

Whitehorse, Yukon**Thursday, October 23, 2008 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF PAGES

Speaker: It gives me great pleasure to announce the follow students who will be serving the House as legislative pages for the 2008 fall sitting. They are Linnea Blum, Keenan Dennehy and Arbor Webster from F.H. Collins Secondary School; Kelsey Kabanak, Chantelle Rivest and Andrew Walchuk from Porter Creek Secondary School; and Miriam Ott and Daniella Raillard from Vanier Catholic Secondary School.

Today we have with us Kelsey Kabanak and Andrew Walchuk. I would ask the members to welcome them to the House at this time, please.

Applause

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes that have been made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper because they are out-of-date: Motion No. 83, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane; Motion No. 115 and Motion No. 138, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun; Motion No. 216, standing in the name of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini; Motion No. 302, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek South; Motion No. 322 and Motion No. 431, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition; Motion No. 409, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne; Motion No. 455, Motion No. 456, Motion No. 461 and Motion No. 462, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; and Motion No. 474, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the action requested in the motion has been fulfilled: Motion No. 76, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tachun; Motion No. 77, standing in the name of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini; Motion No. 108, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin; Motion No. 169, standing in the name of the Minister of Health and Social Services; Motion No. 170, standing in the name of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; and Motion Nos. 201 and 421, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as they relate to a bill that is no longer on the Order Paper: Motion Nos. 72 and 186, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne; Motion No. 324, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane; and Motion No. 407, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper due to the dissolution of the 39th Parliament: Motion No. 250, Motion No. 440 and Motion No. 464, standing in the name of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini; and Motion No. 466, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party.

Motion No. 483, standing in the name of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as it referred to a motion that is no longer on the Order Paper.

Motion No. 487, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as it referred to a bill that is no longer on the Order Paper.

Finally, Motion No. 489, also standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as it is outdated.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

TRIBUTES**In recognition of Yukon Foster Family Appreciation Week**

Hon. Mr. Hart: I rise today on behalf of the House to acknowledge the week of October 19 to 25, 2008, as Yukon Foster Family Appreciation Week. I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Yukon foster parents. They open their heart and their home to help Yukon children when they are most in need. They generously share their time, love and energy with foster children.

Je tiens à souligner les efforts et le dévouement des parents d'accueil du Yukon. Ils ouvrent leur cœur et leurs portes pour aider les enfants yukonnais qui en ont le plus besoin. Ils consacrent généreusement leur temps, leur attention et leurs forces pour prendre soin des enfants en famille d'accueil.

When a child's parents are unable to care for them, we must ensure that the children are well cared for and loved as this is the time they need us the most. Health and Social Services commends foster parents for filling a very important role in our community. Foster parents fill a number of roles. Some are kinship foster parents caring for a relative; others are respite givers who care for children for a few hours or a day or a week. Many care for children who have special medical needs or developmental disabilities. No matter what type of foster care they provide, they are all filling a very important role — the role of raising and caring for Yukon's children.

We must ensure that Yukon's children are cared for when they are in need. We truly appreciate and commend Yukon foster families for their generosity and care.

I had the pleasure of meeting a number of Yukon foster parents at an appreciation dinner this Monday and a more dedicated group of people you couldn't find.

Merci beaucoup. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of Mental Illness Awareness Week

Hon. Mr. Hart: This week of October 19 to 25 is dedicated to mental illness awareness in Yukon and I ask my colleagues to join me in taking the time to recognize this week.

Monsieur le Président, la semaine du 19 au 25 octobre a été consacrée à la sensibilisation aux maladies mentales et j'invite mes collègues à se joindre à moi et à prendre législative temps de souligner l'importance de cette semaine.

Mental health is important to an individual's overall health. The reverse of mental health is mental illness and unfortunately even in these modern times it is something that still holds a stigma in our society. While people speak freely of such conditions of cancer and diabetes, people shy away from speaking about mental health conditions such as depression, schizophrenia and psychosis.

This has to change. Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of. It can be brought on due to a genetic predisposition or by other factors such as stress or trauma. The sooner we start to accept mental illness in the same way we do physical illness, the sooner people will feel comfortable to reach out to friends and family members and receive the medical attention they need.

This year the focus on Mental Illness Awareness Week is psychosis — particularly early psychosis intervention. Psychosis is a condition of the mind that can be treated. Symptoms usually begin between the ages of 15 and 25, and the earlier a condition is detected, the greater the chance of full recovery. This is why early intervention is so important. Three percent of all people will have symptoms of psychosis in their lifetime. Left untreated, it is a condition that can severely impact an individual's chances of living a happy, successful life, as well as impact the lives of friends and family members.

Mental Health Services has recently developed an early psychosis intervention program, which helps inform youth and the people who work with youth what the signs and symptoms of psychosis are. This will help ensure that people with psychosis are detected early and receive the appropriate treatment. To help educate Yukon youth on psychosis, this week Mental Health Services brought up a dynamic group from British Columbia called ReachOut. ReachOut uses music and entertainment to educate youth on the signs and symptoms of psychosis and where to go for assistance.

I attended one of their performances yesterday and was very impressed with their energy and the creative way they informed youth on the subject. They will be visiting other Yukon communities for the remainder of this week.

I would like to encourage all Yukoners to pay attention to their mental health, as well as the mental health of their friends and family members. Mental health is critical to living a full and engaged life.

