooperatively with the community at large -- whether that be business, industry, our education institutions and other governments -- in order to address the labour shortage issues.

One of these strategies that we are looking at is increasing the participation of perhaps various groups such as youth, older workers, persons with disabilities and so forth. Initiatives, whether they be new incentives, whether they be augments to current programs, policies -- tweaking what we can -- these are all very critical to ensuring that these workers pay a greater role in the labour market.

I know that, for example, the government is working with the federal government also to strengthen and certainly im-

prove the process where Yukon businesses can also apply to invite workers under the temporary foreign workers program.

Through the good work of the Department of Economic Development they have made funding available to the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce to undertake a substantial amount of research to identify and assess some of these initiatives and to identify the gaps -- to actually look at what we are doing, what's working -- and actually go back to the drawing board and identify those gaps and see what it is that we can improve -- introduce new incentives or tweak programs that will be reflective of the needs of the market today.

We are also working with our respective provinces, in particular our northern territories and western provinces, on what could be a potential western Canadian aboriginal training strategy. As was mentioned earlier by the Member for Klondike, we are also working with the federal government on the implementation of a targeted initiative for older workers. It's using federal funds over the course of two years to again address the training needs of older workers displaced in Yukon.

Again, we are working on other levels to provide training initiatives. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the substantial number of dollars that this government has invested in training over the last four and a half years. We reinstated the community training trust funds, for example, to that particular area after it had been reduced by the previous government. In fact, we have actually been able to augment it with additional money targeted specifically for trades training.

We have been able to enhance funds to the Yukon College's base funding so that they are able to augment their ability to provide training in programs that are relevant to the needs of Yukoners.

In terms of literacy support, there has been a great degree of discussion about literacy skills, numeracy skills development and problem-solving skills development. Again, there is more funding available to assist our respective communities in providing support for the basics so that more individuals can enter the labour force.

In terms of on-the-job training, I refer to an initiative under Investing in Public Service, or IPS, and GradCorps is a perfect example of how we've been creative in developing a new internship program. In terms of students coming straight out of university or college, sometimes it's difficult to enter the workforce without having the experience necessary to take that first step or to open the door to employment.

We've been able to augment increased positions in the Yukon government to provide those students with a year's worth of work experience, so that they will be able to perhaps again look to the government for more permanent work. And, of course, we're doing that.

You know, in this year's budget we've also enhanced dollars for the First Nation Training Corps. That particular funding program, I think, was \$200,000 when we were first elected. I think it's now at \$500,000 today, so we've more than doubled the funding for that program. Again, that program has allowed the Yukon government to partner with First Nation governments and to take on, again, programs or internships -- call it what you will -- to provide Yukon government employees or

First Nation employees the on-the-ground experience and the necessary skills to do their jobs properly and in order to actually enable them to build capacity in their respective communities.

There are so many different initiatives we have been working on. To say that the Yukon government hasn't been doing anything is, I think, perhaps not quite accurate. Again, working with our respective communities, whether it be in trades training -- again, I just refer to one initiative through the Women's Directorate, partnered with the Department of Education, which is the women exploring trades and technology program. For the first time ever, we have been able to introduce a 16-week course. It's an introductory course to the respective trades. It has been very well-received. In fact, there has been overwhelming support for the program with more uptake than there are seats. It's a great thing to see because after the first intake of students -- women graduates -- they have carried on their careers in the trades.

Some have actually entered into the trades, whether it be at the job level or whether it be through the apprentice program. So it's really great to see that more women are getting involved in the trades and are actively taking them on. They are doing exceptionally well.

Again, in terms of providing post-secondary education support, we were able to augment the student grant. We're indexing it against inflation. That was one of the commitments we made in the first term. We have enhanced the Yukon excellence awards, scholarships and so forth.

Again, as I mentioned before, we're providing a substantial number of dollars -- about \$1 million -- to various literacy programs and organizations and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things also being done on the federal government front. For example, the member opposite made reference to public transit. Through the good work of the Government of Canada, they've actually made tax credits available for public transit use -- a good thing. They have also recently introduced tax relief for Canadian seniors, for example, including an age credit enhancement, as well as pension income-splitting.

Again, these are all very good. These are innovative solutions. I think that by working with our respective stakeholders, we will be able to come up with a strategy where we can all work together. I guess that is the basis for this motion -- that there are things government can do; there are certainly things employers can do and that employees can take on as well. It is a collaborative, strategic initiative to work on. There are many things to do.

This motion certainly outlines some of the target groups -- certainly seniors. I've referred to them before. Again, parents -- as the Member for Lake Laberge mentioned earlier today in Question Period, it's by working on a new five-year plan for childcare in the territory. It's about how we can make more affordable, more accessible childcare in the territory. It's about how we can reward parents who choose to stay at home as well. It's a combination of all factors, but if there are ways that we can assist stay-at-home parents to enter into the labour force without being penalized, let's look at those. I think there are

some creative solutions being raised and adopted clear across the country.

Again, for those on social assistance, I recall listening to a member of the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce just recently talking about a pilot project that they have engaged in; they're talking with the Department of Health and Social Services. I think it's a great program that they have been engaged in. It's by looking at various individuals on social assistance and providing them with the skills, the training necessary so that they can re-enter the workforce without having to face the penalties of perhaps having their income clawed back.

These are all things that we need to take a look at and work toward. In terms of students, as I mentioned earlier, this is another key target -- how do we enhance, or attract more students to come back home, to stay in the Yukon, to make their living here, to raise their families and to contribute to a very thriving livelihood here in the Yukon.

So it is a very multi-faceted approach. We on this side of the House don't profess to have all the answers, but it is by working together that we'll be able to come together with a very strategic, attractive and competitive plan so that Yukon can remain as a very competitive destination, not only as an attractive place to visit and to work, but of course to live here, which is first and foremost why we are all here.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to hearing the members opposite.

Mr. Mitchell: I'd like to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing forward this motion. I think that it's certainly worthy of discussion. I'd give him an A for effort for bringing it forward. I would give it an NI for "needs improvement" for content, because I think there are some areas that are not addressed by this particular motion.

This is in the same spirit as the Member for Whitehorse West was using in her remarks to say that it is good for us to come together and discuss these things and that good ideas come from all sides of this House. I agree with that. As I look at this motion -- yes, this addresses one aspect of a bigger issue. As far as it goes toward talking about that aspect, I am supportive of it.

It talks about new incentives to increase the labour pool for entry-level jobs in the service and retail industries in the short term. Then it talks about the groups it's targeted toward. We know there is a shortage of workers in entry-level jobs. This is not just in Yukon but also in British Columbia. We hear that in Vancouver there are "help wanted" signs everywhere. In Alberta, the problem is probably bigger than anywhere else. We have heard the kinds of wages people are paying to get people into these jobs in some other jurisdictions. To be honest, if employers have to pay more in order to get people to work in those jobs, then good for the workers. I am not one who believes that jobs in the service industry have to be minimum-wage jobs. It is a free market.

We heard today on the radio that the price of gasoline is going up because there is a shortage of refinery space, not because there is a shortage of petroleum. That is what happens; it is a free market.

I understand that this motion has been crafted to address, basically, a platform item from the Yukon Party platform in the last election and a particular commitment in the budget. I have two owners of major food franchises who live on my block. I hear from them quite frequently as we walk past each other or do yard work, and they do have these problems. I appreciate it. They do want help and they said so before the election. I am sure those employers will appreciate whatever help they can get, but there are a lot of other areas that also need to be addressed.

First of all, I find it kind of ironic or surprising that this is a priority now, because this government has been saying for several years that they have improved the economy and are fixing the economy and that the unemployment rate was higher when they took office. They said there were people who had left the Yukon. It was true. It was happening in a lot of areas, but it was certainly happening here. If they are so confident that it was this government's actions that fixed everything, then they dropped the ball on this one. They should have seen that that was going to be a need and addressed it sooner, rather than waiting until there is a crisis.

If they knew the economy was going to improve, they could have anticipated this labour shortage and been working on this three years ago. It is three years too late starting on this initiative. Why is the economy doing well? We've said high mineral prices, devolution, which was accomplished by the past Liberal government -- we are now the regulators and it has made a huge difference in the money that comes into a Yukon budget from Canada and then gets used again because we are in charge of more of these services ourselves, so the transfer payments are bigger because they are being administered through the Government of Yukon, not via the Government of Canada. The upturn in all of western Canada that we have seen -- high oil prices. Again the other day, to make my point, I congratulated the Yukon Party government on the Dow Jones hitting 13,000 and the Canadian dollar moving over 90 cents. No sooner had I spoken than the dollar moved up even higher, so more has been accomplished.

I guess my concern is that there are four bullets in this particular motion. The first one addresses seniors who might wish to take on part-time or full-time work, but are discouraged by the higher rates of income tax that they would then pay. In the 2007-08 budget that is addressed. They are targeting older workers: "We are also committed to providing new incentives to increase the labour pool for entry-level jobs in the service and retail industries." I would say that for those seniors and those retirees who choose to re-enter the workforce in these jobs -- unlike the Member for Mount Lorne, I am not going to criticize anybody or categorize what jobs people should take on. Every job out there is an important job. When we shop in these stores, when we go to larger stores -- last night because I was at a couple of meetings, I didn't get to eat dinner. It was 9:30 and I violated my own health tenets and drove through a fast-food drive-through to get some food because I knew my family had already had dinner and I didn't know what would be available at home. I was in the lineup for 15 minutes and there were only two cars in front of me. Obviously there was a short-

age of workers inside and it was quite evident because there was nobody at one window and only somebody at the final window, and obviously they were short in the kitchen and I had to wait. I know that is real and there is nothing wrong with people taking those jobs, but I am concerned that we are only targeting those jobs.

I am concerned that we are only doing the first thing, which is the first bullet, and targeting seniors only into those jobs, because there is a lot of other work that seniors might want to do. In First Nation communities, the traditional word that is used for them is "elders". It is recognized in First Nation communities that elders have wisdom because they have lived longer and experienced more. They have seen ups and downs and gone through difficulties. They have been strengthened by their experiences. It is unfortunate to think that seniors -- people who are 65 or 70 -- should be greeters in big box stores or working at a drive-through window. We should be targeting more opportunities for them to work and bring back the experience. We have many retirees from the Government of Yukon -- people who have had 25- and 35-year careers working in the Government of Yukon doing very complicated and important jobs. I don't think we want to suggest that, in their retirement, they should only work at entry-level jobs.

Stay-at-home parents who are unable to take on work due to the cost of childcare is not being addressed by this government. I think it is kind of strange to address the first of four bullets, because it begs the question as to what is planned for the other three. I will make some suggestions on the second bullet of the motion -- childcare. It is quite simply that we need to make childcare more affordable. We need to quit stalling and quit studying.

I think that, earlier today, the Premier said in response to a question by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin regarding a report that it is only a report, it is only a study, that they are taking action and doing something on the environment; they're not studying it. Yet when we raised the issue of childcare or social assistance, the government says that they want to study them some more. The government has criticized the Liberal Party and Liberal members for having a platform that made some specific recommendations. We never said this was the end and would solve everything.

I wrote a letter to the editor awhile ago about childcare and I said that ultimately we need to be looking at it not as organized babysitting, which is the sort of mindset some people have, but as just another step in education. My wife is an educator. She is very well-paid for working very hard teaching five- and six-year-olds. Then we pay somebody \$12 or \$13 an hour to teach that same child when they are three or three-and-a-half years old. That makes no sense.

