

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, November 3, 2009 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

Introduction of visitors.

Returns or documents for tabling.

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 8

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly, I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 8 of the First Session of the 32nd Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Leader of the Third Party on November 2, 2009. This petition meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Are there any other petitions for presentation?

Are there bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 110: Introduction and First Reading

Mr. McRobb: I move that a bill, entitled *Yukon Energy Corporation Protection Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Kluane that a bill, entitled *Yukon Energy Corporation Protection Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 110 agreed to

Speaker: Are there further bills for introduction? Hearing none, are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges all Yukoners to celebrate the arrival of the Olympic torch in Yukon and to seize the Olympic spirit of fair play, respect, commitment for peace and the power of sport by participating in the Olympic torch relay events taking place in Yukon communities November 3 and 4, 2009.

Mr. Cardiff: I give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for all documents and papers related to the memorandum of understanding the Government of Yukon has been negotiating with the ATCO Group since November 2008, including:

(a) the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Yukon and the Na Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation on the Mayo B hydroelectric project;

(b) the contribution agreement between the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada on the Mayo B hydroelectric project; and

THAT all these documents be tabled in the Legislature prior to the next meeting of the Public Accounts Committee.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support the initiative of Nathan Cullen, New Democrat Member of Parliament, in drafting Bill C-472, *An Act to Amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act*, in order to establish the civilian investigation service which would investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of or the occurrence of serious bodily harm to any person while that person was in the custody of the RCMP.

I have for filing copies of Bill C-472.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to support the initiative of Jim Maloway, New Democratic Member of Parliament, in drafting Bill C-310, *An Act to Provide Certain Rights to Air Passengers*, in order to place obligations on air carriers to provide compensation and other assistance to passengers in certain cases such as when:

(1) a flight has been cancelled or delayed;

(2) boarding has been denied;

(3) an aircraft has remained on the ground for a period of time more than one hour at an airport; and

(4) to require all air carriers to disclose all relevant information to the public regarding the pricing of flights and to keep passengers informed regarding any misplaced baggage and developments in respect of their flights that could have a significant impact on their travel plans.

I also have for filing copies of Bill C-310.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motion? Hearing none, is there a statement by a minister? This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Yukon Energy Corporation/ATCO

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we asked the Premier about the negotiations he undertook with ATCO president Nancy Southern to privatize the Yukon Energy Corporation. We asked him about the documented negotiations he had with her about increased ATCO involvement in Yukon's hydro system.

We asked him about the documented negotiations with her about the term of the president of the proposed new energy company. We asked him again, referring to the public record,

about the Premier's familiarity with her when he introduced her to the Legislative Assembly. We asked the Premier to explain this in light of his public statements that he did not know Ms. Southern. There's an obvious contradiction here, Mr. Speaker.

Could the Premier please explain why he told the public he had never met Ms. Southern, when in fact he clearly had?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Firstly, there were no negotiations with the president of ATCO by me. Let's get that on the record. Secondly, I'm not sure what the member's point is about knowing the president of ATCO corporation. I think all Yukoners probably are well aware of the individual — the president — because of the significant contribution that the corporation has made, for instance, to the Canada Winter Games here in Whitehorse in 2007. Surely the history of energy in the Yukon, given the long, long involvement of the Yukon Electrical Company Ltd. in providing electrical energy to Yukoners — that spans probably somewhere in the neighbourhood of a century in time. I imagine a lot of people are aware of and know who the individual is.

Mr. Mitchell: It's about credibility and integrity — the contradiction between the Premier's public statements and these documents remains. On June 25, the Premier was featured on CHON-FM to answer questions about his plans to privatize the Yukon Energy Corporation. In response, the Premier told Yukoners he'd never met with ATCO president Nancy Southern in his life. Yesterday the Premier tabled a letter from himself to Ms. Southern dated November 7, 2008. The Premier wrote: "Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you last week to discuss Yukon's electricity options." He also wrote of the need to develop the framework for a new partnership, detail the proposed arrangements, and identify the process to conclude due diligence and detailed negotiations. These negotiations are part of the public record. Now, the public record also includes the Premier's denials that he had ever met Ms. Southern.

So why did the Premier tell Yukoners he had never met Ms. Southern when, in fact, he had been working closely with her to privatize the Yukon Energy Corporation?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I think this is a fruitless discussion with the Leader of the Official Opposition, who refuses to even acknowledge this so-called evidence that the member himself tabled in this House on Thursday of last week.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, if the member has drawn a conclusion that (a) we were in negotiations with ATCO to privatize anything — I would challenge the member to explain that to the Public Accounts Committee; (b) I would challenge the member to refer to the very document that he tabled. It clearly shows that one of the proposed models that was being discussed, and scoping-out discussions, showed that the Yukon Energy Corporation was not selling assets.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, it also demonstrates that the discussions were about concepts, not negotiations about a partnership, or an arrangement, or privatization, or selling of assets whatsoever.

I think the member opposite is starting to demonstrate unwillingness, or a hesitation to go before the Public Accounts Committee and present his information as he believes it to be

factual. We'll let the Public Accounts Committee table its report, as it should, so the Yukon public is well aware of what the facts are. We're not getting the facts here in this House right now.

Mr. Mitchell: Being truthful with Yukoners is never fruitless and we'll discuss it right here today, tomorrow and the day after in this House.

Yukoners still don't have straight answers from the Premier about his secret negotiations with ATCO president and CEO Nancy Southern. The Premier also told Ms. Southern that he wanted to discuss ATCO managing Yukon's water, waste management and housing. He told Ms. Southern that the president of the new energy company should hold that position for a longer, rather than a shorter term. Then last June, he told Yukoners that he had never met her in his life.

Yesterday, the Premier tabled a letter from himself to Ms. Southern dated November 7 of last year. In this letter he refers to meeting her and says he looks forward to developing the framework for a new partnership and to concluding detailed negotiations with ATCO. The Premier should clear up this matter.

Did he meet with Ms. Southern like his letter says he did? Or did he not like he has been telling Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I think the member opposite is actually inferring that there are factual issues here and I think we're demonstrating in this House, by what the member is presenting, that there are, and that's why the Public Accounts Committee will do its work. The member can bring his information forward, as he should, and other facts will be presented to the Public Accounts Committee. That's why the government has chosen to go that route.

We believe strongly that Yukoners should have the facts. They're certainly not getting them from the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Question re: Yukon Energy Corporation/ATCO

Mr. McRobb: I stand today in total disgust at what's going on here. In more than 13 years in this Assembly, I've never seen anything like it.

Never before has a government been so badly caught in its own web and it's trying to spin its way out. The contradictions between the evidence of what this government is saying are simply astounding. Yesterday the Premier himself tabled a document that flies in the face of what he has told Yukoners on several occasions, including one radio interview in particular when his credibility and the credibility of his Yukon Party government was on the line. All we get is more spin and accusations from this government, including one yesterday from the Premier himself calling the evidence a "bush league sham".

When will the Premier and his colleagues do the honourable thing and finally level with the public?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, levelling with the public is exactly what the government has been doing all along and that's why the Public Accounts Committee will delve into this matter and provide Yukoners the facts. I think the members opposite — if they're so adamant on what they say was taking place — should have no trouble presenting that to the Public Accounts Committee, provide their evidence.