Merci beaucoup, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Fairclough: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to Mental Illness Awareness Week. Mental illness has a profound impact on our society. It can affect individuals of all ages, all cultures, all educational and income levels and from all regions of our country. Over one million Canadians live with severe or persistent mental illness. Mental illness can strike early, with the highest prevalence in young people aged 15 to 24. We must raise awareness about mental health conditions and the importance of mental wellness for all.

With more information, we can help decrease the stigma associated with mental health. The stigma is a major factor influencing whether people go for treatment, talk about their illness with others or feel socially accepted in their community.

In Yukon, we are in definite need of improvements to our mental health services. With a lack of facilities and staff, the demand for mental health services is putting a burden on our hospital emergency ward. The time has come for us as legislators to revisit our Yukon *Mental Health Act* and make improvements to provide better services and make the act more patient-focused.

We all have a role to play to promote mental health, to improve mental wellness through community-based prevention and crisis intervention programs and addictions treatment. Together we can offer hope and encouragement for improving the diagnosis and recovery of people living with mental illness.

We applaud the courage and tenacity of all those living with mental illness and for those who care for them.

Mr. Edzerza: I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to recognize Yukon Mental Illness Awareness Week. It is significant that a youth group, ReachOut, is in Whitehorse to bring to our attention the signs and symptoms of mental illness, and we thank them for their contribution. Youth today face many challenges, not least of which are increasing rates of stress, suicide and addictions. Their commitment to solutions to the problems of mental illness is absolutely necessary.

We much prefer to use the term "mental health" rather than "mental illness" to raise awareness of psychiatric conditions. Our awareness of these problems can be expressed in action in our individual, daily lives by living a healthy lifestyle that gives us physical exercise, good nutrition, moderate use of alcohol, emotional stability and intellectual stimulation.

Presenting this example to others, particularly to our children, goes far in raising awareness of the path to mental health. Educating the public about mental health can be done with a positive emphasis on community involvement and social programs, artistic endeavors and sports and with sufficient financial support for these activities.

Canadian governments do not have a mental health system. We have a patchwork of programs that are insufficient and leave afflicted individuals and families stranded without a clear direction on how to deal with this problem. Canada is the only country in the Group of Eight without a mental health strategy. It is time for us to set out specific goals on how to reduce the impacts of mental illness, how to prevent mental disorders and how to promote mental health and wellness.

We in the territory can do our part toward this. We need to evaluate our treatment of persons dealing with mental problems, particularly those with mental and addictions issues. Supported living situations, not hospitalization or incarceration, should be available. Community treatment programs such as land-based healing need to be developed in collaboration with First Nations. Support for alternative approaches, such as presented by the Second Opinion Society, should be better financed. Bullying in our schools must be addressed. Without community involvement and realistic supports, our children, friends and colleagues dealing with an expanding range of mental problems will not become mentally healthy again.

Thank you.

In recognition of Waste Reduction Week

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government of Yukon, I am very pleased and honoured to pay tribute to Waste Reduction Week in Canada, which is now underway and ends on Saturday. It is organized by an important coalition of waste reduction and conservation organizations from across Canada, including Yukon's own Raven Recycling.

Waste reduction through recycling is something each of us can do — certainly, to reduce our impact on the environment, including our contribution to climate change.

Mr. Speaker, here in the Yukon, there are 17 registered community recycling depots and two recycling processors, including Raven Recycling. Raven Recycling alone has 141 customers in Whitehorse for their paper-save programs at 270 locations. Ninety eight of those locations are Yukon government facilities, 18 are schools and 80 are offices. As well, there are many organizations, governments, families and individuals who are involved with recycling and waste reduction initiatives in the Yukon. Thanks to these many efforts, approximately 5,000 tonnes of material are diverted from Yukon landfills each and every year, almost 20 percent of the amount of waste generated in Whitehorse alone.

During Waste Reduction Week in Canada, and every week, every one of us can do our part by reducing, reusing and recycling in every aspect of our lives, whether it's at home, at school or at work.

The Government of Yukon is pleased to provide support for recycling and solid waste management programs across the territory. In addition to operating funding, the Department of Environment provides funding for capital projects as well as public awareness programs through the recycling fund, as well as the waste reduction and recycling initiative. These funds support special projects, including capital improvements and public education.

The department also helps fund the collection of household hazardous waste. Last year, approximately 16,000 kilograms of waste was collected, while over 55,000 kilograms of commercial hazardous waste was shipped out of the Yukon for treatment.

We certainly recognize and value the work of all Yukon communities to maintain and enhance the quality of our environment and are pleased to acknowledge its support during this very important week.

In closing, I wish to acknowledge, recognize and thank each of the waste reduction and conservation organizations in Yukon, Canada, municipalities, First Nation schools and the many, many volunteers for their continued work and dedication toward a healthy and sustainable environment.

Mr. Cardiff: I rise today on behalf of the opposition parties to pay tribute to Waste Reduction Week, October 19 to 25 of this year.

The problem of waste management has been with us since humans lived in caves, but it is only in the past few hundred years that our society has generated enough waste that it has become an esthetic eyesore, an economic question and I think most importantly, a threat to our environment and to our health.

Our throwaway culture is over-consuming and generating waste that has become intolerable. I think there are probably people in many communities, including Dawson — I remember hearing these stories, where the garbage would be accumulated on the ice in front of the town, and it would float down the river to our Alaskan neighbours in the spring. Fortunately, society and communities have come to the conclusion that that wasn't a good idea, and that's no longer the case, although it's these communities that are still faced with significant solid waste management problems.