The children are just as vulnerable a year earlier, and most studies will show that the impact on them, the educational experience, may be even more important at that point. It may set the tone for whether they will succeed or fall short of succeeding later in school. Ultimately, we need to look at the whole thing and ask how much of this should be looked at. It's currently put in the Department of Health and Social Services. We've always treated it as a social issue. I think over the long-

term we need to look at it as an educational issue. We did say to increase the childcare direct operating grant to licensed childcare centres and family day homes by 25 percent; increase the subsidy to qualifying parents by \$100 a month; raise the income cut-off to qualify for the subsidy by 25 percent; exclude the federal childcare payments from income when calculating eligibility for the subsidy; don't make parents pay any Yukon income tax on the new \$100 a month federal childcare payments and so on.

We costed out those suggestions. It came to somewhere in the realm of \$2 million a year. We believe that the money exists. We believe that the \$85 million in surplus shows that the money exists to do that. We were criticized by the government for having specific targets. We think specific targets are goals, and they allow people to budget and plan. If the government wants to study it and come back and say, "You know, we've increased it by 25 percent, but it turns out we should increase it by 31.5 percent" -- great. We have no opposition to studying it. We have opposition to delaying taking action for longer and longer periods of time, because in the meantime parents are struggling.

This motion addresses only one of the four bullets. Look at (3): "for those on social assistance who would like to supplement their income to help meet their needs." We've been saying for session after session -- in the 31st session, in the 32nd session, the fall sitting, the spring sitting, the previous spring sitting -- that we have to address what's happening with social assistance. The government has been studying it. I'm not surprised that the Member for Klondike felt the need to bring forward a motion to push the government because, as a backbencher, that's his only vehicle. I commend him for urging the government to take action, although it's a little strange to have to urge the government of which he is a part. Nevertheless I think it is good that he does so.

What are some of the other things that could be done beyond just talking about entry-level jobs, like enhanced skills training? We know there is a growing labour shortage across western Canada. It has demonstrated the need for more training and a more skilled workforce. We had suggestions for that. We said to develop a comprehensive worker recruitment and retention strategy, not only for entry-level jobs but for all levels. We suggested: establish a working group led by the Minister of Education, the Minister of Economic Development and the president of Yukon College to evaluate how to further enhance the ability of Yukon College to train workers; fund a \$100,000 feasibility study to examine the potential for a university of the Yukon, and I know that the third party has talked about a university of the Yukon. Their leader has championed this. I don't know whether we can overnight establish a university; I believe more in evolving toward it, but we think that spending money on that and looking into it and seeing how we can expand programs and work toward it would be money well-spent.

We also suggested the creation of a Yukon capacity development fund. Again, what would that do? A fund like that would have been an application-driven fund. We suggested \$100,000, but considering the surplus, perhaps it could be larger. It is a fund that workers could apply to in order to have

training costs covered. They would have a sponsoring business to which the worker returns after getting the training. What does that do? In other words, for skills that don't exist in Yukon, skills that are in shortage -- allow workers to say, "If I take this program and if I get this certification, then here's an employer who can hire me, but they can't afford to hire and train me. They need me to have this certification." These are loans and then the loans can be forgiven as long as they return to work with the sponsoring business.

Again, I throw that out because I very much appreciate the remarks of the Member for Whitehorse West because she said there have been ideas from all sides of this House that have come forward during debate on motions and some of them have been incorporated by different governments over the years into programs. I throw that one out as something. Change it or call it something else -- it doesn't have to be the name that the Liberals put on it, but do it, because it will help to attract more skilled workers in the workforce.

Now, we also talked about some other things during the campaign. I want to put some of them out, because there are still some things that can be done. It doesn't matter that we're not the government of the day if the plans come forward.

There is a need to look at a targeted approach to help us to serve Outside clients as well and do other work. I have a constituent who has been working here for a few years making a six-figure salary working for a company Outside. He has a particular skill set and he is bringing money into the Yukon. He pays taxes in the Yukon, but his employer is elsewhere. By the same token, his is in the knowledge sector. We need to build that knowledge economy and bring more workers here. I know from other constituents that there is a shortage of those kinds of workers in Yukon. Yukon businesses, such as in the computer and programming areas, are short of those skilled workers. We need to target that.

These are just some positive suggestions that I think could be done. We could amend the motion to suggest that it could target more areas. I know that the Acting Leader of the Third Party has indicated that he can't support the motion because of what it doesn't address. My concern with amending the motion is that I don't want to see something positive not happening just because, once amended, people speak to the amendment and so on. We have seen past motions get talked out so that they don't get passed at the end of the day because of what appears to most people, including ourselves, as a bit of a game. We amend it, then we talk to it, then somebody else amends it and at the end of the day, we haven't accomplished much. As much as I am tempted to amend it to address some of these areas, I am not going to do so.

I would encourage the government to look at some of these other areas that we have brought forward that my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek South, who has a fair bit of expertise in this area, has brought forward. We should focus on much more than just the entry-level jobs and the unskilled jobs and address some of these other areas. We should have the best paid, most skilled workforce anywhere. We know that we in the Yukon have, on average, the highest or second-highest

level of post-secondary education of any jurisdiction in Canada.

I see the Member for Southern Lakes, who is the Education minister, nodding because he'll know whether it's first or second, and I don't. But I know it's up there.

If we've got these kinds of skills here, we need to retain those people too. So that's why I suggest that we should be making use of more than entry-level jobs. When these people with these advanced degrees retire from government service, we should be looking to inspire them to take on other employment in the private sector as well.

In any case, I've made some positive suggestions. I will be supporting this motion, because I think it takes a step in the right direction. I want to maintain the momentum that we've had in here of working cooperatively, at least one day a week -- Wednesdays -- as opposed to some of the other days when we seem to get lost in debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It gives me pleasure to rise in the Assembly today in support of this motion, and I commend the Member for Klondike for bringing forward this motion and highlighting his commitment and our government's commitment to addressing this area.

The issue of entry-level jobs is something that is increasingly becoming a challenge here in the Yukon, with the economy doing very well here today.

I must note that the Leader of the Official Opposition spent a significant amount of time talking about social assistance. As I have previously identified in this House, we are reviewing social assistance rates right now and will be coming forward with appropriate modifications based on the results of that review.

I must point out, in comparing our challenges today in finding people for entry-level jobs and the issue of social assistance -- I would remind members that the only increase the Liberals made to social assistance when in government was increasing the number of people on social assistance, as they tanked the economy of the territory. There was certainly not a shortage of people to work in that marketplace. It was the opposite problem, as the Yukon had double-digit unemployment at that time.

Today in the Yukon, we have seen a period of quite a few months where the unemployment rate has been at around the five-percent mark, dipping down to around the three-percent mark, which, of course, places us in the area where not only are most people indeed employed, but it is a challenge to find people for many areas, including entry-level jobs.

Now, as per our commitment in the election campaign, our government is committed to working to bring in measures making entry-level jobs, such as those in the service and retail industries, more attractive to potential employees already within the existing labour pool, as well as to assist employers with the costs of hiring and training those workers. The aim of this, of course, is to encourage greater participation of these sectors in the entry-level workforce. This includes changes for seniors who might wish to take on part-time or full-time work, but are

discouraged by the higher rates of income tax they would then pay. The commitment is to introduce changes to the tax regime to ensure that there is no disincentive to taking on this type of employment.

On that same topic, I must commend the federal government for the change they have made in this year through the age credit enhancement. They increased the federal income tax credit for Canadians 65 years of age and older by \$1,000. The effective date of that was January 1, 2006. It has been increased to a level of \$5,066. These types of changes are important. There are many senior citizens who, some time after they retire, find that they wouldn't mind taking on a part-time job. It may be in a field where they have expertise, as other members have mentioned. In other cases, it may be a part-time job, such as working as a greeter at Wal-Mart, serving coffee or driving a van for seniors, such as a member of my family in Ontario has done in retirement. It may not even be that there is a need to take on this work so much as just a desire to have a bit of extra income to supplement their pension, as well as some activity. The important part of this is that it opens up an option. It is a choice. None of us would want to see seniors financially compelled to do so, but the reality is that it can be attractive for them, and providing them with that opportunity opens up a new group of people who might be willing to work part time.

A second sector of focus for encouraging participation in entry-level jobs is stay-at-home parents who are unable to take on work due to the cost of childcare. We are committed to incentives to allow their participation in the entry-level job market, adding to what we have already done in the area of childcare.

We are putting in place a 40-percent increase to the direct operating grant -- an increased investment of some \$900,000 annually -- raising the total investment by the Yukon government in childcare to \$5.3 million per year.

We are committed to a territory-wide childcare and early-learning strategy, moving forward on a new five-year plan based on following priorities and working in partnership with parents, childcare operators and workers, and focusing on the needs ultimately of children with the following goals: creating more available spaces for children of all ages, especially for those younger than 18 months; reducing the rates parents pay for childcare; increasing financial support and reducing disincentives, such as taxes, to allow parents to participate in the labour force; ensuring that parents with children in kindergarten are not charged full-time preschool rates for their childcare; a greater focus on early learning for preschool children; and collaborating with First Nations, community groups and non-governmental organizations to provide an integrated system that better serves the educational and cultural needs of parents and their children in all Yukon communities.

Another area of focus for opening up and increasing the labour pool for entry-level jobs includes the area of those on social assistance. As I have stated before in the House, we are right now doing a very comprehensive review of the social assistance structure. We want to ensure two priorities are met: (1) to ensure that funding is always adequate to address the needs of those who are forced to rely on social assistance; and

(2) to ensure that the system is structured to give people a hand up rather than a handout to assist those who are on social assistance to move into the labour force -- first, to identify the areas, whether it is training or childcare rates or financial disincentives in some way, shape or form that make it difficult for them to enter the labour force. We want to address those problems -- identify them, address them, put in place the programming, and help them move into the labour force so that they can be gainfully employed and have the satisfaction and financial benefit that accrues from that.

A further area for increasing the labour pool for entry-level jobs is students. One thing that can be a challenge for employers is dealing with someone who does not have training in a job. There are costs associated with that; it can be difficult. We are committed to making assistance available to employers to offset the cost of wages as the employee is integrated into his or her position. By addressing this area we intend to, and will, reduce the cost of integrating new entrants into the job market.

So within these sectors of our existing labour force -- those being seniors, stay-at-home parents, students and those on social assistance -- there will be many who are interested in taking on entry-level work, either on a full-time or a part-time basis. We are focused on reducing the barriers to their participation for the benefit of these individuals, employers and society.

In an improved economy like the one underway in the Yukon, it's important that employment incentives such as those we have outlined are implemented. We are doing the work right now through the Department of Health and Social Services and through the Department of Education, and other departments are involved in linking to these areas to ensure that the changes are made within our system, to ensure that it is the very best system we can have and that we face the challenge that has been caused by a revitalized and growing economy.

As has been noted, the improved economy and the new era of prosperity have brought their own challenges, and that is in the area of identifying employees who are able to fill the jobs in many sectors. Entry-level is the area that has been focused on today and has been highlighted by the Member for Klondike in his motion but, as members will recall, there are other areas that have been addressed and will continue to be addressed, such as through my Department of Health and Social Services -- the new health human resources strategy that we rolled out last year put in place programs and incentives to assist physicians, nurses and other health professionals that are making the Yukon a more attractive place for them to come and work. They have done that through areas such as the family physician incentive program under which we provide new graduates from medical school up to \$50,000 for coming here and committing to be in the Yukon for a period of five years. There is the medical education bursary under which we provide Yukon students entering medical school \$10,000 per year in support for their education.