But I say again, the member opposite — the Leader of the Official Opposition — clearly stated that the Yukon government was selling the corporation and that they have tabled the evidence to prove it. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, if this is their evidence, they had better dig up a lot more before they go before the committee.

Mr. McRobb: Mr. Speaker, this is nothing less than an outrage. Let's review the facts: the Premier and several government Cabinet ministers told the Yukon public their story. Their story was disputed by people in the know, including the former YEC chair, former board members, the former energy minister, all of whom resigned on principle on this matter. In response, the Premier and his ministers have repeated their questionable stories, remained in denial and on occasion, have attacked the dissenters.

Yesterday we received what might be the strongest evidence yet — the Premier's ATCO letter from a year ago. It proves the dissenters were right and the Premier and his ministers were wrong.

When will the Premier and his colleagues do the honourable thing and speak to the facts?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The reason we tabled the letter for the members opposite is to help them out with the facts. What the letter shows is, upon receipt of a proposal from ATCO, it was presented to caucus. Through that discussion, it was decided to proceed with scoping-out discussions. By the way, Mr. Speaker, it's in keeping with the Yukon government's energy strategy that speaks clearly to the development of partnerships in relation to energy, energy infrastructure and energy needs in the Yukon today and into the future. We've already developed some of those partnerships — for example, with Canada on the Mayo B project. We are working on a partnership with Na Cho Nyäk Dun. There are provisions for partnerships with industry in our energy strategy. None of that is privatizing or selling assets.

You know what it is, Mr. Speaker? It's actually building assets. It's building our energy future, and it's meeting the objectives of affordable, reliable energy for Yukoners, which is our main challenge.

Mr. McRobb: Well, let's speak to one of the facts of this matter. The Premier's own letter from a year ago said the proposal to create a new entity in partnership with ATCO was discussed with his caucus — with his caucus — from a year ago. This contradicts what the Premier and his colleagues have told the Yukon public. The letter also said that his colleagues gave him full approval to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, this means that every elected member of the Yukon Party not only knew about ATCO one full year ago, but also approved of this secret, massive sellout of public property. This is my final opportunity today to ask this question of the Premier: when will he and his colleagues do the honourable thing and finally level with the Yukon public on this matter?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I can assure the Member for Kluane that, once the Public Accounts Committee delves into this issue, the member will have many more opportunities to level with the Yukon public. In fact, the government is really quite

anxious to have the Public Accounts Committee take this issue and report back to this House.

There's going to be a lot of requirement by the members opposite to substantiate their inferences, opinions and interpretations. The government side is certainly looking forward to the work of the Public Accounts Committee and the outcome.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Prior to the honourable member asking the question, there seems to be a lot of extraneous chatter, and I just ask honourable members to control that.

Member for Mount Lorne, you have the floor.

Question re: Mayo B project

Mr. Cardiff: The New Democrats have more questions about the future of our management of Yukon's energy resources, in particular the Mayo B project. At the Marsh Lake stop on the Premier's tour, I heard the Premier tell residents in Marsh Lake that the Mayo B project would be rate neutral, that none of the cost of doing either the Pelly-to-Stewart project or the Mayo B project would be taken into consideration in the rate base, and that rates wouldn't be affected. We kind of wonder how the Premier can make that kind of an assurance.

Can he shed some light on how such a costly project will not have an impact on energy consumers?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The reason that we clearly articulated to the Yukon public that the investment in Mayo B would be rate neutral is because that is the only way this project will be of benefit to Yukoners. If the Yukon Energy Corporation had to put this in infrastructure — which we are about to provide in partnership with Canada for that corporation's asset base into the ROE, which is the return on equity factor — there would in all likelihood be an increase in the rates. That is not our objective, and we have stated many times that our objective is reliable, affordable energy. So, Mr. Speaker, it is a fact that this will be rate neutral, because we have gone out and done the hard work in creating the partnership with Canada so that the investment in this infrastructure will allow for the Energy Corporation to maintain a rate-neutral position.

Mr. Cardiff: Well, in Question Period yesterday, the Premier said the Yukon is responsible for 50 percent of the cost of Mayo B.

The federal government has provided \$71 million; the Yukon will provide \$71 million. Yesterday, the Premier told us that the government was advancing \$25 million to YEC, but there are really only three options available to the government and YEC to pay for Mayo B: pay out the money from the Yukon's accumulated surplus; borrow the money to pay for it, in which case there would be financing charges and it would have to be paid back and that would have to be in the rate base; or get someone else to pay for it with strings attached.

Will the Premier please lay out the plan to cover our \$71-million share of these costs?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: First off, the member of the Third Party will have to understand that the actual agreement on the green energy infrastructure fund is between Canada and the Energy Corporation. What the government is doing is working through the Yukon Development Corporation to assist and pro-

vide support to ensure the Energy Corporation can meet its obligations under the agreement.

I'd like to get into this debate with the members opposite, because it is all about how we are going to pay for much-needed infrastructure at a time when the Yukon Energy Corporation is facing supply challenges. What we're trying to avert here through investment is saving money, because if Mayo B does not proceed, there is some millions of dollars of increased cost to the Energy Corporation to meet that supply challenge through the burning of diesel fuel. Mayo B is a very wise investment at this time.

Mr. Cardiff: It may be a wise investment in the Premier's opinion but, as the minister responsible for the Yukon Energy Corporation, he didn't lay out the plan of how the Energy Corporation will cover that share of the cost.

Yesterday, as I said earlier, the Premier told the House that Yukon Development Corporation is in the midst of securing financing for the Mayo B project and that the Yukon government has advanced \$25 million to the corporation on a short-term basis. That leaves \$46 million for the corporation to cover for the project cost.

Can the Premier please provide more details about the \$25-million short-term advance? How long is that going to be and when will the taxpayers be repaid? Once again, what are the government's and the corporation's plans for finding the remainder of the funds to do this project?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Not only can we provide details when they become available — because at this time the Energy Corporation is working on those very arrangements — we'll bring the Yukon Energy Corporation before the Assembly as witnesses, as we always do each and every year. It will be a very good discussion, and I'm sure the Yukon Energy Corporation will be more than pleased to demonstrate why the investment is required at this time as a good investment for Yukon and is indeed something that will save the Yukon ratepayer money now and into the long term because we will reduce our consumption of diesel to produce electricity.

Question re: Yukon Energy Corporation/ATCO

Mr. Cathers: Throughout the events relating to the Yukon government's talks with ATCO, senior staff at the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources at all times acted in a professional manner and their conduct in fulfilling the direction given to them by the elected level of government is beyond reproach. They have done exactly what professional civil servants are expected to do in serving the elected level of government. Does the Premier agree?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I certainly agree that the department has always done its work at a very professional level, and I'd like to thank the member opposite for bringing it to the floor today.

Mr. Cathers: I thank the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources for answering that question. We didn't hear what the Premier thinks.

It is interesting that the Premier has been hiding behind officials and now he is hiding behind the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. One of the expectations of ministers, including the Premier, is that they will answer questions of a policy nature and questions of a political nature. Even when acting on the advice of officials or answering for a problem that a minister had nothing to do with within a department, the minister is still expected to answer the tough questions.

The key questions regarding the Yukon government's talks with ATCO have always been about the Premier's involvement and the Premier's actions. How officials acted based on orders is not the question; yet the Premier has repeatedly dodged and skated around the tough questions and is reverting to old, tired desperate responses about how everyone else is wrong. Then he points the fingers at officials and sends them to answer the questions and then to take the blame. It's the Premier's —

Speaker's statement

Speaker: The principle that we have been discussing since we started this session is that all members are honourable. Honourable member, keep that in mind while asking a question. You still have the floor.