Yukon is the only jurisdiction in Canada that allows garbage to be burned at municipal landfills, and the amount of open burning of garbage in several rural communities is alarming. Burning garbage releases thousands of pollutants, including dioxins, furans, arsenic, mercury, PCBs, and lead, and they come from solid waste incineration and backyard garbage burning. Dioxins in the environment do not break down. They build up in the fat of animals and humans, and they can become concentrated in mothers' milk. Dioxins and other poisons in the air lead to heart disease, cancer, and developmental problems in our children.

The minister mentioned recycling. There are three Rs: reduce, reuse and recycle. We all can do a lot in all those areas, reducing the amount we use and consume. Reusing — which takes place at some of the transfer stations and landfills — is a solution to the solid waste management problems that we face here and, of course, recycling. Recycling is becoming, in some areas, a way of life and an important habit for many Yukoners. We need to support that vigorously, and I know the government has recently announced that they've increased the funding to that.

We need to buy more environmentally friendly, recyclable products and make our feelings known when we purchase products — for instance, products with unnecessary packaging. It would be good to note that the government could lead the way in this area as well with its purchasing policies.

I'd like to also lend my support and I hope that here in the territory we would lend our support to federal initiatives as well, such as extended producer responsibility. That can be best understood as changing the traditional balance of responsibilities among manufacturers and distributors of products and consumer goods with regard to waste management.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development defines extended producer responsibility as an environmental policy approach in which the producer's responsibility, either physical and/or financial, for a product is extended to the post-consumer stage of the product's life cycle.

One, it can shift the responsibility, physically or economically, upstream to the producer of the product and away from governments and municipalities that have to handle product. Secondly, those types of initiatives provide incentives to producers to take environmental considerations into the design of the products that they produce and make available for sale.

If we extend that to the government and their purchasing policies, requiring the responsibility for those products, then we have less waste going into our landfills.

Finally, I'd like to also pay a special tribute to the many volunteers across the Yukon who are taking waste reduction seriously, who work to keep the Yukon's environment healthy and clean and to every one of them, I believe, every week is Waste Reduction Week, and we should thank them for both their vigilance and their commitment.

In remembrance of Old Crow loved ones

Mr. Elias: I rise today to pay tribute to the memory of several lost loved ones and to once again reveal the loving respect of my constituents. We honour the memory and mourn the loss of Ruby Van Bibber, born on March 21, 1950, and passed away on September 28, 2006. Joseph Lazarus Charlie Jr., born on September 2, 1941, and passed away on January 29, 2008. Sarah Netro, born on November 30, 1961, and passed away on March 1, 2008. Stephen John Charlie, born on October 14, 1983, and passed away on May 5, 2008. Delma Rose Kisoun, born on October 15, 1959, and passed away on July 23, 2008. Asta Kisoun, born on November 20, 2000, and passed away on July 23, 2008. Isaac Kalinek Shingatok, born on December 21, 1958, and passed away on July 23, 2008. Victor "Daduck" Allen, born on February 14, 1928, and passed away July 23, 2008. Annie Lord, born April 25, 1934, and passed away August 19, 2008.

We all know that they lived as they were loved. Sudden and tragic loss is the worst, and as northerners, how we pull together and support each other through these hard times is testament to the fact that we are one big family. If one of us is hurting, we all share that same hurt and we all join in to help one another. We honour the dearly departed by carrying on their rich traditions, messages and teachings and by never forgetting their hard work and sacrifices.

They have passed on to us a legacy that now lives on through us and it is our responsibility to pass those teachings on to the next generation.

The calibre of our lost friends and family members was displayed through their hard work, soft-spoken nature, words of wisdom and commonsense approach to issues, their gentle humour and determination to help others to help themselves. So we share our memories, thoughts and especially our children who share their own memories, and feel that it's okay to think and talk about their lost loved ones when they are sad.

We all remember and feel gratitude for the time we shared with our dearly departed, for it opens our hearts to healing, even though the tears in our eyes still get wiped away.

I honour their memory today and extend my heartfelt condolences to their family and friends all across the north. May each of you find comfort in the fact that they all were loved and are dearly missed by so many.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?
Hearing none, introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming Mr. Bell, who is one of our fine teachers and the father of one of Yukon's Olympi-

ans, and the grade 10 ACES class to our Assembly today. Welcome.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I'd like to ask all members to join me in welcoming to the gallery today the Mayor of Whitehorse, Her Worship Bev Buckway, and also a constituent of mine, Mr. Peter Wojtowicz.

Applause

Mr. Mitchell: I'd also like to ask all members today to join me in welcoming a constituent who is in the gallery, Ms. Judi Johnny, who is an advocate for improved service for people with different abilities.

Applause

Mr. Hardy: I would like everyone in the Legislative Assembly to once again welcome with great fondness — and I think they're all here — the media.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Horne: It is my honour today to introduce my aunt to the House, Elder Pearl Keenan of Teslin. Pearl was the former Chancellor of Yukon College, and Pearl continues and has served the Yukon in many influential positions. Welcome, Pearl.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Are there returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 61: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Lang: I move that Bill No. 61, entitled *Act to Amend the Municipal Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 61, entitled *Act to Amend the Municipal Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 61 agreed to

Bill No. 58: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that Bill No. 58, entitled *Act to Amend the Quartz Mining Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that Bill No. 58, entitled *Act to Amend the Quartz Mining Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 58 agreed to

Bill No. 54: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I move that Bill No. 54, entitled *Electoral District Boundaries Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 54, entitled *Electoral District Boundaries Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 54 agreed to