If they choose to return to the territory following that education, they will receive up to \$15,000 a year during their period of medical residency, if they take up residency in a family medical practice. That area specific to physicians has already

been augmented by the announcement just yesterday of our new initiative under the health human resources strategy. Funding has been provided in four areas, one being contributions to help renovate and expand space in existing medical clinic buildings to accommodate new physicians with the criteria clearly stating that the renovations must increase space for at least one new physician who qualifies for hospital privileges.

The second initiative is to provide start-up funds for physicians looking to establish a practice in the Yukon.

The third area is to provide a stipend to physicians who act as preceptor resident physicians in the Yukon. In simple terms, when a student of a medical school is in their period of residency, the doctor that oversees them during that period of their education when they're "out in the field" is referred to as a "preceptor". What we're doing through this is providing a stipend to the physician overseeing them, so that they do not end up taking a loss if the university does not provide support for that, as some do and some do not.

I should mention that all of these are with the Yukon Medical Association. We are working with the Yukon Medical Association on new tools and campaigns to attract physicians to the territory.

So, as I outlined, this is just an example of how, both in the area identified by the Member for Klondike today in his motion specific to entry-level jobs and to the other end, within the medical field, we are taking action to address the challenge we're facing today with our increased economy and the national issue of the demographics -- the baby-boomers nearing retirement -- and the increased demand for workers as so many people retire.

Other areas under the health human resources strategy, of course, include the nurse education bursary. We have doubled the support per Yukon student taking education, as well as doubling the number of applicants who are accepted under that program. That support is up to \$5,000 per year and is similar to the health profession education bursary, which enables us to address a list of many other health professions. Again, under that, we provide up to \$5,000 per year to assist Yukon students attending school in those areas.

Those areas include, as a priority, pharmacy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language pathology and audiology, medical laboratory, medical radiology, dietetics and nutrition, and licensed practical nursing.

Another area related to that to assist in addressing nursing is the announcement last month of the new nurse mentorship program, which will assist us in engaging in knowledge transfer from more experienced nurses to newer nurses in the field, particularly in areas such as community nursing where there is a high level of expertise and experience required. Nurses have been asking for many years for mentorship support and we are pleased to have been able to do so in that area.

Mr. Speaker, this is just a recap of how, as a government, we are moving forward from the entry-level area, as highlighted by the Member for Klondike in his motion, to the area of health professionals and how we are taking steps on a number of fronts to recognize that this is a very large challenge. It is

necessary to address each profession and each area based on the needs of that specific sector.

I thank the Member for Klondike for bringing forward this motion. Before I conclude, I would hope that we can pass this motion and I look forward to hearing from other members. I would be remiss if I didn't note that this includes other areas such as education. The Minister of Education's comprehensive skills and trades training strategy includes an increased focus on Yukon College and its community campuses to increase skills and trades training and work with the private sector to increase enrolment in the Yukon apprenticeship program for approximately 46 designated trades, as well as initiating a targeted marketing campaign to bring Yukon skilled workers back to the territory and attracting new workers by advertising the opportunities that are available and the superior quality of life that the Yukon has to offer.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on for quite some time, but I look forward to hearing from other members. I hope that we can all come forward and agree to pass this motion and support this area and the strategy for continuing forward with the work that has been done to address these needs.

Mr. Edzerza: I would like to make a few comments with regard to this motion.

This motion was tabled on November 28, 2006. It was a Yukon Party campaign promise, so why wasn't it addressed in this budget? That is the first question I would put to the government. They had the opportunity to include this in the budget this year if they were really serious about it, and it didn't make it. I question really how much of a priority this really is. It appears that the government is again working the issue.

Mr. Speaker, I have to disagree with some of the comments that were just made by the Minister of Health and Social Services, especially with regard to nursing. I believe it was raised in this House before -- Yukoners who have had to go south to get a degree in nursing were refused jobs when they returned to the Yukon. In fact one individual hired a U-Haul, because they were told they would have a job when they come here. They hired a U-Haul, moved up here, passed up opportunities for jobs down south to come home, because the individual already owned a home, bought and paid for -- only to have to rent the place out and hire a U-Haul to move back south to go to work in a hospital that accepted her with open arms. Now, according to what the minister just said, there is a total conflict here with reality. What is the train of thought for this government? Or did their thoughts catch a train to nowhere, because what they are saying really doesn't support their actions. There is a problem here. In fact, I might mention that the very nurse who wasn't taken on in the Yukon is now being recruited by a hospital in Hawaii.

So what are we doing wrong in the territory? We're saying here on the floor of the Legislature that we thoroughly support Yukoners who go out of the territory, get educated and come back home, but are we? That is really the question we have to answer. I don't believe we are. I believe that we are losing very good people.

I would also like to talk about why only entry-level jobs are addressed. If we want an incentive for that area, the Yukon will have to follow the example of Fort McMurray. I heard from individuals in Alberta as recently as two or three months ago that people who work at McDonald's in Fort McMurray make between \$17 and \$18 an hour. That could be a real incentive to get people working at these different outlets where they are having problems getting people to work. They should start paying a good wage. That is the best incentive I know.

When we talk about increasing the labour pool in the Yukon, I would say to the government that one of the untapped labour forces in the Yukon is First Nation people. First Nation people are still having a hard time getting work. Why is that? I have no answer. I do know of at least seven or eight journeyman carpenters in the Kwanlin Dun First Nation who could not get work in this territory when there was big infrastructure being built. The Alaskans took them on -- every one of them. They worked all winter for housing construction in Alaska.

How does the government justify saying there is shortage in the labour pool here? I cannot believe this, because there are several First Nation people I know of who had to move to get work. I have a hard time comprehending where the government is coming from when they say that we have a shortage of workers. It may be true in some areas, but for crying out loud, let's not chase our professional people away. The incentive for this government to have kept those nurses was to give them a job -- and they are born and raised, educated Yukoners who are now working elsewhere. So, like I said, I have a hard time really believing that there is such a demand for workers in this territory.

I also want to touch on another untapped labour force that I feel is relevant and is present in the Yukon Territory, and that's women. Why is there so much inequality for women on jobs? I think it's about time that women were seen as more than just people who could work in the kitchen or at home. I really don't see a heavy, heavy push in the government to support women.

We have these little things called women in trades introductory courses and whatnot, but what can we do to provide an incentive to women to really start getting involved in the labour force? And I mean in every area, from welding to equipment operators to commercial pilots -- whatever. But that is one area that I believe a lot more work has to be done in in order to address some of the shortages within the labour market in the territory -- right across the board, not just at the entry level.

And we talk about seniors -- heaven forbid that we have to start asking the people who have worked all their lives to come back out and do some more. I don't see it as a bad thing. Maybe one incentive would be to offer all senior citizens, who give their professional expertise as supervisors or whatever, these positions as tax-free, for example. Seniors wouldn't have to pay any tax if the country is still asking them to work after they have reached retirement age.

I know there are some seniors who are very active, would love to get out and do something but, given the way the system is set up, it would jeopardize their old-age pension, for example. Like I said, no tax might be a solution.

I heard the minister talk a little bit about the social assistance clients. It raises red flags for me. It really does. I'm not sure if there would be any hidden agenda here, but I certainly would be very suspicious if someone, say, started digging into the social assistance and said we don't want to give them a handout; we want to give them a hand up. I've heard of too many situations where the way that's dealt with is to just basically cut them off social assistance totally and force them to do whatever. I think the government has to really understand that a lot of the people who are on social assistance may be there because of several reasons. I know that addictions are rampant in the Yukon Territory, and how do you deal with that issue if you force someone off social assistance? If the government wants an incentive to help those individuals -- we've been asking on the floor of the Legislature for many days -- it's about the importance of having a territorial treatment centre in the Yukon Territory. That is what is needed. I believe we would have a lot more people in the labour pool if that help was available in the Yukon Territory.

I know the government will come back and say, "Well, we have Crossroads or we have the Sarah Steele Building and we're going to build a treatment centre instead of a jail." Well, there's a lot of talk and not much action here with regard to this specific issue. In my discussions with several people throughout the Yukon Territory, one of the comments I've heard most often to date is that we need a treatment centre in the Yukon Territory.

We only have maybe 100 to 200 people who could be incarcerated in the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, but what about the rest of the people who are voluntarily looking for help? The reason it doesn't happen is because the majority don't want to go south for treatment, so they don't get it. It just keeps escalating and escalating and it filters down through from the adolescents and through the younger people. Even if the younger people today have an addiction problem, I don't know where they would go to get help other than to the south.

I think one of the incentives -- and money is not always the solution for incentives for anybody. I think there are an awful lot of people who are already making very good money but are having a hard time making ends meet because of the addictions that they have. In reality, the more money paid, the more a person can support their addictions. I know from my experience and with the traditional knowledge I do have, balance is something that is very important in life. It is good to have work and it's good to have people out there making money, but at the same time we also have to have other programs available. Sometimes money is what creates the problem -- too much of it. I know people may think that I don't know where I am coming from when I say too much money can be bad sometimes, but when you live from paycheque to paycheque, that's when you begin to understand what I am talking about.

I think that I could probably talk about many other things with regard to this motion, but I am going to leave it at that, Mr. Speaker, because I think I did make the points that I wanted to. Again, I only wish the best for everybody in life. If incentives were something that would make it so, then it would be a good thing.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and pleasure to rise today in the Assembly to enter into the debate on the motion brought forward by the Member for Klondike. It is a good, solid motion. From what I have heard so far, there seems to be a lot of support for it from at least two of the political parties in here.

Earlier this past year, I was at a small meeting. There were about a dozen different employers in the room. During the discussion, we started to tally up the number of new opportunities they had and the number of new employees they were looking to hire. Just within that small group of people, they came up with over 100 people. There were 300 jobs out there that they needed to staff in very short order.

Now, when we look at the statistics that the statistics bureau, Human Resource Development Canada and some other agencies have developed for us, I realize that we have an unemployment rate in the territory of about 3.2 percent, which is incredibly low. In fact, it is so low that it is a problem itself.

There is an organization in Whitehorse that has done a survey of some of the major employers and smaller employers. They have identified that there are about 590 jobs in Whitehorse and throughout the Yukon communities that need people. When we look at the unemployment numbers, the latest statistics we have is that there are 500 unemployed people. In one estimate there are 590 jobs; on the other hand we have 500 unemployed people.

Obviously, those unemployed people don't always have the skills or characteristics to fit the jobs that are available. That is just the nature of things. Different people have different backgrounds and work experience. They have different professional and employment experience. We can't always just take those folks and say, "Here's the job for you." It just doesn't work that way. What it does indicate is that we have more jobs in the territory than we have people to fill them right now. That is a problem.

Some would argue that it's a good problem to have, but it can cause other issues down the road. So it's one that we need to address.

That's the rationale behind bringing forward this motion today. It is an important issue in our community.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with the motion that the Member for Klondike has brought forward -- he brought it forward with a different approach too. I think we all can agree that he brought forward a motion that is a recognition of the problem. I think we can all accept that reality in the Assembly. Hopefully, through the course of our debate, we can convince some of the members in the NDP that there really is this issue and that it does need to be addressed.

We have also put forward in this motion a call for action on it. So, on one hand, there is a problem. Secondly, we need to take action. What I would like to see is for all of us in this Assembly to agree to that -- to say, "Yes, it is an issue. Yes, we should do something." And in here, there are some very targeted initiatives and, yes, there are others out there.

I appreciate that the leader of the Liberal Party has offered some other solutions or alternatives that could be incorporated

into this. I certainly do appreciate that we're not doing the "motion shuffle" -- the amendment, and then the amendment to the amendment. Let's get beyond that. Let's agree that we can all agree it's an issue and we need to take steps on it.