Mr. Cathers: It's the Premier's job to answer about policy and his own actions — why is he hiding behind officials?

Hon. Mr. Lang: I certainly appreciate the member opposite's question on our energy strategy for the Yukon and certainly he's not hiding behind anybody. I am the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and I will answer questions pertaining to that department.

The member opposite knows that. He was the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. He was the man who was in charge of the energy strategy for Yukon and he did a very good job, Mr. Speaker.

In answering the question, we work with the department. I'd like to compliment the member opposite. The department does a stellar job for Yukoners, and of course, represents the government very well on any level.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I don't question for a moment the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources' respect for the officials.

The Premier is now touting the idea of handing this issue regarding ATCO off to the Public Accounts Committee. It wasn't very many months ago that he told government members to scuttle that committee. PAC's mandate deals merely with reviewing implementation of policy. The key questions regarding the government's talks with ATCO have always been about the Premier's involvement and about the Premier's actions. This is another deflection technique, another attempt by the Premier to put officials out front and not answer the questions himself.

If he's serious about his alleged new-found eagerness for letting the public know what he has been hiding for months, he'll convene a judicial inquiry where people — including department staff, YEC employees, former board members and most importantly, himself — would have to testify under oath.

Will he agree to convene a judicial inquiry or is he going to continue playing word games, dodging questions and hiding behind officials?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, you know, under the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, and given the fact that the Yukon public has been subjected to a tremendous amount of misinformation, due consideration was given to a public inquiry. However, the justification of that expense is certainly somewhat problematic because it's quite obvious what is actually behind this whole initiative that has been undertaken by individuals. That's why we chose the Public Account Committee. If the former minister has a desire to present his evidence, his opinion, and his views at the Public Accounts Committee, I'm sure that would be a contribution to the process.

We do know one thing though. The outcome will be the facts, and the Yukon public deserves the facts of the matter. As soon as we can get to those facts, we intend to make sure they are available, not only to this House, but to Yukoners.

Question re: Yukon Energy Corporation/ATCO

Mr. Mitchell: We have more questions about the Premier's letter to Nancy Southern. This is the same Nancy Southern the Premier told Yukoners he had never met. The letter confirms that the Premier had in fact met with her. It's about integrity. The Premier repeatedly denied that his government was in negotiations to privatize the Yukon Energy Corporation, but no one believes him — and why should they?

Yesterday the Premier undercut his own argument. He made public the letter that confirmed what we have said all along. The government caucus gave the go-ahead to this entire privatization plan in November of last year, so they're all in this together. The letter confirms the Premier's plan to proceed with detailed negotiations.

Why does the Premier insist on denying the obvious and why should Yukoners believe him?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Obviously, the member opposite has problems trying to interpret the letter. The letter is quite simple. It informs the ATCO president that upon receipt of the proposal and its presentation to caucus, the government is willing to proceed with the discussions with ATCO on the proposal that was received. The member tabled that proposal.

It states clearly in here that whatever we do in this regard, should we get to a point of negotiations — which we have not; there have never been any negotiations — this would remain a regulated utility, a public utility. There's no discussion of privatization. The Yukon government's position, by the very documents the member tabled here Thursday, demonstrates clearly the Yukon government was not selling anything. It was focused on building Yukon's energy future and meeting the objective of affordable, reliable energy.

Mr. Mitchell: Just to clarify something: ATCO is a private corporation and it's a regulated utility. That proves nothing.

Yukoners were quite rightly outraged this summer when they learned about the Premier's secret plans to privatize the Yukon Energy Corporation, and the Premier spent the summer denying it. Now we have a letter before us that proves the Premier's denials don't hold water. Yukoners have had enough,

Mr. Speaker. They will not put up with the Premier's lack of transparency any longer. It's time for an election to clear the air.

Will the Premier send Yukoners to the polls so they can pass judgement on his summer of misinformation?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: On a point of order, you're absolutely right.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, I mean we've heard the Leader of the Official Opposition numerous times skating over the line. Now to state the Premier was putting misinformation on the public record throughout the summer is clearly a violation of our Standing Orders. I'd ask you to draw his attention to the Standing Orders and encourage him to follow them in our Assembly.

Mr. McRobb: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, it's understandable how members opposite are excited on this matter, but there is no point of order. The information put on the record by the Premier this summer contradicts the evidence before us today.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: From the Chair's perspective, there actually is a point of order. The honourable member stepped over the line. We talked about this yesterday. I understand that in the excitement of Question Period it does happen. Just keep that in mind. I'm not going to make any member withdraw remarks. There have been strong statements on each side of the House here today, so honourable members, take a breath.

You have the floor, Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Mitchell: It's our job in the Official Opposition to hold the government accountable and that's what we're doing. We believe this government has lost the trust of Yukoners and it is time to go to the polls. The Premier lost the former chair of the Energy Corporation Board and three board members over this scandal. He lost his former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and judging by the looks on the faces of some of his remaining colleagues, it won't be long before he loses another one.

Yukoners are fed up with the corner office democracy that they're living under. The Premier's letter to the ATCO president confirms that negotiations began last November and that every member of the government knew about it and approved it.

Will the Premier do the honourable thing and call an election so Yukoners can decide who they want to govern Yukon?

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Before the Hon. Premier replies, honourable members understand that strong words are going to beget strong words.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: The Leader of the Official Opposition will have to exercise patience. We have no intention of calling an election. In fact, we have a lot of work to do — a lot

of work that is definitely contributing to a better quality of life for Yukoners.

The evidence of that contribution and the positive change and direction for the Yukon Territory is now seven years long. However, Mr. Speaker, we're very interested in having the members opposite participate in a Public Accounts Committee review of the so-called "negotiations" that they have presented to this House — the negotiations that never took place — the *Seinfeld* negotiations. We are very confident that the Public Accounts Committee will do its work and provide Yukoners the facts of the matter. We're not selling Yukon's energy infrastructure; we're building it. We've demonstrated that already, and we'll continue to do so as we continue throughout our mandate as we were elected to do.

Question re: Yukon Energy Corporation/ATCO

Mr. Mitchell: The Public Accounts Committee that the Premier's colleagues refused to attend when we asked them to meet last summer — that committee can deal with issues of officials implementing policy — but this Premier will have to stand in this House and he will have to stand again and again and answer questions about his actions, or deny them — that's his option.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the government had no mandate from the public to privatize the Energy Corporation. The media finally caught up with the Deputy Premier in early August. She insisted government was not in negotiations to privatize the Energy Corporation. The letter tabled by the Premier contradicts that. The Deputy Premier gave her stamp of approval to the privatization plans in November of last year, along with the rest of caucus. Once again, they're all in this together. So will the Premier let the public pass judgement on this government? Will he send Yukoners to the polls?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Well, actually, I'd be careful of what you wish for. I think the member opposite knows what I'm referring to.

This whole charade about negotiations — let's let the Public Accounts Committee deal with that. The member says the committee is there to deal with matters of policy. Well, I submit to the member opposite that if any government was intending to sell the Yukon Energy Corporation and all — or substantially all — of its assets, that would be a matter of policy. Let's get on with the work that will give Yukoners the facts, instead of what they're experiencing here in the House.