Bill No. 60: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. Horne: I move that Bill No. 60, entitled *Act to Amend the Judicature Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 60, entitled *Act to Amend the Judicature Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 60 agreed to

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr. Nordick: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the Government of Yukon initiate the following measures to manage local impacts of the global economic downturn by:

(a) continuing to maintain a prudent financial position so there is money available to invest where necessary;

(b) hosting roundtable discussions with key stakeholders within the Yukon to collect advice and input to aid and inform decisions;

(c) focusing on key infrastructure investments to create jobs in the short-term and provide an environment for long-term investment and growth;

(d) promoting research and development opportunities in the Yukon, such as a Cold Climate Innovation Centre and climate change research centre of excellence;

(e) striking an internal committee of deputy ministers chaired by Premier Fentie to monitor and assess economic trends and identify opportunities;

(f) implementing labour mobility initiatives;

(g) expanding trade opportunities with foreign partners;

(h) encouraging the federal government to continue to make strategic investments in Canada's north, meeting their commitment to unlocking the vast potential in Yukon, which will continue to help Canada's economic future, which will result in economic benefits for Yukoners; and

(i) continuing to work with First Nation governments to ensure an appropriate federal mandate is renewed to adequately resource First Nation governments. This will enhance First Nation capacity to more fully participate in Yukon's economy.

I also would like to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Parliament of Canada to review the effects of recent changes to the Canadian *Elections*

Act regarding information voters are required to present to prove identity and to determine if identification requirements need to be adjusted to prevent northern residents from being deprived of the ability to exercise their democratic right to vote.

Mr. Mitchell: I would like to give notice today of the following motion:

THAT the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly be amended by adding the following Standing Orders:

"45(3)(a) The Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall consist of three members from the government caucus, to be identified by the Premier, two members from the Official Opposition, to be identified by the Leader of the Official Opposition, and two members from the third party, to be identified by the Leader of the Third Party; and

"45(3)(b) In the event that there is fewer than two members from the third party, the number of members needed to complete the complement of seven members shall be identified by the Leader of the Official Opposition."

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to complete a thorough health care infrastructure needs assessment of all communities and to create a priority action list on expenditure of funds for new health care centres in all communities. This review should include, but not be limited to

(1) an assessment of existing infrastructure and service provision within every Yukon community;

(2) an assessment of current health care provision demands and a projection of health care needs for the coming decade;

(3) a plan for the provision of acute and continuing health care for each community and region;

(4) a prioritized capital expenditure plan for the improvement of health care infrastructure for the coming decade.

Mr. Inverarity: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly be amended by adding the following Standing Orders:

"45(4.1) A special or select committee shall consist of members of the government caucus to be identified by the Premier, a member of the Official Opposition to be identified by the Leader of the Official Opposition and members from the Third Party to be identified by the Leader of the Third Party."

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to allow the House the opportunity to heal wounds and turn the page on the tragic and dark chapter in Yukon's history by formally apologizing to the Yukon Aboriginal people in this current sitting of the Legislature, for the great wrongdoing perpetrated on them in residential schools which were present in the Yukon. And further, to:

(1) allow First Nation leaders in the Legislature to hear and respond to the apology, to help demonstrate our collective

commitment to building a future based on fairness, equality and respect;

- (2) express our recognition of the fact that their children were stolen;
- (3) acknowledge the effect of residential schools on aboriginal culture, language and identity;
- (4) recognize the fact that we are losing our former residential school students at an alarming rate; and
- (5) start on this important process as soon as possible in order to move forward together in healing, reconciliation and dignity.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon, through collaboration with the Departments of Environment, Community Services and Finance, to develop a Yukon-wide comprehensive strategy for waste disposal by the end of this fiscal year that includes:

- (1) the principles of the three Rs — reduce, reuse, recycle — in that order of priority;
- (2) composting as a necessary component of waste management;
- (3) strengthening of air emission regulations to ensure standards and monitoring are complied with;
- (4) the cessation of burning at community solid waste facilities;
- (5) the establishment of a Yukon-wide recycling council that is funded by the government;
- (6) the equitable funding of all community solid waste facilities;
- (7) funding to receive and process non-refundable recyclables in Whitehorse from other Yukon communities;
- (8) funding for the transportation of non-refundable recyclables;
- (9) an increase in the refundable deposit for beverage containers; and
- (10) expanding the types of recyclable products eligible for refunds.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to regulate the sale of cigarettes and other tobacco products in drug stores by making it an unlawful act to sell these items in order to:

- (1) make tobacco less accessible to the public;
- (2) have products in drug stores more in line with the purpose of their establishments;
- (3) protect the health of Yukoners; and
- (4) prevent children from being influenced to use tobacco.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Credit market upheaval

Mr. Mitchell: In recent weeks, Yukoners have witnessed an unprecedented upheaval in the world's credit markets. Perhaps the most visible symptom of this international crisis has been the huge stock market sell-offs in Canada and worldwide. There are impacts on companies large and small and on individual Canadians, as it becomes more difficult to borrow money to purchase a car, a home or to run a business.

Mining companies have lost prearranged financing. Yukoners watching their pension funds shrink are worried about how they will afford to retire.

What did our Premier do? Did he take immediate and decisive action? No, Mr. Speaker. He told Yukoners that everything was okay: "Don't worry, be happy." Now, 90 minutes before this sitting of the Legislature started, the Premier suddenly woke up. He put out a press release to tell us he's going to consult with his officials and strike a committee.