Another thing about this motion is that it provides a multi-departmental approach to its resolution. Now, this isn't an issue that can simply be addressed by government. We all can recognize that too. It will involve this government, other orders of government, employers, employees, municipalities and individuals. But specifically in the territorial government, it recognizes that the different departments need to be involved -- that Health and Social Services plays a role, that Finance plays a role, that Economic Development plays a role, that Tourism and Culture plays a role, and that the Department of Education certainly plays a role.

The Department of Education has a significant responsibility in this area and has been taking steps and actions on labour market initiatives and preparing Yukoners for employment opportunities for years.

In fact, if we look at the funding for the Department of Education, this year we expect to spend over \$32 million on labour market initiatives and training. This includes an investment in the community training trust fund, the labour market development agreement, the aboriginal human resource development agreement, the Yukon Indian training trust and Yukon's significant investment in Yukon College.

There are several different programs that we have operating right now. These include our labour market development agreements that we have with Ottawa, the community training funds, the trades training programs, post-secondary education support, literacy support, support for on-the-job training, recruiting workers to the Yukon and flexible immigration practices. With regard to our labour market development agreement, Canada and the Yukon co-manage employment services in the Yukon. This year, we will see over \$3.5 million allocated to the labour market development initiatives. One of the important projects coming forward that we will be announcing very shortly with our federal partners is a targeted initiative for older workers. This will be an investment of over \$600,000. It will work with our partners in education -- specifically Yukon College -- to provide assistance to older workers to re-engage in the workforce.

In the area of community training trust funds, this budget will allocate \$1.5 million into 14 different funds. Now, I think most Members of the Legislative Assembly know about these funds. They are sectoral or community specific or project-based. They allow those involved in the industry or community to identify those areas that do need additional training and additional support. They provide funds to individuals to get that type of training. It allows us to be very responsive to the community's needs and to industry's needs.

In the area of trades training, Yukon College provides pre-employment trades and apprenticeship-level courses. Right now we have about 340 registered apprentices. I believe that is the highest number of apprentices ever that we have had indentured at one time.

This year we will see over \$1 million being spent on Yukon apprentices in in-school training. About two weeks ago we saw the continued investment in trades training up at Yukon College with the provision of capital dollars to be used to expand the trades training programs at Yukon College and also to give them the flexibility to enhance their trades training trailers so that they can take the trailers out to the community to provide hands-on training where it is needed.

The Department of Education also provides post-secondary education support. \$15 million is provided to Yukon College. With our student financial assistance programs, we provide over \$6 million in scholarships, training allowances, the Yukon excellence awards and Yukon grants.

So far, Mr. Speaker, for 2006-07, over 1,000 students are receiving financial assistance. That is a very large number considering the population of the Yukon. We have 286 Yukoners receiving these funds to attend courses here -- primarily through Yukon College, but we also provide financial assistance to about 778 other individuals to attend institutions out of the Yukon. That is a tremendous number -- that there are over 775 individuals from the Yukon who are now Outside attending post-secondary institutions and developing their skills. In fact, when I looked into this number, I was really curious to see how many different institutions these students are going to. I was curious as to whether all our students are going down to University of British Columbia or the University of Alberta, but it is amazing. Yukon students attend over 125 different institutions across North America. When you think about it, the opportunities that the Yukon students have through the Yukon grants and the assistance that we provide and the articulation agreements that we have -- and interdepartmental agreements that we have -- with other institutions that give them advance standing for some of the courses, or at least hold the door open for them so there are seats in some of the different programs.

It allows Yukon students to go to the centre of excellence in education for their specific field of study. So they aren't all just saying, "Hey, we'll go to the school that's closest to us." Many of them are going to the centre of excellence for their field of study throughout North America.

When I look at the number of over 125 different institutions, I was really amazed and gratified to see that. What I really want to see is those Yukoners going out, getting that education, coming back home and using what they have learned to better and further the territory along.

There is other support that the Department of Education provides. For example, for literacy, which I think we will all agree, is a very key component in seeking, obtaining and maintaining employment situations. We provide over \$1 million to literacy programs and organizations. The issue of on-the-job training has been raised earlier. The Department of Education has several programs in this area. They include the student training and employment program, the summer career placement program, the Yukon Native Training Corps and the Yukon government apprenticeship program.

Earlier, there was a member from the New Democratic Party who said that government should lead by example. There's a really good example of the government getting in-

involved and hiring apprentices. We have other programs that we see to help recruit workers such as the Come Home program or the GradCorps program, and I would expect that the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission will be able to go into more details about those programs.

We have agreements for Canada/Yukon cooperation on immigration, and we're also working to identify and address long-term labour shortages. The Department of Education is working with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to conduct a labour market demand survey that will be done throughout the year.

We're working with the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce to add to current knowledge about Yukon's labour force, to identify programs and services that currently exist; research best practices in hiring and retention of Yukon's labour force.

So, there are programs out there but clearly we have an issue that is coming to the forefront. Statistics demonstrate that; the help-wanted signs on Main Street demonstrate that; the number of ads in the newspaper looking for employees demonstrates that there are significant needs out there. We do have to look at some of what we would probably call untraditional sources of people to work in these areas.

There was also a question about why the service and retail industry was singled out. That is the largest private sector segment in the Yukon's economy. When the motion was crafted and focused down, it looked at where we are seeing a significant demand and where there is a significant problem today. That's where it's at. It's called for some sector-specific assistance -- for example, with seniors, and calling for action to assist seniors who might wish to take on part-time or full-time work but are discouraged by the higher rates of income taxes they would pay.

I believe I just heard the Member for McIntyre-Takhini speak specifically to that item and suggest that was a good idea. I believe he was discussing the extent of even eliminating income taxes for seniors. I think that is an item that he could live with at least -- perhaps there is another speaker who could clarify if he was agreeing or disagreeing with that position. I wasn't quite sure.

There are many different reasons why seniors might want to re-engage in the employment situation. There are some who re-engage for necessity -- they do not have the resources, or their savings or pensions or the forms of assistance they receive are not great enough so they have to work to maintain the lifestyle they want to. But there are others there who choose to work to prevent cranial atrophy. They want to work to keep busy, to keep from getting bored, to have a reason to get up and leave the home and go and do something, and because they have something to share and they do make good mentors.

Anyone that has ever shopped at Lee Valley tools can appreciate the mentorship and the wisdom from the many folks who work behind the counter there. I just throw out that one as an example of a place I have shopped where many seniors work due to a joy of working with the subject. It is an area where the employer has been very creative and found a tremendous resource. It is a neat example where workers can re-engage.

This motion is calling for specific action to assist stay-at-home parents, to work with those on social assistance and to work with students. It is a good motion. It responds to an identified need in our community. It is putting forward good initiatives that I hope we can all agree on. I would like to seek the support of all members of the Assembly. I think we can all work together in a collegial manner to come to an agreement and support this motion unanimously.

Mr. Fairclough: This is government motion day. The government side identified a motion that is in the name of the Member for Klondike. Basically, we are forced to deal with this motion. Out of all the direction that the government side wanted get through motions, this is the one we have to deal with.

The unfortunate part is that the majority of this motion has been announced. It was read by the Premier in the budget speech. Here we are asking government to do what they said they were going to do in a budget speech. This is what we are being asked to do. Are there not other things the backbenchers could be urging government to do? Is there not more that that side could do than bring forward things that they have already announced in the budget speech? I would think so. I made a mistake. There is only one backbencher on that side of the House.

I have concerns with this, but I am going to vote for this motion, and I am going to keep government accountable because this is what they are urging themselves to do. We are going to keep them accountable to that. I am going to vote for this motion on that basis and because of some of the things that are included, although I don't agree with the whole motion. I would think that it would be counter-productive to do any amendment on this motion because we are outnumbered and it definitely would not be passed.

I have some concerns with how it is written. The New Democrats identified a couple of them. First of all, we are talking about entry-level jobs. Here is the unfortunate part, Mr. Speaker: we have had Yukoners who went out to school, were trained, came back to the territory and couldn't get a job. Guess what? They are in professions we are seeking out the most. One of them is in nursing. These two happen to be aboriginal students. I don't know if that makes a difference with the members opposite, but they did have their training and, guess what? They couldn't get a job here. That's the unfortunate part. Now we are encouraging these students to take these entry-level jobs. The bad part of all is that these very students who went out and got this training -- it's a four-year course to come back as a nurse -- couldn't get a job with the Yukon government and were offered work in B.C. just because they knew they were graduates and they were hustling to get nurses into their system. Like everybody else, everybody is trying to recruit doctors and nurses in the territory, and here we have our own and we can't even hire them. That is an issue with Yukoners and it is over and over again we see that -- with students going out, coming back and not being able to get a job.

So we are dealing with a motion that is looking at entry-level jobs. That is the unfortunate part.

The members go on and on about saying how the economy is booming in the territory. The five-year Yukon Party plan that they had -- they are almost five years into government, so that is the plan they had at the beginning -- didn't create one major mine in the territory. Not one -- pro-mining and not one major mine in the territory.

Fortunately, we have other governments that are hustling on this file -- First Nations, for example, are working with and are in contact with mining outfits and making deals, even to the point where Minto, for example, is on selected lands. They want work; they're trying to find work; they're hustling hard to try to get the better-than-low-paying jobs. They're doing that. And I really think it's forcing the government to pull up their socks and to start working with the industry to get more work here. I thank them for that, because without that we may not have the industry here like we should.

I'll give you an example, Mr. Speaker, and I've said this before -- when there is a good working relationship with First Nations and a mining outfit, it means millions of dollars for exploration work to get the mine to the stage of production. That's what happened, particularly with Sherwood Copper -- which had a different name before -- and Carmacks Copper and others.

Much activity is taking place in my riding, and I like to monitor it a lot. Unfortunately, the Yukon Party, in its five years, has not been able to convince one mining outfit to open. Minto is the closest one to it, and we will hopefully see that go into production -- well, even this month. They're looking like they are very, very close. That's good work on behalf of the local people there.

We haven't concentrated on trying to diversify the economy here in the territory. Well, what does that really mean, anyway? It really means getting away from the boom-and-bust economy that we're so used to here in the territory. Mining comes and everybody works; it goes down and the unemployment rate goes up.

Well, other places have concentrated on diversifying their economy. I'll give an example -- have a look at Alberta. They do not look at relying strictly on oil and gas.

Their tourism industry is high. They have concentrated on other parts of their economy to ensure people are working in the long term down the road -- even logging in a place like Alberta. We kind of missed the boat and the Yukon Party hasn't put anything in place to really address that over the five years they've been in government. Here is a real good one that the Premier himself is fond of -- trying to get our forestry industry up and going, with sawmills, logging, and so on. That was his bread and butter before coming into politics. They haven't done any of the hard work to ensure that that industry gets up and going.

Fortunately, we have some committed people in the agricultural industry, even though it's a very small part of what we could be producing here in the territory.

A lot of credit needs to be given to First Nations in providing jobs for people in the territory. I keep saying this over and over in every budget speech, but I don't hear the government side saying it at all. There are a lot of professions that come

into the territory strictly because of First Nations and what they are involved with. Where is the government in regard to that?

The motion does say "in the short term" but we can't rely on these service and entry-level jobs to give to Yukoners constantly -- having Wal-Mart and Superstore and so on, which are suffering. We all know it. Just look at the service provided when you go through the checkout lines. They are in need of workers, and so are the communities -- whether it's in the stores or restaurants or whatnot, they are needed. Part of the problem is that we are not attracting them here like we should.