Mr. Mitchell: It's not what I'm wishing for or what we're wishing for; it's what Yukoners are wishing for. Now, the Premier's letter to Nancy Southern confirms that all members of the government caucus were in on the ground floor of this privatization scheme. The Deputy Premier's denial about there being no direction given "when it comes to all the discussions that have been going on in the media with respect to the ATCO corporation" ring very hollow.

The Premier's letter says he discussed the privatization proposal with the entire caucus and he had "full approval to proceed." Yukoners expect their government to be up front. We don't believe that has happened in this entire episode. Yukoners are angry; they are disappointed and they want an opportunity to vote for a government they can trust.

So again, because he could change his mind, like he did about PAC, will the Premier give Yukoners that opportunity or will he deny them that choice?

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Yukoners will get the opportunity; of course they will; that's called "democracy". When this mandate is concluded and an election date has been set, Yukoners will have that option. I challenge the member to demonstrate to this House and to the Yukon public at large where in the letter he's referencing is that a privatization proposal? Where is that? Let's get on with the facts. If the member is hesitant to go before PAC, appoint somebody else in his stead.

Mr. Mitchell: Let's go back to the facts. The Premier told Yukoners this summer he had never met Nancy Southern. He had in fact at least once, perhaps several times. His own letter acknowledges it. He said there were no negotiations to privatize the Energy Corporation. He released a letter yesterday that said the government would be conducting detailed negotiations with ATCO.

The Deputy Premier said there was no mandate to negotiate with ATCO and therefore, there were no negotiations. The letter released yesterday contradicts that. It confirms that the entire caucus gave the thumbs-up to the privatization plans last November. Add it all up, Mr. Speaker, and there's only one way to clear the air: give Yukoners the opportunity to vote for a government they can trust. If the Premier is so confident, he should put the question to the people — call an election.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Mr. Speaker, you know what's astounding here is that the member opposite, first off, interprets a document that he has presented here as evidence of privatization that is nothing of the sort. He tables a document — a proposal — that again, is nothing of the sort when it comes to privatization — it's about building the energy future for Yukon. He now states that a letter tabled in the House in the spirit of transparency is a commitment to detailed negotiations and it is a mandate. Does the member not even understand what it takes to provide a mandate for any department in government to negotiate? You know the question the member should be asking? "Let's see the Cabinet minute that gave the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources the mandate to negotiate anything?" You know what, Mr. Speaker? There isn't a minute.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Cardiff: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I'd like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, November 4. It is Motion No. 852, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Mr. McRobb: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, November 4, 2009. It is the bill entitled *Yukon Energy Corporation Protection Act*, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Speaker: We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner, in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to the bills that have passed this House.

Commissioner enters the Chamber, announced by the Sergeant-at-Arms

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Speaker: Madam Commissioner, the Assembly has, at its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the Assembly, I respectfully request your assent.

Clerk: *Act to Amend the Public Health and Safety Act; Fourth Appropriation Act, 2008-09.*

Commissioner: I hereby assent to the bills as enumerated by the Clerk.

I also wanted to just quickly say that I hope I see some of you along the route or at Shipyards Park, as we welcome the Olympic torch to our territory.

Thank you.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

Unanimous consent re proceeding with Motion No. 857

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I would ask the unanimous consent of the House to proceed with government Motion No. 857 at this time.

Speaker: The Government House Leader has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of the House to proceed with government Motion No. 857 at this time. Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 857

Clerk: Motion No. 857, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. Taylor.

Speaker: It is moved by the Government House Leader

THAT the membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, as established by Motion No. 8 of the First Session of the 32nd Legislative Assembly, be amended by rescinding the appointment of John Edzerza and appointing Steve Cardiff to the committee.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: My remarks will be relatively short and succinct this afternoon. The motion before us is pertaining to the membership of the Public Accounts Committee. This is really a matter of housekeeping business. It's to establish appropriate membership relevant to the respective individuals in the Legislature. It is also to resolve some imbalance on the committee as it stands today.

It refers to removing the appointment of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini and in turn appointing the Member for Mount Lorne to the committee.

As it currently stands, there is not an appropriate balance of representation of members, as we have seen in the past. This is in keeping with standard practice and in the tradition of how the makeup of the committee has stood in previous years.

We on the government side very much look forward to receiving the concurrence of all members in the Legislature to proceed with this motion. Give concurrence to the motion so we can have the Public Accounts Committee in full operation once again.

Mr. McRobb: I'm pleased to say we will be supporting this motion today, and it is relatively a housekeeping issue. Aside from that, however, there are some other comments I would like to put on the record about the Public Accounts Committee, because the committee has been so topical in this Assembly in recent days. I used to serve on the committee, Mr. Speaker, and it is a good committee. It's usually well prepared and resourced with the assistance of the Auditor General of Canada's Office. All the proceedings are recorded in this Assembly and so on.

However, the Public Accounts Committee can never be a total solution, especially to the issue it's facing today. I'm talking about the secretive privatization scheme related to Yukon Energy Corporation. Let's be clear about something. The Public Accounts Committee can only address the implementation of government policy. PAC cannot go beyond that into matters such as the policy itself; therefore, PAC is, at best, only a partial solution.

In addition, the membership of PAC is limited to only members appointed to that committee. This excludes the participation of most members from the opposition benches, including me. This Assembly is the appropriate opportunity to ask questions of policy to the government side. Mr. Speaker, when you connect the dots, what do you get? A government side who, in this Assembly, points to PAC on questions related to policy. Well, Mr. Speaker, you can see now it's merely a diversion with no tangible result. PAC cannot deal with policy questions itself. It also can't deal with statements made by the Premier in reference to policy. It can only deal with the implementation of policy.

There is another problem with the Public Accounts Committee, and that is the government side controls the majority of membership on that committee.

In the past, the Yukon Party government has attempted to scuttle the committee and to basically seize up its progress by refusing to attend meetings. The Public Accounts Committee cannot function without a quorum. We know that the Yukon Party members who go to the meetings are merely following the orders from the Premier, and the orders are contrary to the whole intent, purpose and workings of this committee.

The Public Accounts Committee is chaired usually by the Leader of the Official Opposition, and should be used as a body to test the accountability of government policy and its implementation, but that's not what has occurred. Hopefully, Mr.

Speaker, that's water under the bridge and we'll be dealing with the reconstituted committee that has a fresh mandate to pursue questions and to fully participate without any so-called scuttling and do its best for Yukoners, because after all, we're here to serve the interests of Yukon citizens and that can only be done if this committee functions properly.

I just want to end by repeating that, again, the Public Accounts Committee is only a partial solution, and questions of policy are appropriately asked on the floor of this Assembly.

Mr. Cardiff: I'll be brief. I'd just like to thank the Government House Leader for bringing the motion forward today and thank Members of the Legislative Assembly for their support. I look forward to participating on the Public Accounts Committee once more.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: I have to provide some information for the Member for Kluane. This is a matter of policy. The point is that for anything such as what the members are suggesting to have taken place, it is a policy decision that would have to be made and direction given to the Yukon Development Corporation itself to carry out such policy. That is by way of order-in-council.

It's a very appropriate process to take and allow the Public Accounts Committee to do its work. Of course the first step is what we've addressed today, and that is its membership and its structure, and now we can get on with the work and provide Yukoners with the facts of the matter.