What new action is this Premier taking to cushion Yukoners from the economic downturn and keep them working as the mining and tourism industries slow down?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: In the first place, I think the member opposite should be very careful in how he communicates these matters to the Yukon public, because the member is, quite frankly, raising alarm bells in a situation that is a global cycle, but we have to be clear here. The Yukon economy is not in crisis today and there are a number of reasons for that, which we can go over through the course of the 28 days of this sitting. The fact of the matter is that this government, over the last number of years of being in office, has done a great deal of work in making sure the Yukon economy is much more prepared to deal with these types of global cycles.

So what we've done, Mr. Speaker, are things like lowering our taxes in the Yukon so there is more disposable income in the pockets of Yukoners, working very hard on diversifying our economy so that we're not totally dependent on the resource sector.

We've included now arts, culture, film, sound, IT, research and development; of course, tourism is still a mainstay of our economy, assistance for small business, and the list goes on. So the Yukon is well-positioned to manage its way through what is a definite global cycle.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, we just get empty promises and hollow assurances from this Premier. He must be wearing rose-tinted glasses, if he thinks this is just a normal economic cycle. To paraphrase the international financier, Warren Buffett: "When leaders start claiming that the fundamentals of the economy are strong, it's time to start worrying." This Premier doesn't get it. Now he's going to be reprinting his budget.

Yukon depends on three pillars in our economy: mining, tourism, and government investment and spending. We've heard from the Yukon Chamber of Mines and from mining companies that the investment markets are drying up. Local companies have started to lay off workers. Visitor numbers here and in Alaska were down this year and will be lower next year because our American neighbours are worried for their jobs and aren't making travel plans.

That leaves government spending, Mr. Speaker. In B.C. and elsewhere, leaders are stepping up with real action plans. What worthwhile and well-planned capital infrastructure projects will the Premier advance to keep contractors and all Yukoners working during the coming recession?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, all the projects that member has voted against over the last six years, by example, and the further announcements we've made with expanding hydro, with investing in highways, with replacing our bridges — and the list goes on.

What the member is speaking to is exactly what this government did the day we took office: increase the stimulus in this territory and, through prudent fiscal management — which, by the way, is a priority for the federal government, the provincial governments and the territorial governments in this country. Prudent fiscal management ensures that we have the options available to lead and manage Yukon through this time of global uncertainty and the global cycle we're in.

By the way, unless the member has missed it, as he's so fond of quoting snippets of what's in the news, governments across this globe have taken unprecedented action in this matter, investing hundreds of billions of dollars into the credit market. Most recently, today, Minister Flaherty, in consultation with the governments of the provinces and territories, has now guaranteed the Canadian banks to ensure the Canadian banks are working on a level playing field with the rest of the global institutions.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, the Premier makes my point for me. Governments across the world are taking action. Governments across the world see the severity of the situation while this Premier sat back and said that we were immune; we were fine; we were actually more closely tied to Asian markets, he said the day before Chinese investment disappeared from a Yukon project.

Mr. Speaker, when your mining and tourism customers are hurting, when they cut their spending, guess what? Yukon businesses feel the loss of those customers. There is no protected Yukon. We're tied to the Canadian and international economies. Again, what Yukon can do is advance needed capital projects, such as schools, highway construction, communications and needed health care infrastructure, provided these projects have been well-thought out and well-planned. Unfortunately, what we can't do is use \$36.5 million that has disappeared down the black hole of this Premier's poor investment planning.

What spending priorities will this government advance and what incentives does this government intend to put in place to keep Yukoners working?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: In the first place, under this government's watch, we actually have an economy to manage. The members opposite, when they had the opportunity to manage the Yukon economy in global cycles, were miserable failures. That's not the case today in the Yukon Territory. We have one of the healthiest financial positions in the country on a per capita basis. We have lots of fiscal resources available to invest in the areas that we need to. We will let the cycle determine how we will act to those instances. We are not going to run around

setting our hair on fire like the members opposite. We are going to be prudent, thoughtful, targeted and strategic to ensure that the Yukon economy will manage its way through this global cycle and continue to grow and build a brighter and better future for all Yukoners.

The member speaks of projects. The member voted against a \$31 million investment in the Robert Campbell Highway. The member voted against \$20 million in hydro infrastructure, which also is contributing to economic development in this territory.

Mr. Speaker, the member has no credibility when it comes to an economy.

Question re: Health care long-term plan

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I see we're right back at it.

Mr. Speaker, quality health care is something that all Canadians expect and deserve, and Yukoners are no exception. Providing such a service requires ongoing needs assessment, planning and review. These are requirements for any government department and government project, but especially so for health. It is the Health minister's job to provide all Yukoners with details of his long-term vision, what services are going to be provided and what new infrastructure requirements are needed. He needs to explain what plan the Department of Health and Social Services has to ensure that an adequate number of health service workers will be available to provide the best possible service delivery.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell the House precisely what his department has done to ensure Yukoners that they will be provided the best health care possible? What undertakings are there for Yukoners that they will be provided the best health care possible, and what undertakings are in place to ensure that there is a long-term plan for the years to come?

Hon. Mr. Hart: I thank the member opposite for his question.

We are currently reviewing a report that provides us with a 10-year window on our health system and what its projected needs and assessments are, and we are doing our due diligence on that report. We'll be tabling that report in the House, as well as providing a process on how we go out to the general public on the procedure.