Even our students, when they take the training in universities and colleges outside the territory, want to work in the summertime between semesters. What happens in the territory? Dawson is a prime example where we have seen university students come up and work during the summer. The fact of the matter is that there is work elsewhere and the students are staying there, and that is part of the problem that we're having today.

With regard to bringing forward this motion, whether or not we, on this side of the House support it, I think we do. One of the things we want to do is keep government accountable and urge them do what they said they would do.

In terms of our seniors and what has discouraged them from doing work instead of staying home collecting a pension, we are looking at their high tax rate. That is something I would like to see the Yukon Party address, because it is part of their motion. Obviously, they have some answers, so why not say it here? The mover of the motion did not have a lot to say about this motion at all. I was surprised by that.

Here is another one. It is the second point in the motion and is with regard to entry-level jobs for stay-at-home parents who are unable to work due to the high cost of childcare. I think they could have taken this line right out of the motion if they addressed the issue of the high cost of childcare in the territory. What does it cost for a daycare here in Whitehorse for one child? I haven't heard too many of them that are under \$700 or \$800 a month. The break that we got from the federal government just raised the price of daycare here in the territory. It is between \$700 and \$800 and could be even more. That is a big expense for anyone who has more than one child, but even with one child, if you consider the cost of living for food, rent, clothing and so on, it could be more than a person's paycheque. What happens is that a lot of parents stay at home and raise their child to a certain age and then try to go back out into the workforce.

The government side asked for constructive debate. We made suggestions with regard to childcare. Take care of this issue. Put your thoughts together and come up with a solution. This is part of the motion, so I'm anxious to see the government side's solution to this matter.

In regard to the third point, Mr. Speaker, for those on social assistance who want to make some extra money to help out with their expenses, no one could stand having a small income month after month, being barely able to buy your own food and not eating anything as healthy as you want to, and they want to do this. I think the government ought to take a look at what the First Nations are doing, because the Yukon government is far

behind other local governments that are already doing this. They're trying to provide incentives for those on social assistance to provide some actual work. Whether it's taking care of elders, chopping wood for them, First Nations are doing a lot of that.

I did talk a little bit about the training that took place with some of our students with regard to doctors, but I didn't talk about the ones we have right here in the territory. That's our teachers. Through the Yukon native teacher education program, we've had a lot of students graduate who didn't get into the system here in the territory and would not have if not for the voice of the opposition, trying to encourage government to look at this seriously and hire some of these students. I'm glad to say that pressure from this side of the House on government has produced some of that and we are getting some of our students into the schools and teaching.

The other thing that disappointed me about the Yukon Party government is they said they were going to make First Nations full partners in economic development. That means, if there's work out there, they are going to be full partners and we're going to include them in it. Any government project is economic development in the community -- I raise this again in the House and you're going to hear it again. If they're truly full partners in economic development, they would be involved in projects that are out there. Unfortunately, when it comes to small communities, our unemployment rate is higher than it is here in Whitehorse.

It would be nice for government to come forward and recognize this and get people working on these projects instead of hiring Outside companies from the Northwest Territories and having carpenters coming to the territory from, say, Newfoundland, when our own carpenters could be working on government projects, but end up doing other work.

Unfortunately, the Yukon Party has failed on that front. That is nothing to be proud of. I hope they pull up their socks and really work on the partnership in economic development with First Nations to the full extent and not have just lip service that sounds really good for the time being. They should make it really work; put a plan in place to do it, and not just say it. People out there really know the difference, and they want to see government keep their word on promises they've made to the public during their campaign.

I know I am running out of time here, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that members opposite could do is really concentrate on the minimum wage. We had that nice little debate here in the Legislature with the Youth Parliament. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for doing that. We listened to that in the gallery and in our offices and it was interesting to hear younger people debate back and forth with their different ideas. It is something a bit different from what we would do as elected members in this House. Why not concentrate on it? It doesn't hurt the economy one bit at all to ensure that our minimum wage is the highest in the country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: It gives me great pleasure to rise on this motion and to comment on not only the topic but to put some of the things that have been said back into perspective.

I still have some concerns that have come up in many debates before. For instance, the member before me referred to the minimum wage. With his vast experience in government he should know very well that that is not set by the Legislative Assembly. It's all well and good to comment on what this body should do with it, but the reality, of course, is that this body has nothing to do with it.

We certainly want to put out that there are short-term solutions and short-term solutions are part of that, but there is much more to the issue. The motion I don't think was ever meant to limit those other aspects, but certainly to allow those other aspects to come into the debate as we develop it and pick the minds of the opposition and get their ideas because there are good ideas on all sides of the discussions.

I do have some concerns, though, with the Member for Mayo-Tatchun who is critical that there is no major mine opened, but somehow misses the fact that there are several in imminent danger of opening. He misses the fact that we have gone from roughly around 41st, in terms of desirability by several major studies for places to work and develop, to 11th. We have done that in four short years. He misses the fact that mine exploration has gone up from roughly \$6 million when we took office to approaching \$100 million, and that could substantially go up this year with one operation in particular accounting for over \$25 million in just that one mine alone.

Again, looking at some small parts of the statistics does not really tell the whole story. He fails to mention that when we took office, the Liberal government had us in double-digit unemployment. If you properly adjust it and look at it, our statisticians tell us we are probably closer to two percent -- the best in all of Canada. Better than Alberta, Mr. Speaker. Yukon is one of two jurisdictions that has no debt. We are in the positive figures completely -- that is, of course, Alberta and the Yukon. When you look at that on a per capita basis, we are actually ahead of Alberta.

I think in four short years we have made massive, massive strides, and to comment that this is an accident is I think unconscionable.

It bothers me, too, when the Leader of the Official Opposition again goes back and claims that the development of the economy is due to high mineral prices. I would again remind him, as I did multiple times during the election, that they're called "world" mineral prices. The minerals prices are the same worldwide.

Why then did the Yukon, in this time period, increase its exploration and mine development almost 10 times more than the national average, with exactly the same mineral prices? It's not the world mineral prices. Again, it's an argument that simply does not hold water.

He claims that an increase in western Canada in general -- and perhaps that is a factor; I don't think anyone could really deny that -- is 10 times the national average. He refers to oil prices. I hope he lets me know where that oil well is, because I don't know of any in the Yukon. Is there oil out there? Quite

possibly there is, and in fact, it is quite likely. If we had the infrastructure to develop that and the ability to extract it -- and with modern technology, this can be done with safety to the environment. Other jurisdictions are proving that. We are not a tar sands or anything like that. We can't look at it like that, although I am sure someone will try to draw that conclusion. There are methods of extraction that could greatly benefit the population of the Yukon and the First Nations but, again in terms of oil prices, I would like to know where that oil well is.

I have one ray of hope in all of this. It is regarding a point that was made by the Member for Mount Lorne. It is actually part of what the Member for Mayo-Tatchun had perhaps mistakenly allowed into his debate; that is, the criticism of the wording in the motion that it is looking only for short-term solutions. What I think all of us heard is a concern that we always have to look at developing the big picture, and looking to the future and at the long-term implications.

This is a revelation. It is a huge development in the progress of this Legislature to finally absolutely say that long-term solutions are a big part of it. We do have to look at transportation corridors. We do have to look at rail infrastructure. We do have to look at development of roads. We do have to look at port access and port access studies. All the things that we have been doing in terms of the Pacific gateway and the Asian gateway, and the ways to utilize rail are good examples. Rail is so much more environmentally friendly than roads.

It's so much easier to maintain than all of the maintenance on the roads. It's so much safer, rather than putting large numbers of trucks and everything else on the road.

So these are developments, and I'm sure that someone, at some point, will sit down and realize what they've said. But what they have said so far is that they really want us to be looking at the long-term solutions. That's exactly what we're doing, and it's exactly what we're doing in terms of support of the mines, the exploration and everything else.

The Member for Mayo-Tatchun referred to Sherwood Copper several times, and I would agree wholeheartedly with him on that. That is an example, I think, of how a company should develop, how it can develop, and how it can work with First Nations. Of course we are aware of the fact that unemployment rates are higher in the communities, and this is something that always has to be worked on, and Sherwood Copper is a very good example of that.

For instance, most recently, for those familiar with the Sherwood Copper proposal and project, what that is all about is a single area that has been developed and funded -- they have had very little trouble in developing that funding. I understand that they should be shipping ore in the next couple of months, or at least producing ore and getting ready to ship it. Facilities are under construction in Alaska and Skagway. It's moving along very, very well.

But one of the problems they have is that outside of that original and distinct mine site, also on First Nation land, there are indications that there is much better development. So, our department has been very pleased to give some basic funding to the mine, not for the development of the mine itself -- that's

going -- but to look at expanding that, which is in direct support of Selkirk First Nation.

Now, the opposition, of course, has completely -- I'll be polite and say -- "misinterpreted" that. It is not for development of the mine itself. It's a very reasonable thing to do, and we're very happy to do it, and I think the Selkirk First Nation is very happy. As I say, if I can praise the mine, I also have to praise the Selkirk First Nation for what they've been doing.

The communities are a distinct entity, so one of the things we have done is develop the Yukon economic development partnership agreement. I won't even begin to try to give that acronym. Under this partnership agreement, the Yukon government and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation and Na Cho Nyak Dun First Nation have signed the Dempster corridor economic opportunities identification agreement. That was signed on August 25, 2006. What that does is allow the partners to explore and identify potential economic opportunities along the Dempster corridor. Ultimately that will develop recommendations for consideration by the political principals of the agreement. It will open up, we hope, economic opportunities in the northern communities.

We are very committed to ensuring that the First Nations become key players in that area. We work together and have dedicated staff that work with all the players in this to ensure that any economic initiatives are congruent with ongoing Yukon government programs, planning and mandates -- again, looking at the long-term structure of this.

I hear so much from the opposite side that gives the idea that waving a magic wand at something is going to be a good solution. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that's one thing this government doesn't have. Taking the lead from the Member for Porter Creek South, I will apologize for that. I guess I can apologize without meaning it. We don't have a magic wand -- nobody does. We have to do the hard work of planning. We have to do the hard work of looking at the overall strategic structure. I have been very pleased to be in communication with the Chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin, who has been very complimentary about these efforts and has engaged his First Nation to work with our regional economic development branch. I have no doubt at all that they will do a good job up there. There are so many opportunities in that area.

We have been very fortunate to have the Member for Klondike engage in some of these discussions and come up with some of his own ideas, which we have turned over to our regional economic development group -- again, to tie in tourism opportunities and other opportunities that will benefit all involved. We hope to tie in Holland America and the transportation people up there, to tie into the Tombstone Park and all the various things that will bring more people to Dawson and up the Dempster Highway and into that whole part of the world.

In terms of the skills shortages, we are in a real shortage. We know that. You don't need a degree in political science or anything else to understand that we have a problem. You don't have to do anything but look at the newspaper. You don't have to do anything but walk down the street.

I remember being in Calgary a few months ago with PNWER. One of the Americans from Idaho gave a speech. His comment was that he was so happy to be in that part of Canada and to learn a few Canadian phrases. His comment during the speech was that in Alberta, the way to say hello is to look at someone, shake hands and say, "Can you weld?"

He almost got a standing ovation with that one. It's true, we are short of workers; we are short of skilled workers; we are short of unskilled workers. There are only a few ways we can really address that. Again, we can do the band-aid solutions. We can look for the magic wand. Sometimes there are band-aid solutions, and if you wave a magic wand long enough, something might happen. I suppose there is always that possibility.