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

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would like to thank the Member for Mount Lorne for his comments. I would like to thank all members of this Assembly in support of this motion. Indeed, the Public Accounts Committee does provide a valued service, and I believe that the committee has functioned very well. In the past, it has overseen a myriad of different matters referred to the committee, and I believe that every member who has put forward their service on behalf of Yukon citizens has done a very good job.

Of course, with respect to the member opposite — and I refer to the Member for Kluane — I am not sure whether or not I agree with the definition of the Public Accounts Committee as being merely a diversion. However, certainly we want to see the Public Accounts Committee up and running. We want to see it fully functional and operational. There has been a lot of toing and froing over the last number of days on a varied variety of issues pertaining to one matter only. As the Premier has already articulated, this is but certainly a very valued operation that can be referred to this particular committee.

Again, I would just like to thank all members for their support on this motion and for their expedience in seeing it through.

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. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hart: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Lang: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Horne: Agree.

Mr. Edzerza: Agree.

Mr. Nordick: Agree.

Mr. Mitchell: Agree.

Mr. McRobb: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Mr. Inverarity: Agree.

Mr. Cardiff: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 14 yea, nil nay.

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

Motion No. 857 agreed to

Speaker: Government bills.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 17: Second Reading — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 17, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Fentie; adjourned debate, Hon. Mr. Fentie.

Hon. Mr. Fentie: Yesterday at the time of adjourning the House, we were speaking about the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, Bill No. 17, for fiscal year 2009-10, and had left off at an investment of First Nation Training Corps position, specifically a GIS technician in the oil and gas branch, in keeping with our commitment to a representative public service.

Under the Department of Tourism and Culture, \$100,000 has been allocated to support the heritage, arts, culture and essential skills project that is focused on developing skills for First Nations managing heritage resources within rural communities. These all represent initiatives creating more opportunities for the Yukon public.

Through the Department of Education, we are providing Yukon College with just over \$1 million in operation and maintenance and capital funding to support implementation and operation of the Research Centre of Excellence. Mr. Speaker, climate change continues to be at the forefront of research discussions throughout the world. This is a significant investment in the college, creating opportunities to attract researchers who can produce innovative and leading-edge research in key knowledge sectors such as climate change, the environment

and the economy. I'm sure the minister responsible for education can provide the House much more detail on this very important initiative for Yukon.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources includes two significant infrastructure projects supported under the Arctic research infrastructure fund. The first is the two-year investment of \$3.885 million for renovations and upgrades to the H.S. Bostock Core Library. This supplementary estimate includes \$110,000 for the first year of this two-year project.

The second is the two-year investment of \$1.597 million for renovations and upgrades to existing forestry research infrastructure. This supplementary estimate includes \$540,000 for the first year of this two-year project.

These represent significant investments for Yukon because both initiatives will support valuable northern research, which builds our knowledge and our understanding and helps to inform environmental and economic objectives at both the local and national levels. These investments build on this government's commitment, as outlined in the climate change action plan, to expand our research capability and our knowledge of northern climate change.

Following the most recent intake of the northern strategy trust, the total funding of \$40 million under this trust has now been committed. Just over \$3.5 million is included and disbursed between the various responsible departments in this supplementary related to projects and initiatives previously approved. This brings the total 2009-10 allocation, under the northern strategy, to approximately \$13.7 million. Of this amount, the Executive Council Office retains a significant budget of \$5.4 million for the northern strategy to be allocated once the cash flows for the most recent approvals and when they are finalized.

In the area of public health and safety, as I have previously noted and advised this Legislature, the Yukon Hospital Corporation is facing significant challenges with the rising cost of providing health care. As I advised last year, officials from the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Finance negotiated a three-year agreement with the Yukon Hospital Corporation. This was an important step by our government to confirm our commitment to provide stable and appropriate funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Under this agreement, this supplementary includes another \$3.05 million for the corporation.

So we continue to allocate funding under the territorial health access fund, with just over \$1.5 million provided in this supplementary, bringing the total 2009-10 allocation to approximately \$11.6 million. Our government continues to work diligently on securing an extension to this agreement with the Government of Canada, led by our Minister of Health and Social Services and our sister territories' ministers of health. Their work continues to ensure that northerners and indeed Yukoners will be able to access comparable health care services that all Canadians have access to.

This supplementary provides almost \$1 million in support to continuing care. Specifically, funding is provided in support of five additional home care positions. On the emergency medical services side, the Department of Community Services

has identified an additional \$827,000 in support of this important service for Yukoners. Further, this supplementary includes \$692,000 in capital to be revoted to complete the emergency medical services facilities in the community of Watson Lake.

Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to highlight initiatives directly supported by this government, those being the significant infrastructure projects being undertaken by the Yukon Hospital Corporation. With support by our government, the Hospital Corporation has undertaken to secure financing to provide for the design and construction of a new staff residence and health services facility, the planning, design, construction and fit-up costs for both the Watson Lake and Dawson City hospital projects. These are all significant infrastructure projects, Mr. Speaker, important to Yukoners as our government strives to improve access to and the quality of health care services to the Yukon public.

Investing in Yukoners is paramount. Education reform remains a priority for our government. In these supplementary estimates we have identified an investment of over \$1.6 million in our New Horizons strategy. The strategy encompasses the planning and implementation of conceptual and systemic shifts in education. New Horizons involves communities and partners and is supported by educational research that will lead to greater success for each student. This important and significant investment will see the implementation of a new student tracking system, provide support for school growth plans that will see First Nation and community input in setting priorities and building capacity in a collaborative approach to what is very important: lifelong learning, numeracy and literacy.

I could go on at great length but I'm sure, considering the member opposite's desire to engage with the government on factual matters important to the territory, I will close my comments by pointing to the fact that, once again, the Yukon government has been able, during the course of a fiscal year, to increase its investments, building a better quality of life for Yukoners, creating stimulus, building our economy, strengthening our health care system and our education system, investing in our arts and culture — and, Mr. Speaker, overall, very balanced.

Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: I'll just start by once again thanking my constituents of Copperbelt for continuing to place their trust in me to represent them — for their counsel, their questions, their suggestions and their candour, which I received over the course of the summer at the door, in public, on the streets of Whitehorse and across the territory when I ran into constituents wherever they might be.

I very much appreciate working on their behalf. I appreciate the constituent questions that come to me where people ask for help on any number or matter of issues that remain out of the public eye, but are done behind the scenes — working with ministers and working with officials of other governments to try and arrange for better solutions for Yukoners, and my constituents in particular.

I'd like to start today — I might as well start with the Yukon Energy Corporation, the elephant in the room, and one

of the biggest issues on the minds of Yukoners. We've all heard this. I'm sure members opposite have heard it too, because we've heard from Yukoners who say they're telling it to their Yukon Party MLAs and they're asking them why this was going on, why it was going on in secret and why it was going on despite the Premier's denials.

This summer, the Premier's secret negotiations to mortgage Yukon's future by considering options for selling and privatizing part or all of the Yukon Energy Corporation angered many thousands of Yukoners. These events have convinced many Yukoners that they deserve an opportunity to elect a government they feel they can trust.

We in the Official Opposition, the Liberal caucus, have heard from literally hundreds and hundreds of Yukoners who are fed up with all the Premier's wordsmithing and denials, and they want to change this government. They want an opportunity to vote.