Mr. Mitchell: The minister is reviewing a report. I'm concerned because Yukoners are increasingly telling us that they're losing confidence in this Yukon Party government. We continue to see ongoing shortages of nursing staff and unopened wings in the extended care facility in Copper Ridge. There's a lack of sufficient specialist doctors. Patients with diagnosed mental illnesses are ending up incarcerated in the Whitehorse Correctional Centre because there is no appropriate place for them to receive treatment. Very large amounts of money are being earmarked for projects with no public consultation or proper planning. There are significant variances in the level of health care being offered in different communities.

Mr. Speaker, these are the real concerns of real people, our fellow Yukoners. They deserve straightforward, clear and concise answers, not an assurance that the department is consider-

ing a plan. What plans does this minister have now to address these issues?

Hon. Mr. Hart: As I stated, we're in the process of reviewing the plan that was provided and giving us a 10-year overview of the health program. It's providing us with an assessment of the needs for our rural facilities, as well as those in Whitehorse. It's also addressing the issues of dealing with what our needs are, as far as resources go, for nurses, and we're in that process.

Also, I'll just remind the member opposite the availability and need of specialized medical professions is a common occurrence right across Canada and, in fact, right across North America. That's a big issue. Getting specialized staff is very, very difficult to obtain in all jurisdictions across Canada, the United States, as well as in Australia.

We're all dealing and struggling with the situation, and we're looking at ways in which we can appease the process and hopefully improve the health and wellness of all Yukoners.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, I fully realize that this minister inherited a very difficult situation. However, four months have passed since he took command, and four months is ample time to have laid the foundation. Yukoners are concerned with the provision of health care in Yukon. I don't think they're going to get much comfort from the planning being done in U.S. or Australia that he refers to.

So let me ask the minister what he intends to do with what is now being referred to as the "Watson Lake sinkhole". Let's have a look at what has gone on in one community. First, Yukoners were promised that a multi-level care facility was going to be built in Watson Lake. Who knows what the real cost of that facility is — somewhere between \$5 million and \$10 million? Oh, yes, and it was sole sourced.

That building — it's way overbudget and it's long overdue. The building, in fact, is just a shell, not nearly completed or usable. Now, we see that there is a \$25-million call for a proposed hospital. There has been no community consultation at all. Not included in the estimate for this new hospital are fixtures, furniture, equipment — things that will add 20 percent or 30 percent to the final cost.

The minister says he's looking at a 10-year plan, but this project is already on the books. How does the minister justify this massive expenditure that was never planned for, consulted on, or justified in any way?

Hon. Mr. Lang: To correct the member opposite, the figures he's putting on the floor today are not correct. We are not overbudget on the Watson Lake hospital facility. We have a structure in place, underbudget, which not only includes a structure for the expanded hospital facility, but also an outside facility for the heating system.

We're working — it's work in progress. We are not overbudget on that facility.

We budgeted \$5 million; we're below that figure today, looking forward to having a hospital up and running in Watson Lake in the near future. Certainly we'll keep the House abreast of the actual costs as we move forward.

Question re: Economic summit

Mr. Hardy: People are hurting. They're losing their life savings. They're losing their retirement funds. Mining companies are laying off people. They're losing their jobs. We are just getting a touch of it right now in the Yukon, but its major impact across the rest of Canada and the United States is a complete mess. Around the world, markets are collapsing.

Now, I asked the Premier to call a summit of key stakeholders in this territory and he refused to do so. But at the first call from Jean Charest, Premier of Quebec, he ran down there for a very short meeting to discuss this very same topic. He will go and discuss this with the Prime Minister, I hope.

I'm happy to hear that the roundtable discussions of key stakeholders to collect advice and input are going to happen and I applaud him for doing it finally.

Speaker: Order please. Ask your question, please.

Mr. Hardy: Yes, will this discussion include the groups that I've listed, which are the —

Speaker: Ask your question, please.

Mr. Hardy: Yes. Will this discussion include the groups that I've listed, which are First Nations and other stakeholders?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Let's just clear up something. The member opposite is referring to what is a very serious global matter. As every government in the country, we are concerned about what's happening to Canadians' pensions — in this case, Yukoners' pensions — and what's happening to our economy overall, but we also have to recognize that there are many individuals involved in analyzing this situation.

So I can only respond to the issue of pensions on the basis of what the experts are saying today. This is not the time to panic and sell. There are a lot of initiatives — unprecedented initiatives — taking place on the global market today, investing hundreds of billions of dollars back into the system to make credit available.

So the key here is for governments to take a prudent, responsible course.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the meeting of stakeholders, that's part of what this government will continue to do on an ongoing basis. We always meet with stakeholders but, in this case, with a targeted group of deputy ministers internally in government, chaired by myself, and with engagement with key stakeholders — yes, there will be First Nations, chambers and so on. We will conduct these discussions on an ongoing basis. The main point is we must be coordinated in our approach locally, nationally and globally.

Mr. Hardy: I agree with part of that, but I look at it by using his own word: "coordinated". Let's have a summit where people come together to discuss this issue and not bits and pieces all over the map, as the Premier is indicating now.

During the last territorial election campaign, the Yukon New Democratic Party proposed creating an economic council to advise government and that idea was rejected by this government and was rejected by the other party. If this council existed today, the government may not have put \$36.5 million in a risky ABCP scheme, locking up public money for the next nine years.

If this council existed today, the Premier would have had a forum for getting together with all the key stakeholders in the Yukon economy — action plans to help us get through this mess could be discussed there in a non-partisan and constructive way, without the finger-pointing and political posturing that often happens in here.