Those are things that might have to be tried. But we have to try to forecast the skill shortages. We have to try to look at who is there and what skills we need. We need to do market indicators to determine what the market will bear and what the trends are going to be. We have to do employer-based surveys and find out what the people want and need.

In a previous life I was involved with a community college in Ontario, which had a marvellous program to train operators for electron microscopes. It was a technology that was rapidly developing and for which there was a real need. Unfortunately, without talking with the industry, what the college did was buy six relatively low-end microscopes -- these are several-hundred-thousand-dollar microscopes -- and they did a marvellous two-year training program on how to operate them. Unfortunately, by the time the students graduated, the microscopes were no longer state of the art; they were no longer in common use; they were old technology. They had produced, in fact, technicians who were trained to do something that had no relevance to the employer, as opposed to them doing a wider range of training.

You have to look at the cyclical imbalances, the structural imbalances and how that will impact on the labour market; how we measure those changes; how we look at all of those things in the long term and what we do with them.

We have done that in some respects, both the Department of Economic Development and the chambers of commerce here and in other jurisdictions, and there are a lot of studies out there. They have been conducted all over the place by labour organizations, sector councils, governments, industry associations and on and on. Each study offers points worth considering and recommendations to address the matters that related to skills shortages and skills development.

Alberta and northern British Columbia studies are at least in the right range for Yukon, and we can sort of look at those with maybe a little bit more information. For instance, the Government of Nunavut conducted a skills inventory soon after their territory was established in 1999 to try to determine available skills for public sector hiring because they were very well aware of the fact that they had capacity problems. Interestingly enough, in Nunavut, to my knowledge, there have been no other studies done. Northwest Territories have enjoyed a booming economy throughout the 1990s and into current times. Of course a lot of that is due to the diamond industry. They have had to recruit from overseas. I was rather surprised and inter-

ested to learn that some of the best diamond cutters in the world come from India. In fact, the training programs really had not lived up to what some people want. So, there is an imbalance in the availability of workers and such in every jurisdiction.

What are some of the things we could look at in the Yukon? Business and consumers need a change of mindset. We can substitute technology, where possible, for human resources. Automated-teller machines are a good example that would cut down on the staff needed in a bank. I went to a restaurant not long ago where the waiter had a little hand-held unit, showed you the bill, swiped the card and printed the receipt right there. He never had to walk across the floor.

We can address transportation issues. The public transit system comes under fire occasionally, and while that is a municipal issue, it is something that this government has supported by purchasing new buses and this sort of thing. Busing is often the only affordable transportation option for people, and that may be something to look at. You can also re-schedule classes at Yukon College, either in time for better transportation or in venue and bring them down to other areas -- or go online and do it that way.

We have to broaden eligibility criteria for programs that encourage the hiring of only Yukon youth. We do have the potential of getting in trouble there, under the intergovernmental agreement on internal trade. We may in fact find ourselves in violation of some of our own trade agreements on that. That's a magic wand that may have some limited use, but we have some problems with that.

Recruiting temporary help from other provinces for the summer -- where do we house them? We had one staffing shortage committee -- we put representatives of the Yukon Housing Corporation on it -- and everyone scratched their heads and asked why you would do that. Where are we going to house these people?

When -- not if -- the railroad is built, and it goes through the Carmacks or Ross River area, we had better have lots available. We had better have housing available for these workers and for the people who will service that railroad.

You have to look at the whole range of things. Foreign workers are a potential possibility, but that brings up all sorts of other possibilities. We have to look at recruiting the students, but recruiting them at a level that they are trained for. It's nice to say that a nurse can't get a job, but a one-year graduate or a one-month graduate is not going to go into intensive care or into the emergency room or into surgery. In my own profession -- an absolutely brand spanking new graduate veterinarian is not going to be going in and doing four-hour delicate surgeries in the college. There's that aspect. As the saying goes, not everyone grows up to be an astronaut. We have to be honest and look at that.

When we look at all those things and we look at some of those things in terms of short-term solutions, they're part of the problem. I am so happy to hear the New Democratic Party suggest and almost demand that we look at long-term solutions. I'm so happy to have them finally on side.

Mr. Elias: I am pleased to rise today to speak on the motion from the Member for Klondike. We do have a word for this in Gwich'in: *nii chii gwnulth yiin*, which means moving forward and keep heading in the right direction.

I will be supporting this motion. You'll have to excuse me. It's the first time I am standing in the House to speak to a government motion. It's coming from my colleague, the Member for Klondike, who is a backbencher in a majority Yukon Party government, who is urging the government to do something. It was developed in November, before the pre-budget consultations.

I guess the question is: why don't they just do it? They had the opportunity to put this in the budget, but from what I see, it's only the first bullet in the motion that's actually mentioned in the budget speech. Anyway, I'll move on.

I just want to echo some of my colleagues from both sides of the House actually. Again, I don't have a problem with the substance of the motion. These are things that governments should be doing. It all comes down to the implementation and the details of the motion.

The Chamber of Commerce just produced a report on the labour shortage, and it has a lot of good suggestions. It will take some time to act on those suggestions. It is puzzling for me to hear that the Yukon Party believes they single-handedly improved the Yukon's economy. One thought that comes to mind -- if they knew the economy was going to improve in such a dramatic fashion, they should have anticipated this labour shortage three years ago and would have been trying to solve this problem they saw coming. I guess it's three years too late.

One suggestion that came from a colleague of mine was that we work with the Government of Canada to assist with more foreign workers to come to the Yukon under the temporary immigrant worker program. Past experience with Yukoners in the Filipino community, for instance, has shown that many of these immigrants will eventually become permanent Yukon residents. So that's what I have to say about that.

You know, with regard to the economy doing well, there are very high mineral prices, and devolution was accomplished by the Liberal government. We're now regulators, and it has made a huge difference. The transfers are bigger. And yes, it's our share, but that's part of the reason for the economic upswing in Yukon. All of western Canada is experiencing this and it is attributed to high oil prices as well.

That being said, we have to continue recruiting new workers. I also noted earlier that one of the four bullets begs this question: what is planned for the other three?

I'll make some suggestions on the second bullet in the motion with regard to childcare. It's quite simple actually. Make childcare more affordable. This government has been studying this for four years. They have \$85 million in the bank. Why not spend it on childcare?

I'm going to be fairly brief with my comments here. It is important to note that the economy and Yukon's boom might be felt quite significantly in the territory's capital, but it's a very different story in the smaller communities, and especially in my riding of Old Crow. There is a lack of full-time work, and it is

of particular concern for young adults in my community. Some young people don't expect to find work and simply don't become involved in the formal labour market in Old Crow. They leave the territory to seek work elsewhere. Work in the Old Crow area is less likely to be full-time, and that is just a fact.

Although the Vuntut Gwitchin are isolated by distance and lack of road access or easy transportation, they have made effective use of the Internet as a link to the outside world. I recently had a discussion with one of my constituents who is raising her two young children at home. This link to the outside world via the Internet came up as a topic. She said, "Maybe it could be an economic opportunity for me if I could sell my beadwork around the world. How do you think we could do that?" I said that was an excellent idea. We have the Internet and she came up with an idea of an Old Crow eBay, as she called it, with a local broker where she could take orders from around the world and show her beadwork on the Internet. Then she could still stay at home and raise her two young children. Economic development ideas like that are out there. People are willing to do the work. They just need some initiatives to help those ideas out.

The nearby Vuntut National Park and Ni'inlii'Njik -- formerly known as Fishing Branch Wilderness Reserve and Habitat Protection Area -- could provide some employment in Old Crow. The tourism and private enterprise -- I am not aware of a park ranger from Old Crow being employed in the Fishing Branch protected area. I think that's something we could work on.

Again, Old Crow is far off the beaten path, but it is likely there will be tourists interested in the area once the new visitor reception area is built. This is a partnership among various governments and there are going to be a lot of initiatives there with regard to tourism.

A lot of my constituents have communicated to me that they are willing to share their most prized possessions -- the land, water, wildlife, caribou, and the cultural and traditional lifestyles. I think that could be delved into more with regard to employment -- all-season employment, I might add -- in my small remote community of Old Crow.

Another thing we could do in Old Crow is have training and skill development programs with regard to operating accommodation and food services to support the tourism activity in Old Crow and to provide services to government, business, visitors and people who decide to come to Old Crow.

The economy in Old Crow for the Vuntut Gwitchin is largely traditional and subsistence-based, like I said earlier. Many people rely on traditional hunting, fishing and trapping activities for food and income. It has been like that for thousands of years. A very limited, market-based economy in Old Crow supplements the traditional activities. Government services provide a significant share of the total employment in the market and the economy. Government services in Old Crow include the First Nation government and administration services for First Nation members, as well as the territorial and federal governments -- the police, the teachers, the nursing station and other small businesses.

Another idea that was brought up with regard to employment in my remote northern community regards the newly established Vuntut Hunters and Trappers Association. Their goal is to basically focus on land stewardship and provide teaching to children with regard to trapping and hunter education programs on the Dempster Highway, for instance. I see this as an economic opportunity for private individuals who have the land based skills, the trapping skills and the traditional skills to teach this. This bodes well for the next generation, our youth who are coming up, so they can continue the traditions and contribute their heritage and their culture to many of the shining lights. The management plans for the Vuntut National Park, for the special management area, for Fishing Branch, for the north Yukon fish and wildlife management plans, and for the Rampart House heritage site -- I participated in many of those planning initiatives.

I've been in the small renewable resources council offices, and those land-based experiences end up in the written documents and many of those things in north Yukon. I think it's very important for principals or governments to get involved in these kinds of new initiatives that are positive and can contribute long term to the well-being in north Yukon. In my constituency, I see that as a very viable opportunity.

I am encouraged to hear about the Dempster corridor economic development agreement and exploring economic opportunities along the Dempster. I am encouraged by the fruit that is produced by this. It is encouraging and I look forward to seeing some results that come from this.

Another issue that came up concerned Yukon First Nation doctors and nurses. We thought that maybe there should be more bursaries, scholarships or incentives for First Nation students to go out and gain their health professional degrees and come back home to provide that service. We have heard the last few days in the House about the lack of dental services and other services in the remote communities, because it is not economically viable to provide them. But there are people out there living in the communities who want to go out and get their formal education and come back home to provide those services. I have heard from those individuals. Additional opportunities could help with that.

In closing, the wealth and economy in the Vuntut Gwitchin traditional territory is strong. Many of my constituents consistently say that they are so glad we are one of the richest people on earth, basically. As long as we have our healthy land, water and wildlife, and clean air to breathe, we can always maintain our traditional economy. As long as our ecosystems and land are strong and the caribou are strong and still there, there will be a viable economy in Old Crow for years and years to come.

I thank all the members and I look forward to voting in favour of this motion.

Hon. Mr. Lang: I'll only be speaking for a few moments on this motion. I thank the Member for Klondike for bringing it forward. Of course I have been listening to all the members, whether they're on this side of the House or in the opposition. We all have like concerns. Sometimes we have different road maps that we see ourselves going down, but I

appreciate the input from the opposition and, of course, our colleagues on the concerns we have for this issue and how we maximize the use of Yukoners to benefit not only them, but the Yukon as a whole.

We can argue between the two sides about where we're at today compared to where we were four years, but I think the facts will bear out the truth of the matter. Right now, the Yukon hasn't been in better hands in many, many years. We're certainly looking forward to the next four years of commitment that this government -- these individuals -- have made to make it even better for all Yukoners.

Of course, as government, we have a responsibility to work for all Yukoners to make sure that whatever the community, it benefits that community. We as government have the added obligation to make sure that we do the job of representing all Yukoners, regardless of representation in this House. So that's an added responsibility that we gladly take on.