In fact, we saw that the Leader of the Third Party, just yesterday, tabled in this House a petition with over 700 names of Yukoners who are decrying these attempts to privatize the public Yukon Energy Corporation, the publicly owned corporation that belongs to all Yukoners.

I've seen many of those signatures because, in fact, the Dawson signatures arrived in our caucus and we had an opportunity to look at those and then provided them back to the Leader of the Third Party to table along with the signatures that have been collected elsewhere across Yukon.

This summer we also saw the astonishing resignation of the former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — the member from Lake Laberge — from the government. The former minister has corroborated what we have been saying since June and what the former chair of the board of the Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation and his three colleagues who resigned last June have been saying — that privatization of the Yukon Energy Corporation was on the table and the table was set by the Premier.

The former minister said that the Premier was not up front with Yukoners, that his caucus was governed by intimidation, and that the Premier interfered in the operation of the Cabinet portfolios of his colleagues. Well, Mr. Speaker, on this occasion we agree wholeheartedly with the former minister.

We are strongly opposed in the Official Opposition to the manner in which the Yukon Party government undertook the Yukon Energy Corporation/ATCO secret negotiations, and that is why we tabled a non-confidence motion in this Assembly. It may be several weeks or more than a month before any such motion will reach the floor for debate, and many Yukoners have asked whether we believe we can win a non-confidence motion. It doesn't appear very likely, but we think it is important for each and every MLA to stand and vote on whether they support the actions taken by the Premier in secretly negotiating to privatize our public energy company and then refusing to be up front with Yukoners about those negotiations or not.

Every member of this Assembly will have to rise from their seats and stand and say "agree" or "disagree." We agree with what's gone on in the corner office; we agree with the secret dealings, the secret talks, the denials, the negotiations,

the plans, the schemes and the hiding of it from Yukoners — or we disagree. That will be an opportunity, just like the recorded votes here today, for every MLA to be on the record.

If all the Yukon Party MLAs vote confidence in this government — and their ranks have swollen with the reappearance of the Member for McIntyre-Takhini on that side — then they're all endorsing the Premier's actions. Then they're all in this together and no different from the Premier if they're prepared to continue to condone his actions.

Should we be trying to force an election this fall? Many people say the public doesn't like elections, that they're tired of elections. Well, the answer is yes, based on what we have been hearing on the doorsteps, by e-mail, telephone calls and on the streets of our communities from our constituents.

Yukoners are telling us they have had enough of the way in which this Premier runs government from the corner office and of those government members who support him in that.

We saw today the Member for Kluane table a bill that will make it impossible for any future government to privatize Yukon's publicly owned Energy Corporation without going to the public, by referendum, for their approval — for a clear mandate on this question alone. That will be another opportunity for the members opposite to take a stand for Yukoners — stand up for Yukoners. An issue this important should never be decided by nine MLAs. It should be decided and endorsed by all of the Yukoners we represent.

Mr. Speaker, while our title is the Official Opposition, we prefer to think of ourselves as Yukon's official advocates because that's what we really are and what we do. We advocate for all Yukoners who want a better standard of living, a better Yukon, a fair and more just Yukon.

I'll provide an example or two of how we tried to improve legislation on the floor of this House on behalf of all Yukoners. We tried to improve the *Child and Family Services Act* in 2008 and the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* earlier this year. We proposed amendments to reflect what we were hearing from many Yukoners, from First Nations and non-First Nations alike, who told us that the bills as tabled were flawed and that changes should be made to fix them.

Unfortunately, the government side had no interest in considering opposition amendments to the legislation. We and the Third Party tabled amendments to try to make it better legislation. Those amendments would have addressed the public concerns that we were hearing. For example, the fact that the position of a child and youth advocate would be better described as "child and youth navigator" — a child and youth GPS — to get someone from this office to that office, not to stand up and advocate for children who have been caught up in the system, who have found themselves — through no fault of their own — in difficult situations, children who have had difficult family upbringings and are not necessarily living with their parents and now need help, that they should have an advocate who can stand up for them and provide that help, but rather just say, if you go to this office, maybe they can help you. We hoped to address that.

As far as the original bill, the *Child and Family Services Act*, we tried to stand up for issues that were brought to us by

many Yukoners, including the Yukon's Information and Privacy Commissioner, including the Grand Chief of the Yukon First Nations, including a number of other First Nation chiefs and leaders who said there are good things in this legislation but there are flaws and you need to fix the flaws before you pass it.

We tried to represent that case. We tried to see if this Assembly, which will provide opportunities for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board president and chair to appear to testify on the Assembly floor, would to allow First Nation leaders to appear and testify, but that was refused.

In the end, we voted against that legislation because the government steadfastly refused to debate and consider the amendments we proposed to improve the bills.

I'm proud to be the Leader of the Yukon Liberal Party. As Liberals, we will never abandon those who have fallen by the wayside, whether it be from sickness or lack of educational opportunity or difficult family circumstances. Regardless of the causes, we don't write people off. We stand for fighting to eliminate poverty and homelessness and ensuring that there is affordable housing for those who need it. A Liberal government would work with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and others to find real solutions for the lack of affordable housing in the Yukon. We know that a healthy community provides its citizens with good access to health care professionals who care about and understand their needs. Liberals believe in a Yukon that continues to provide first-rate, affordable, publicly funded health care to every Yukon resident without the imposition of user fees or premiums. Let's not kid ourselves, Mr. Speaker — these are the ideas that are being floated: new fees, new premiums, to try and make up the shortfall in funding. We wouldn't impose those health care fees.

We understand that a healthy community is a community where the sick receive treatment and children are safe in their homes, their daycare centres and their schools, where there are ample recreational facilities and opportunities for families to experience quality time together. We believe that a healthy community must be free of the scourge of illegal drug use and of those who inflict it upon us.

We know that a healthy community doesn't judge others by their colour, ethnic background, religion or sexual orientation. A healthy community is a caring community, and that's what makes a prosperous community. Prosperity can't just be measured in dollars; it can only be measured in our quality of life, the quality not only of individuals but of all people and all communities. As long as there is a single Yukoner who suffers from poverty, addiction, untreated illness or chronic depression, then our job is not done.

Liberals believe in a Yukon where government supports a food bank and acts aggressively to fight poverty, rather than denying its existence because it's embarrassed to acknowledge it. We have many hundreds of caring Yukoners who are donating time, money and food to the Whitehorse Food Bank. I know many of them are in this room, Mr. Speaker — many of the elected members, as well as the Assembly officials and staff. It shouldn't only be left to the volunteers. Government needs to do this. Government needs to make sure that there are

no Yukoners who are going hungry, that there are no Yukoners who have to choose between paying the rent and putting food on the table.

We live in a far too prosperous society to have that be the choice left for anyone.

Liberals believe in a Yukon where no young person should ever be forced to couch surf, to trade their bodies and their dignity for a safe place to sleep. A Liberal government would support a permanent youth shelter in Whitehorse. Why do we keep discussing this? Why do we keep having officials go out to try to determine if it's 27 or 35? Is it 15 or 50 young people who are at risk?

We know there are young people at risk. It is fine to quantify it and determine just what the level of need is, but how many years have to go by, while young people and those adults who advocate for them demonstrate outside this Assembly, march in front of the federal building saying that Yukon needs a shelter that young people in trouble can go to, without taking action on it?