In light of the economic turmoil we're seeing today, will the Premier set up an economic council — a long-term one — that will include representation from outside of government?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: You know, I really am concerned about how little relevance this member is giving to the hard-working government employee, how little relevance this member is providing for the private sector in this territory and the business community that is making investments in Yukon's economy. How little relevance he gives to the chambers of commerce, the chambers of mines, of Yukon Indian Development Corporation, the Tourism Industry Association, the Association of Yukon Communities. These are all people who, on a daily basis, are very focused on these types of issues and that is who we are going to be working with in a coordinated manner.

Mr. Speaker, I am always a little nervous of accepting economic advice from the NDP. We all know, historically and the evidence is everywhere, of the difficulty the NDP has when it comes to managing an economy.

Mr. Hardy: I would love it if the Premier would speak with facts. That last statement was totally incorrect and I challenge him to a debate on that on any day, anywhere. As to my position about working people of this territory, I will always stand up for them. I will not accept being challenged like that, Mr. Speaker. I stand up for working people, for small business; I stand up for organizations and for other levels of government. I don't need to stand in here and listen to that kind of response, when I raise concerns that I hear on the doorstep everywhere I go.

Eighty-five Canadian economists have put out a letter, and one of their statements was, "Complacent expressions of faith in our 'fundamentals' and other varieties of economic denial, will not protect Canadians from the coming storm." Will the Premier use the advice of these 85 economic experts — and I have the letters here to pass over to him — when he meets with the key stakeholders that I hope include almost all of the Yukon to discuss the Yukon economy?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Yes, of course, Mr. Speaker, we accept advice as it is intended, and advice that is relevant to the issue, but the member is speaking of facts. I'm merely trying to be factual. Under this government's watch, Mr. Speaker, we have a single-digit unemployment factor of some five percent or lower. Under the former government's watch — members across the floor — we had double-digit unemployment factors. Obviously that is a much more difficult circumstance to be in, trying to manage the Yukon through a global cycle. It is a point of fact.

Under former governments in this territory, we had no fiscal capacity. The point and the fact the government side makes is today that's not the case; we have ample fiscal resources available to assist managing the Yukon through this cycle. We have taken advice and direction from experts and engagement

with other governments. It is about a coordinated approach; it is about the hundreds of billions of dollars being invested into the credit markets today. It's about our ability as Canadians — this country — to ensure we do not diminish the position we are in, to ensure we do not create fear in the minds of Canadians to exacerbate this very situation, but to ensure and reassure Canadians so they understand that Canada is positioned very well to manage its way through this global turbulence. But it's up to us to do the hard work. We intend to do that. This government here in the Yukon will do what it takes to ensure we diminish any and all impacts for Yukoners.

Question re: Council on the Economy and the Environment

Mr. Hardy: I understand it's a new question, so I'll shift. The two greatest threats facing us today are climate change and economic uncertainty — the double "e".

Our glaciers and permafrost are literally melting away while our stock markets and financial institutions are, figuratively, melting down. But thanks to previous NDP governments, we have a central advisory body. It's called the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment that can help us tackle these challenges. However, the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment has not met or tabled a report since 2004, even though this is a legal requirement under section 40 of the *Environment Act*.

Will the Premier obey the law of the land and reactivate this important public body?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: What we are doing is the prudent and responsible thing. We're reviewing matters that are two decades old, initiatives and institutions that are decades old and, in this instance, that's exactly what we will do to determine what role the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment can play in the Yukon's future.

But the fact of the matter is, under these circumstances, no, the government will not be charging or mandating the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment to deal with this issue. As a government, we were given that responsibility; we will live up to that responsibility and we will do the work necessary, as I keep saying, to manage the Yukon through this global cycle.

This institution and the members in it should, first and foremost, be reassuring Yukoners that we have the means to do exactly that. Yukoners have to know and must be aware that the situation that is impacting other countries is not necessarily the same situation Canada and the Yukon must deal with. We must be very responsible, prudent and thoughtful in our approach. That's what this government is doing.

Mr. Hardy: What would be more prudent, thoughtful and responsible than allowing the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment — the two single biggest issues facing the world today and facing the Yukon — to do their work? For some reason this Premier has blocked its ability to advise him, and I don't understand why he's doing that.

The Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment was created to take a leadership role in working with various sectors to develop a sustainable economy and a sustainable

environment. The Yukon was the first jurisdiction in Canada to have a council.

Today the federal government and most provinces have such councils, as well as territories. This government, for purely ideological reasons, stopped appointing members and stopped giving work to the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment. Today more than ever we need this council.

What special interest groups — and this is a serious question — have been advising this Premier, if not them, on economic development and environmental policies and issues?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The short answer is Yukoners have been advising this government on these matters and any and all matters, given the length and the breadth and the depth of consultation this government undertakes. This is not about ideology — not at all, Mr. Speaker. It's about the correct course of action to manage the Yukon's affairs through these global times of turbulence. That's what we're doing.

The council the member speaks of was mandated and structured with an intent that is 20 years in our history. Times have changed. We have an economic plan for sustainability. We have a climate change action plan and a reporting structure that goes with it. We are out there engaged with Yukoners on these matters.

The point here is getting to work on the issues versus having further discussions to advise government. Governments have lots of advice. It's time for government to act and that's exactly what we're doing.

Mr. Hardy: Why won't he let these people work then? They're representatives of business, of labour, of community organizations and of First Nations.

It was a well-functioning body that assisted government in decision-making. It's a legal requirement as well. This Premier is not following the legal requirements under the *Environment Act*. Why? Why has he targeted this council specifically? What is his ideological dislike of it?