We do appreciate the fact that employment in some of our smaller communities isn't as good as it could be. I look at the Mayo region. With Alexco Resources, the potential of mining there is growing daily with opportunities for the workforce. I was just talking to one of the older residents in Mayo who used to drive the school bus through the period of time when there weren't the opportunities in Mayo for employment. Now that individual is working for Alexco Resources at Keno Hill. So there are those opportunities.

I certainly look forward to the Mayo district getting back to where it was 20 to 30 years ago -- one of the bread baskets of the territory. The longest period of time of prosperity in Yukon's history was when Keno Hill was contributing to the treasury of Canada and, of course, adding employment within the Yukon.

How do we involve our seniors in the workforce? I understand the service industry, as the Member for Mount Lorne commented, is one of the biggest, most labour-intensive workforces out there, whether in retail or tourism. Those are important jobs for Yukoners, but also important jobs for the Yukon. They are our front-line workers. They are the people who represent us when the tourists stop along the highway or come from the coast. Of course, the forest industry and the mining industry are also very important. If we can involve our seniors in a small way, the net benefit at the end of the day is not only an opportunity for our seniors to get out into the workplace but also for them to get out into society and work for wages, which is important. Why would anyone go out and solicit work to find out that, along with what one had invested over the years -- the old-age pension and other benefits -- and the wages, one makes less money if the federal government claws back the money one earns with a part-time or full-time job? How do we address that?

How do we encourage the people on social assistance? What is the benefit, as the member opposite was saying, for an individual or family on social assistance if, as soon as they start work, their rent doubles and other things happen before the individual goes for their first day on the job? We as the territorial government can look at that. There has to be an incentive where we can say to these individuals that there is a window of

opportunity for them to get their feet on the ground so they can move off social assistance and get into the workforce.

That's one of the issues that this government can look at and we are committed to looking at it.

As we look at whether we are doing enough -- the member opposite was saying we have been here four years and what have we done? Well, there are lists of things we've done. Certainly the economy out there and the workforce out there bear that out. Is there more that we can do? Certainly there is always more that we can do as a government. There is always more that we can do individually. Life is not complete. If you've stopped doing things, then things end.

Our government is committed to working within our campaign promises, which we put out to the general public in the last election. We are certainly committed to finalizing that. If you look at our record of our first campaign and the promises and commitments we made to Yukoners, I would say we had a pretty good batting average, Mr. Speaker. Now we have to move from there into our next one. Then, of course, we have four years to complete that.

I think if you were to look at any of the newspaper and the want ads, you could see there are jobs out there. There are more and more industry jobs. Of course, as members are aware, this has become not only a territorial issue, but it's a Canadian issue. The Canadian government, over the last couple of years, has become very much aware of the workforce situation in Canada. The workforce in a place like Fort McMurray -- one statistic is that if Shell Oil were to open the next phase of their tar sands project, they would look at 45,000 more employees. Now, where are you going to find 45,000 new employees? That's not what is in Fort McMurray at the moment; that is more employees. We have an employment crunch.

Do we do enough in training? The Minister of Health and Social Services commented on all the things we do to encourage our doctors to come north. We certainly have a beautiful place to come if we are looking at the lifestyle. But, of course, people in the medical field have invested many, many years and many, many dollars to become the professional people they are -- whether as doctors, nurses or other professional people who work in that part of our society. We have aggressively gone after them and competed.

Again, the number of doctors in our community has gone up. I look forward to more innovative things coming out of the Department of Health and Social Services to ensure that we have more nurses and professional people to fill the void that is always created because of migration of population.

If we look at the Yukon market, what does this government do? What do we do as a government? Well, we have to market the different things through community training funds. We have to do trades training. In our last mandate, the last Minister of Education went to work with the college. We put money in to expand our trades program in the college. As the Minister of Education said this afternoon, we have just under 400 trades apprentices out there. I am sure that the minister is right when he says there has never been a time in Yukon's history when we've had that number of youth out there in the apprenticeship programs. The \$1 million that we put into trades at

the college over the last two or three years has certainly benefited the trades in the territory.

As far as our secondary education programs are concerned, we send our kids off to college. We have the Yukon grant that comes in for a five-year period. It certainly benefits all Yukoners who leave the Yukon to further their education. We have to work at making sure that we include them in opportunities when they are finished their training. I think we are doing that.

The members opposite bring up individual issues. I guess it's not perfect, but we are aggressively working at making sure that, if we spend the money on training these individuals at a professional level, we take advantage of the training once they are done. When we bring people back to the territory, it is better, I would say as a Yukoner, to bring back Yukoners to work in Yukon than to hire individuals who have not lived in the Yukon, because at least our kids are acclimatized to the area and want to come back.

So it's good to see over the last four years how the opportunities for coming back have grown. Four years ago, there weren't the opportunities that are here today in any profession, trades or whatever. The opportunities weren't here. If you were looking at the mining industry, you were obviously looking somewhere else. If you were looking at other forms of employment, there were always better opportunities somewhere else. The Yukon has become a place of choice for individuals, and certainly our kids are coming back to the territory. When they do come, the jobs are here. If there are people out there who have felt they've been slighted in any way with opportunity, certainly they should bring that to our attention. We would work on any file where individual Yukoners felt that they weren't getting the same opportunities.

As far as the labour situation and the opportunity here we have with this motion, Mr. Speaker, I think the motion is a solid motion that we can -- and obviously the members opposite have agreed to -- support. They have questions about it and they have participated in the debate this afternoon with discussion about how they would see the recommendations and whether or not we as a government would take on the recommendations. We as a government certainly have never been closed to good ideas; we're not into turning down good ideas just for the sake of being vindictive or not opening up to ideas that would move the Yukon forward.

We have time constraints this afternoon. I know there are a couple more people who would like to enter into this debate.

I certainly thank the Member for Klondike, and I appreciate the comments that were made this afternoon. I look forward to the vote this afternoon, moving ahead to put some of these ideas into motion and solving some of these issues. I know the challenges are out there; we are competing in a bigger market in Canada.

There are all sorts of questions on seniors, youth and all of these other facets in our community that certainly make our community what it is and are important parts of the community. But, as we as a government move forward, we're aware of these shortcomings that impair people from going to work and we will constructively take a look at that to minimize the impact from these individuals who will go out in the service end

of our economy and contribute. I think that would be a job well done.

I think the Canadian government is looking very aggressively at immigration and how we can best fit new immigrants into our workforce and how we can minimize the paperwork and the timelines on getting this kind of expertise into our country. That, of course, is an issue in our service industry in the territory. If you go to any of the hospitality areas in the Yukon, labour is one of the biggest issues they have -- managing labour and also acquiring labour.

The federal government has certainly come up and contributed with seminars on acquiring workforces offshore -- how that would be done and how that would benefit the labour-intensive industries that have a summer season. Much of the tourist industry is employed during the summer season. It depends on a large labour force for about 120 to 160 days. Again, that is another management problem, as is how these establishments shrink down to what they need over the winter season.

As this government moves forward with its economic development plans, and how we visualize the Yukon unfolding in the next four or five years, I think we'll find that we hopefully will lengthen those busy days with local industry, whether it's the Minto mine, Western Copper, Casino, Alexco Resources in the Mayo area, working with the northern First Nations on the Dempster lateral economic opportunity file. All of these will create work for Yukoners and lengthen our season for the demand of that workforce.

As we move forward with our training and education programs and as we work forward on our labour issues -- whether the answer is an offshore answer or an internal answer -- I think that every move we make is getting more product at the end of the day. I certainly appreciate the fact that this afternoon we have sort of all been on the same wave or page of what we need to do. We just have to move forward with that.

I appreciate the support from the members opposite -- the solid support from our members opposite. I look forward to working with them over the next four years to solve the issues that we have been talking about today. I am sure that with the solid support that we have today, we can look forward to a very positive next 48 months, and maybe solve the issues that we have here today. I am very confident we can.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I am supporting the motion put forward by the Member for Klondike. I would like to thank the members opposite for their solid support on this and I look forward to other comments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ms. Horne: I thank the Member for Klondike for bringing forward this very timely motion. Have you recently tried to buy a cup of coffee in the morning on your way to work? Have you waited a long time in line to buy groceries on a Saturday morning? Perhaps you took your significant other for a nice lunch at a local restaurant. Did you wait long to be served? More and more Yukoners are learning first-hand about how robust our economy is.

It was just a few short years ago under the Liberal watch that the only place busy in the Yukon was a place renting U-Hauls. As the Premier said, five years ago we had Yukoners chasing jobs. Now we have jobs chasing Yukoners. This is great news.

However, the result is that companies need to find workers, especially at the entry level in the service and retail industries. As workers in these areas tend to turn over at a higher rate than other job levels, there is a shortage of workers to fill these positions.

My EA is especially anxious that we find ways to ensure a ready supply of workers for his favourite coffee shop. From being involved in the tourism industry for the past several years, I know the hardships faced by Yukon entrepreneurs in hiring employees to fill the required positions.

By providing the right incentives, we can encourage people to enter or re-enter the workforce from groups such as seniors, stay-at-home parents, those on social assistance, and students. People in these groups might not enter the labour force for various reasons.

I would like to talk about seniors for a moment. Seniors may not re-enter the labour force because the tax regime might be such that seniors would only take home a small fraction of the money they earn since they are taxed at a higher tax rate when their pension earnings are factored in.

I agree with other members that the seniors tax regime should be re-evaluated. I know many seniors in my riding who struggle. They do work at extra jobs.

Another reason may be a lack of familiarity or a lack of confidence in their ability to re-enter the workforce. I can think of older residents, such as homemakers, whose children have left home, who would be wonderful employees, but they lack the confidence because they have been out of the workplace for so long. They require training in the computer and software skills necessary for employment. By providing a training program specifically aimed at senior workers, we can increase the number of seniors who would be willing and ready to re-enter the workforce. Some seniors are not keen to resume working 40 hours a week.

However, aside from the financial benefits, a job outside the home can be a great way to keep active and stay in touch with the community. The project will begin this month, in May 2007, and will run for two years in Whitehorse and the communities. The total cost of the program will be some \$650,000. The program I am speaking of is the targeted initiative for older workers. This is a program for 55- to 65-year-olds that will be delivered by Yukon College. It will help older people acquire the computer skills they need. This program will recruit 140 individuals between the ages of 55 and 65 who want help developing employment skills. Program graduates will be more technologically savvy and will have the basic skills they need to find and retain employment in their chosen area.

Parents of young children may find it more economical to stay home than pay the sometimes high cost of daycare service. A young family with one or two or more children can face a high price to have these children cared for by a daycare service and may prefer to stay at home instead. Yet these young par-

ents also have the potential to contribute to the labour force in the Yukon. In some cases the parent providing the care, often the mother, may have special skills or training. Perhaps they are young women who have years of training but have opted instead to raise their children. By addressing the cost of childcare for lower-income families, the government can increase the number of stay-at-home parents who want to enter the labour force. To this end, we should continue to complete an administrative program review of childcare services, complete the childcare centre and family day home regulation review, complete a five-year childcare plan to address identified issues of concern. These reviews will ensure that childcare service delivery, including costs, is appropriate for families.

The third group of potential workers I would like to mention are those on social assistance who want to supplement their income to help meet their needs. They may not be in a place to work full-time, but they may be able to contribute a few hours a day. By re-examining the way we provide social assistance, we may be able to find a way to help those in need while encouraging them to enter the workforce. However, if their social assistance is decreased dollar-for-dollar against what they earn at their job, what is the incentive to work? I urge the government to look at how those on social assistance would be more inclined to enter the labour force.