This Assembly has taken action to provide emergency funding to the people of Burma, the people in the Philippines. All over the world, we've been generous — Yukoners have been generous. We're doing it because we know Yukoners want us to — to look after people who are less fortunate, who, through no fault of their own, have experienced a disaster, where families have been separated, where people have been killed, where people go hungry and without medical care. Why do we let it carry on in Yukon, right in our own backyards? We know it's happening; we know it. Why don't we act to end it?

We have a supplementary budget in front of us. Where is the funding to establish a permanent youth shelter in the City of Whitehorse? I don't see it in this budget. Why? Why? I've seen members from the government side attending meetings, attending demonstrations. Where is the money to reflect the belief that must be there when we attend those meetings and those demonstrations?

Another issue that has been heating up all year is the Peel Watershed Planning Commission and its draft recommendations. Once again, this is an area where we've seen the Premier interfere in the process. The Premier, according to documents that have been made public, called a senior official and, "...got irate..." as he ordered him to change the Department of Environment's submissions to the commission. That's political interference, Mr. Speaker — working secretly to alter what should be objective information, information that the commission is relying on. That's another example of what's wrong with the government of the day. Any government that thinks they have the right to get irate with officials is headed down a wrong path.

The Peel Watershed Planning Commission, along with all the other land use planning commissions, is a requirement of the land claims agreements; they are mandated by land claims. The commissions were established as arm's-length bodies and they're supposed to solicit public input, hear all points of view, consider all submissions, seek expert advice. Then they make their recommendations public, for additional input — their draft recommendations — before making their final recom-

mendations to the government bodies, both the Yukon government and the affected First Nations.

We've already seen the First Nations speaking up about how important they feel it is that there are significant areas in the Peel River Basin that are protected. They are protected from development because there is a higher value, is what we're hearing from First Nation leaders.

Well, this is the stage we're now at. The Peel Watershed Planning Commission is preparing to make its final recommendations to the Yukon government and affected First Nation governments. But the commission is a recommending body; it's not a decision-making body. Until its recommendation is presented to the governments, it is irresponsible for anyone, including us in the Official Opposition, to interfere in the process by stating what should occur, which is what the Premier did. When the commission makes its final position known, then we'll have an opportunity to comment.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I've been to the Peel River area. I've flown over it. I've walked along the banks of the Bonnet Plume. It's a vast area; it's an area of spectacular beauty. It is unique within Yukon, within Canada and indeed, on the North American continent. We have both an opportunity and a responsibility to ensure that we, as the current stewards of this area, pass it on to future generations to enjoy, that we take a long view of whatever decisions are made — not a short-term view; not a view that only asks, "What is the greater economic benefit in the next decade or the next three decades," but a long view. As Chief Eric Morris said to me recently, "We don't own the land. We are its stewards on behalf of our grandchildren." This will involve some difficult choices and some far-sighted decisions. It will not be easy, and the government of the day — whenever the decisions are made — will have to come down and make those decisions. We will all have to come down on one side or another, and when the time comes that those final recommendations are in, we will let our stand be known and will accept the criticism of those who disagree. What we won't do, Mr. Speaker, is jump in behind closed doors and work to subvert the process. We'll work together responsibly to make the process succeed.

There are a lot of areas we need to address that I don't see being addressed in this budget. Another is transportation — the cost of travel will continue to increase because of the rising price of gasoline. It may go down in the near term, but it will increase over the longer term. We can all see that; we know that the downturns are only temporary and that every year or two we find ourselves adjusting to a higher price than one we ever thought we would pay before.

Yukoners require an efficient, environmentally friendly and cost-effective public transportation system. In Whitehorse, that has to involve the City of Whitehorse. Outside of Whitehorse, it has to involve the communities — every community — and we have to look at transportation into and out of the territory. That's why we proposed working with the City of Whitehorse to implement improving the busing service, including a trial period of free bus service to increase ridership, which we saw did work during the Canada Winter Games.

What do we hear from the other side of the floor? They mocked us. They said, "Free bus passes — a great solution."

But you know, if we keep doing things the same as we always have, then we're going to have the same outcomes as we always have had. A Liberal government would assist the City of Whitehorse in making the bus service work for more Yukoners by providing the increased funding necessary to make this happen. I urge the government of the day to do the same. We would work with the communities to assist them in addressing their transportation needs.

Again, to go back to the discussions that have become more and more public — but occurred in private — between the Premier and the CEO of ATCO, let's talk about water. The Liberal government would recognize that our most valuable natural resource is our water. It's not the copper or the molybdenum or the gold; they're all finite. Whatever is in the ground is extracted over time and one day, it's gone. The Minister of Economic Development can take as many trips as he likes to China to negotiate mining deals, but this is a strategy that may apply to the next 10, 20, 30 or perhaps 100 years. It's not a long-term strategy.

We know our fellow Canadians will value our natural abundance of clean, fresh water: water for drinking, for irrigation and for the potential to generate green hydroelectric power. We believe that, as Yukoners, we must never give up control of this most precious resource to any private company, to any third party, for that would be selling the birthright of future generations of Yukoners. It belongs to Yukoners and it needs to stay under the control of Yukoners.

Just to be clear, that certainly includes public government and First Nation governments. The First Nations in Yukon are, first of all, the original Yukoners, the oldest Yukoners, and they're not going anywhere. We don't have any concerns that the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun or the Teslin Tlingit will put out a press release saying they're relocating to Calgary, Alberta, or Austin, Texas.

So when we say that Yukoners need to keep control of this resource, of course we're including arrangements that could occur in the future with First Nation governments or their development corporations.

We believe that the government stumbled badly this summer. We believe that the Premier's secret agenda to privatize our energy resources has been revealed. Yukoners are angry about it. Yukoners don't want it to happen. We saw those two documents that the Premier was so dismissive of. We saw them — Yukoners saw them. They know what was on the table, Mr. Speaker. They know that the proposal involved nothing less than the privatization by the combination of the private company, and what has been the publicly owned company into a single utility — a new company. We've seen copies of the documents. We've seen notes that were taken at the meetings referring to "Newco", a new company. We have seen what was asked for in the first document.

We have seen what came up in the second document in terms of the 50:50 investment in terms of the company called "Opco" that was being looked at to combine the assets of the

two companies to be operated by one party. We have seen discussions of franchises and rights-of-way.

We've seen the letter that the Premier says is nothing more than sort of a polite reference to a possibility of a discussion and yet we have seen that that letter makes use of words that include "negotiations". By the way, we have seen a Premier who, given, I think, at least nine opportunities today in Question Period, never did answer the question of how he could say in public statements this summer that he never met the CEO and president of this company while writing a letter to her in November of 2008 that references a meeting that he and she had shared and that he had a mandate from his entire caucus to proceed with further negotiations. So all the wordsmithing, all the attempts to define "up" as "down" and "down" as "up", is nothing more than an adventure down the rabbit hole of *Alice in Wonderland*, because the truth is that there were negotiations.

The Premier wants to stand on a fine point — there's no Cabinet minute authorizing negotiations. No, but there's a letter that says, "My entire caucus supports me in carrying forward." The caucus includes all of the Cabinet. The Premier wants to start resting on these technicalities to say it didn't happen, because we didn't have the final Cabinet approval — when you send a letter to the CEO of a company and sign it as the Premier, saying, "I have the support of my colleagues to carry on to develop the MOU to proceed to detailed negotiations," that private company knows that this has the authorization and approval of the Premier. It's not only the Premier's; it's the entire caucus. Let's not kid ourselves as to what that means.