More than ever, the two biggest issues facing the territory and the world are the economy and the environment. We have a council that deals with those issues.

Will the Premier back down and allow this council to assist him in the decision-making?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Again, it's not about ideology; it's about looking at our instruments, our legal instruments and all other matters to make sure they're updated, modern and effective in the times that we are in. That's what we're doing. That is the reason, nothing more. We will continue to do that when it comes to all the legal mechanisms of this territory, whether it be human rights, whether it be safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation or whether it be banning smoking. Whatever the case may be, this government will continue to ensure that the legal framework, the policies, programs and services of government meet the needs of the Yukon of today. That's what it's about.

Question re: Power outages and reliability

Mr. McRobb: I'd like to welcome the new minister responsible for the Yukon Energy Corporation with a question about the frequent power outages in our territory. As he should

be aware, the Yukon's electrical consumers have recently been forced to cope without this essential service on several occasions. Their power bills have gone up but their lights aren't staying on. Loss of power has also impacted our business community and translated to lost sales.

Winter is upon us, and people are quite concerned, especially those who depend on electricity to keep their homes from freezing. The prolonged cold, dark experience from three years ago is still fresh in people's minds. What is the minister prepared to do to assure Yukoners that he is on top of the situation and will do what it takes to keep their lights on?

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: I thank the member opposite for that question, although I'm sure he knows, and many Yukoners know, that there are two electrical utilities in Yukon, and I can only talk about Yukon Energy Corporation's system; Yukon Electrical, of course, being a private company.

There have been a number of power outages that have plagued us all, of course, and some have been destruction of insulators on poles, some have involved trees falling on lines, and the most recent outage was a stuck valve on the governor of Whitehorse turbine number 4.

We're working to resolve that issue. We have experts in Whitehorse, as we speak. We are looking at the problems with that, and we have every confidence that the problems will be resolved within the next week to 10 days.

Mr. McRobb: Well, I'm rather disappointed in the minister not providing enough assurance to Yukoners. The problem appears to be related to the unreliability of the aging infrastructure we inherited from the Northern Canada Power Commission some 31 years ago.

Instead of ensuring that our vital core equipment is running reliably, this government's entire focus is on expanding the electrical grid and adding major customers that will only further stress the aging system. This skew-to-development approach could unfortunately leave many Yukoners cold in the dark.

One suggestion is to have the regulator, the Yukon Utilities Board, review this matter at the upcoming hearing this winter. What will the Energy minister do to make that happen, or does he have some other bright idea?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: As I would hope the Member for Kluane is aware by now, I, of course, as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, have responsibility related to the government's role in energy policy and my colleague, the minister responsible for YDC/YEC is responsible for the corporation and its activities. To provide the member with further clarification, I am surprised the member himself seems to be a little bit in the dark on this issue here. He is failing to recognize the importance of investing in infrastructure and expanding the grid.

If the member would look at the residential and commercial consumption over the past number of years there has been steady upward usage on an average basis per customer. It is critical that we invest in expanding that grid, not only to assist new industries in coming on board, but in fact, to prevent the existing customers from seeing a rate increase due to the requirement to use diesel fuel.

Now, I know the member has a very different view on the use of diesel fuel and seems to consider it a good thing. This government supports hydro usage and other renewable, green energy sources, and that is why we are doing the appropriate thing and working with partners, including with private sector investment. In the case of Sherwood Mine, that company's investment is \$7.2 million in the public line to connect the community of Pelly Crossing. We'll continue to work with those customers in expanding that infrastructure, as we should do.

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, that answer had pretty well zero value. My question did not pertain to policy. It is asking the minister responsible for the corporation what action he is going to take. This is the opportunity for him to be held accountable.

Now, consumers are being asked to pay more for their power; meanwhile, the quality of their electrical service is deteriorating. Electricity isn't just a convenience anymore, it is an essential service and everybody depends on it. The government needs to stay awake at the switch and ensure the government-owned power company is keeping the lights on instead of focusing on grid expansions at all costs. Will the new minister reconsider this flawed approach and undertake to introduce a responsible measure of balance to the instructions his government has given the corporation in order to provide greater reliability of service to our territory's electricity consumers?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I know the Member for Kluane is trying to bridge away from his previous comments on the public record when the member has opposed investment in infrastructure and suggested that simply maintaining the status quo is the only priority. Of course, work transpires as it must, by both corporations, in reviewing the infrastructure, and in the case where problems exist, rectifying those problems and replacing equipment that may reach the point where it needs replacing.

However, the member is completely failing to recognize the importance of the approach this government has taken in engaging with the private sector in involving, in the case of bringing the mine at Minto, Sherwood Copper, on to the line, that that company, in addition to fully paying for the cost of the spur line off the main extension, has paid \$7.2 million in investment to enable the Yukon Energy Corporation to connect the community of Pelly Crossing to the grid and assist us in further expanding that grid toward the Mayo-Dawson transmission line for the eventual connection of those grids and integration of the Yukon's energy system. We are investing in and expanding the Yukon's infrastructure for the good of all citizens and for the good of the economy.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Unanimous consent re notice of motion re Public Accounts Committee membership

Mr. Mitchell: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I would request the unanimous consent of the Assembly to de-

bate the motion regarding the appointment of members to the Public Accounts Committee, of which I gave notice during Notices of Motion earlier today.

Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, the reason I do that today —

Speaker: There's no explanation needed. Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been denied.

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 now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. Monday.

The House adjourned at 2:12 p.m.