The fourth group I mentioned are students who may be looking for short-term work to help pay for things as they study.

Because students are committed to their studies and use jobs to support their studies, employers may not view investing in training students as something that would bring long-term benefits.

I read a story in a magazine some time ago about famous Canadians and their first jobs. One of the things I took away from it was that things like attention to detail, promptness, commitment, consistency and politeness are essential to success in any endeavour. Entry-level jobs are great teachers.

However, the fact is that students often migrate from one job to another. If the employer has to invest in training them, the employer may decide not to hire them if the company cannot recover its training investment.

I urge the government to look into what kind of help can be provided to both students and employers to encourage this group to enter the labour force at the entry level in the service and retail industries. I understand that, in addition to seniors, stay-at-home parents, those on social assistance and students, this government is also looking at immigrants for entry-level jobs in the service and retail sector. This is something I understand employers in these industries are also considering.

Specifically, the Department of Education is allocating \$200,000 for an immigration portal. This portal is an on-line resource to efficiently provide immigration information to potential workers.

I appreciate the support of the members opposite and for the concern and interest shown in this motion. I urge all members of this House to support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McRobb: I'll be brief and just put a few comments on the record. I think this topic has been covered rather extensively this afternoon by several members.

The first one is a concern about why we're even debating this particular motion today.

I believe I heard some reference -- it was a leading option for the private Member for Klondike to make his request known to the government. I have to wonder about that because I would assume the member is part of a caucus budget retreat, which is a typical exercise held by any government in collecting ideas from the caucus members about what to include in the budget. I would have presumed that, if this matter were of such import to the member, he would have mentioned it at that time, and if his colleagues considered it in like regard, some initiatives would have been in the budget to address these matters. Lo and behold, that wasn't done. I have to ask why it wasn't done. Why are we using the time of this Assembly today to review something that wasn't done?

I have to ask: what about other priorities from the member that may be ignored in similar fashion by the very government he's part of? What about the health facility in Dawson? Are we going to have to debate a motion on that matter as well in order for him to get it on the radar screen of the very government he is part of? There are several other matters in the region that I could list today, but I won't bother doing that.

I know the member is fairly new in the Assembly. I would just give him some advice that if he raises these matters internally at the proper occasion and gives them sufficient priority and if his colleagues are listening and they accept the ideas, they can be formulated into the spring budgets that are drafted by his own colleagues.

I hope we don't have to deal with too many motions that are similar to this in the future. These are matters that the government can resolve completely by itself. If you look at the language of the motion, introduced by the Member for Klondike, he's urging the Government of Yukon to take action. Those are his very colleagues.

He is bringing this matter to the floor for debate with all members. Again, this really doesn't seem to have a logical conclusion. If it's a matter of import to the member, his colleague should recognize that and simply include adequate measures in the budget. It is a bit questionable to even deal with a motion like this.

I heard one of the government members indicate that this is a way of opening up debate and maybe hearing constructive input from the opposition on this subject matter. Well, that's fine, but what about some of the other more urgent and pressing issues, such as how the government spent the territory's \$5 million eco-fund money -- the climate change money -- from Ottawa? We would have loved to have had that discussion before the decision was hastily made just days before this sitting began. Quite possibly, had the government done that and listened to the suggestions, the territory would be in far better stead than it is in now, investing in a project that won't produce any benefits for several years. Even after several years, the benefits will be questionable.

Again, I would point out to the Member for Klondike the possibility of bringing issues into this Assembly for input before they are decided. That would seem to me to be a more efficient use of time in the House.

I have a couple of comments to make about the subject matter at hand without getting into too much detail. One of them is on the state of the local labour market. I am not convinced that the government has statistics on hand that relate to what is really happening out there in the marketplace in today's Yukon. The government has some statistics based on business use of employment agencies and so on.

But there are a lot of businesses that don't take those channels, and those statistics could simply be unreported. There are a lot of businesses that may simply have given up any possibility of hiring and have resolved to do without.

Let's take this one level further. There may be entrepreneurs who have had business plans and, after further analysis, have identified the labour component as simply too challenging to meet and have shelved their plans.

This is a serious issue, not only in the Yukon, and really not only in western Canada. It's becoming a global issue -- the labour shortage. It's partially due to the overheated economy, driven by the oil and gas industry in western North America, and it's also due to the demographics of society, with the baby-boomer generation nearing retirement, having increased demands on products and services, and the following demographic -- the younger generations that are essentially the main part of the workforce -- being fewer in number.

So we have a larger population who want the goods and services and a lesser population who are actually producing those products and services. So it's a demographic situation.

We know the government likes to take credit for it and attribute the success to its election platforms. Well -- whatever. We know the statistics indicate otherwise.

So it's going to be interesting to see what the latest employment statistics are and to look beyond the numbers we're provided by the statisticians and wonder what the real labour shortage is in the territory.

I was on a trip recently to a few major cities, and there are "help wanted" signs on windows right across the country. This is something that hasn't been seen in a number of decades. In the Yukon, I think they are starting to pop up as well -- businesses advertising for help wanted.

This is having a dampening effect on our economy. It is beyond Whitehorse and includes rural Yukon, as well. It is interesting to see how the statistics pan out. I have to wonder how far those statistics are from the real numbers.

I also heard a government member indicate that the shortage largely pertains only to the retail sector. However, in a briefing this morning with the Department of Highways and Public Works, we were told that the large increase in the operation and maintenance budget for that department is due to the expected filling of a number of vacancies in the department. So there is an issue about government worker shortages and recruitment there as well. We are likely talking about government workers in the several dozens in terms of numbers -- possibly hundreds if the whole territory and all the departments are fac-

tored in. That is quite a significant number. I have to ask if we are really going to fill all the positions that are budgeted or will we simply see a large number of lapses again at the end of this fiscal year.

One of the consequences of a labour shortage and a greater demand for products and services than supply is inflation. In terms of this motion, inflation means higher wages. I have talked about this matter with some local business people, and they indicate that they are paying their workers about 20 percent more than last year in order to hang on to them. They also indicate that last year they hiked wages about 20 percent.

This doesn't apply to all businesses, just some that I have talked to. We're seeing a relatively high inflationary period affecting at least some Yukon businesses in the territory. It is going to be interesting to see how this works out in the statistics. I wonder about the statistics presented in terms of what is really going on in some sectors of our economy.

There is another huge matter that really overarches all of this, and it is the question of what impact a megaproject like the Alaska Highway natural gas pipeline would have on these matters. Again I have discussed this with a number of local businesspeople. If I can relate this in the terms I heard it, people are frightened by the prospect of a megaproject like this coming into the territory at this time when there is a labour shortage.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you lived in the territory back about 30 years ago when the TAPS project -- the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System -- was constructed in the mid-1970s. In the territory, we heard lots of horror stories about the labour shortage in Alaska. We saw the trucks on the highway hauling pipes and supplies up the Alaska Highway. I remember that some of these drivers had never seen snow before. When they reached a spot on the highway and they saw snow, a lot of them quit, phoned their bosses and hitched the next ride south, because they didn't know how to drive in it.

One company in particular, called Hill-to-Hill Transport from Texas was rightfully nicknamed "hill to ditch" by Yukon truck drivers, because that's usually where they ended up.

The impact on the Alaskan workforce was so great. We heard stories of elected officials quitting their jobs and going to work as labourers on the pipeline. I know some of the members opposite have the look of opportunity in their eyes. I wouldn't want to miss any of them, should a pipeline come through before the next election. I would raise this as an indication of how severely a megaproject like the pipeline could affect the Yukon.

Let's look at the impact on local businesses. I've already alluded to how some of them feel. A lot of them would be quite desperate to hang on to their workers. For instance, who would work in the big-box store for \$8 or \$9 an hour when they could easily double what they're getting paid now for doing something relative, working for the pipeline or for one of the service companies subcontracted to the pipeline. We just heard a speaker allude to recent decreases in services or products. Just imagine how this would be. To make this relevant to us here, what is the government doing to prepare for this eventuality? I do say "eventuality" because the highway pipeline is a project

that will eventually happen. Of course the big question is, when. In the last term of this government, we heard the buzzword "pipeline ready", and just about everyone over there liked to stand up and say how they're pipeline ready. We heard some evidence that they were pipeline ready, but we failed to get answers to a lot of the questions. We asked in terms of how the Yukon will address some of these concerns.

I raised a concern back then similar to the one I am raising today, and it was never resolved.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the situation now with very little in this government's budget to address concerns that are the subject of this motion, and wonder for a moment how we would fare if there was an announcement that a pipeline was happening sometime soon, we would realize just how far away we really are from being pipeline ready. To be realistic, we can fairly conclude there is a huge gap between where we are and where we need to be. Obviously, the government has a lot of work to do in this regard in order to catch up and get where we need to be, especially with a project this huge on the horizon.

Many aspects have gone ignored and we really need to address these, given the situation with respect to a megaproject like the pipeline or even the far-off railroad that we hear about now and then -- not so frequently any more, but we certainly heard a lot about the railroad in the last term. It would be similar to the pipeline, in terms of the impact on the Yukon's labour force.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is running out. There is one more thing I'd like to say, and that is that any workforce coming to the Yukon, in terms of housing -- given the current housing shortage, especially in Whitehorse -- where will these people live? Are we going to put them all in some kind of construction camps, even the ones working in the service and secondary industries? I hardly think so.

I think the government really needs to plan for a lot more immediate growth than it has. If you look at the current rental market in Whitehorse, it has heated right up. I know someone who had an ad in the paper recently and that person received long-distance phone calls from outside of Whitehorse. Some of these people may have already taken jobs here -- and they did that first and are looking for a place to live, secondly -- and they just can't find a place.

I have heard from someone else in the real-estate industry who said that if there were more houses on the market, there would be more people living and working in Whitehorse right now. I think that's an important part of the debate that needs to be put on the record. It goes hand in hand with employment and job training, which has been discussed rather extensively.

Just quickly, I raised an issue with the Minister of Education about a business in Haines Junction who needed some assistance in terms of hiring. That request was refused. I would say that if there are items that the government is looking for, they are close at hand.

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

Mr. Nordick: I'd like to thank all of the members for their comments. I would also like to thank the Member for Kluane, confirming that this is a large problem, territorially and globally.

I disagree with the Member for Kluane that this debate is a waste of time, even though the member used his full 20 minutes on this debate. Passing this motion will help businesses like the Westmark, the Downtown Hotel, Starbucks, Alpine Bakery, the gas stations, the Bedrock Hotel, and hotels in Haines Junction.

I know that all members would like to increase the tools that small businesses in the Yukon have to succeed. Passing this motion will show the Yukon people that we support our businesses. This motion will help with the immediate needs of the Yukon. I would like to remind members that we are on the eve of a busy summer tourist season.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.

Mr. Nordick: Agree.

Mr. Mitchell: Agree.

Mr. McRobb: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Mr. Fairclough: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Cardiff: Disagree.

Mr. Edzerza: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are fourteen yea, two nay.

Motion No. 28 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

The following document was filed May 2, 2007:

07-1-14

Education Reform Team: letter (dated March 16, 2007) to Mr. Ed Schulz, CYFN Co-Chair, Education Reform, and Dr. Colin Kelly, YTG Co-Chair, Education Reform, from Patrick Rouble, Minister of Education, Chief Joe Linklater, Chair of the Chiefs Committee on Education, and Chief Liard McMillan, Chief, Liard First Nation (Rouble)