Our first joint task will be to develop the memorandum of understanding that will include the framework for a new partnership, detail the proposed arrangements and identify the process to conclude due diligence and detailed negotiations and he authorizes the officials to carry forward. It's signed by Dennis Fentie, Premier — not Dennis Fentie — excuse me, sorry, Mr. Speaker. It's signed by the Premier in his capacity as Premier, not as the MLA for Watson Lake. It's signed using his Cabinet approval and copied to the MLA for Laberge — not as the MLA for Laberge — but as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

What is the other party to think when they receive a letter signed by a Premier, copied to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that says "a new entity will provide many benefits to Yukoners and to our organizations." It says, "Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you last week and discuss Yukon's electricity options." This is the meeting that the Premier says, and has said repeatedly this summer, never happened.

I don't know what to think when the Premier says to Yukoners via the news media, "I never met with this individual," and then tables a letter in this Assembly saying, "Thank you for the meeting." We didn't get answers to that. It's like two separate realities — I never met the person/I enjoyed the meeting. It's pretty clear, Mr. Speaker.

There are a lot of other issues, and I do want to get to several of the issues specific to this budget. The numbers in this budget continue to paint a picture. Indeed, the Premier yester-

day said that's what it's all about. We table these budgets so that we have an update — the most reliable, recent information available to us. We on this side do have some concerns about some of the line items in the budget and some of the overall direction, and we will outline some of those here today.

First of all, the reliance on Ottawa. While there are many items that this Yukon Party government is trying to highlight in this budget, there are others that they are not talking about, hoping that the public perhaps will fail to notice. One of those is the government's continued reliance on Ottawa for the lion's share of our spending. The Premier will no doubt respond and say we deserve our share and that the Leader of the Official Opposition doesn't feel that Yukoners should be entitled to the same benefits in this Confederation as all Canadians. That is not so; we do. It is the Premier who is the one who made all the noise in the past when in opposition and then in government about the importance of Yukon standing on its own two feet and how under his government we would become more self-reliant. That, of course, has not happened. In fact, the opposite has occurred. This Yukon Party government promised to move away from the reliance on Ottawa to fund our operations. They criticized past governments for that reliance.

Eight or nine years ago, we generated 15 percent or 16 percent of our own revenues. Under the Yukon Party government, that number has shrunk to only 11 percent. We're more reliant than ever on the Government of Canada to fund our much-needed services. The pie is bigger but, under this government, our slice is actually a smaller piece of the whole pie than it was under previous governments.

This confirms that the Premier has given up any hope of diversifying the Yukon's economy to the point where we actually are producing more of the revenue we need in comparison to the whole, instead of less. The Premier will come back and say that we're wrong, that taxes and revenues continue to go up. Well, they do. They go up as the Yukon grows, but they're not going up as fast as the level of our dependency on Canada.

The Premier promised us we would develop — that he would lead us to developing a self-sufficient economy, some seven years ago, and it's going the wrong way.

This budget is bigger simply because more money is coming from Ottawa. It's undeniable when you look at the amount of money compared to two years ago, three years ago, or four years ago, that was transferred from Canada.

Another interesting fact is the relative amounts of O&M versus capital. The Premier in the past used to be a big proponent of criticizing the massive growth of O&M. You could always count on the Premier or the former MLA from Klondike to come into the House and say that O&M was bad and capital was good. That has now been reversed. This Premier has presided over the largest growth in the size of the Yukon government in history.

I can remember seeing a former Yukon Party government leader explain to members of the media that the fundamental difference between the Yukon Party and the New Democratic Party was that when it came to that portion of the budget over which the government really had the ability to make decisions — the portion that isn't really just a requirement, because a lot

of it, as we know, is going to be spent in the same way to provide basic services by any government — but that the fundamental difference was that the Yukon Party government believed that capital spending is what grows the economy and the NDP believed that was O&M. That was the difference.

It seems to have reversed. Three-quarters of this budget is being spent simply maintaining the operations of government. It's quite a reversal of this Yukon Party and for this Premier. This supplementary budget takes O&M spending over \$700 million for the first time in Yukon's history — just the O&M.

Now, there are some other interesting things in this budget and in the public accounts. As I look at the public accounts — and the Premier explained that the public accounts in this budget should be seen hand in hand because one tells the story of what has happened at the end of last year and this is the beginning as we go forward — but when I look at that, I see that we have now written down more than \$12 million of the \$36.3-million amount that was mis-invested in asset-backed commercial paper that wasn't authorized in the *Financial Administration Act*.

\$12 million — Mr. Speaker, that's roughly the price of a new elementary school. Perhaps it will cost even more the next time, but I'm sure the Minister of Education would be happy to have another \$12 million to build an elementary school. I know many of the residents in Copperbelt would be happy to have another elementary school instead of continuing to be told that there's no room at the school for their kids in Granger and they have to be bused elsewhere.

That's a big amount: \$12 million. But, you know, the interesting thing is that compared to the amounts that have been realized by those private companies and public corporations that have sold these same notes — and we're not talking about the original asset-backed paper, Mr. Speaker, so we don't need to hear about ours being different from theirs — these are the same notes. The MAV2, class A1 notes — MAV2. MAV being “master asset vehicle”; class A2 and class B — I won't get into the class C notes because they're of so little value that it wouldn't matter — but others have sold these into the markets, and what do we find?

The sale price represented, in one case, 40 cents per \$1 face value of the MAV2 A1 notes, and 28 cents per dollar on the A2. They got less than half of the face value of the A1 notes, which we're carrying at well over that amount. We're carrying a face value of \$11,421,000 out of an original amount of \$15,771,000, roughly two-thirds — and 28 cents on the dollar for the other note is what they got, the A2 notes. Ours are showing as \$11,516,000 out of an original amount of \$16,455,000.

What does that tell us? It tells us that there are going to be more writedowns in the future.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Mitchell: It's terrible, says the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin, because he knows what \$10 million or \$15 million could do in his community — infrastructure projects. It could certainly provide a recreational facility to be proud of in Old Crow. But it's gone; it's evaporated into the ether.

The Premier tells us, “Don't worry, be happy. They are just bookkeeping exercises. It is going to go down this year and down last year and down next year and then magically in 2013 and 2016, it will all be there.”

I know that when we get all that money back, it will probably be placed under our pillows by the tooth fairy, Mr. Speaker. That's how we will get it back.

We ask, “When we have \$16 million of these notes, face value, why are they only being written down by 30 percent? What will the writedown be for the current year?” There are other issues that we will have a lot of questions on during budget debate. For example, the issues of the spiralling health care costs. When we look at this budget, we see that we are almost up to a quarter billion dollars in Health and Social Services — \$236,909,000. \$237 million in O&M and \$23.7 million in capital — so, excuse me, we're over a quarter of a billion dollars — over \$250 million.

What progress has been made on the health-cost drivers that were outlined in the report that was presented earlier this year? Where are we going with that? We look forward to hearing from the Minister of Health as to how we're going to continue to be able to afford to provide first-class health care to Yukoners that Yukoners deserve.

We know, because we see transfers, that we won't be able to ask questions about some of these factors. For example, the money that has been spent to date in Watson Lake is approaching somewhere in the vicinity of \$5 million on a health care centre that is yet to provide a single day of health care to a single Watson Laker because that has all been transferred to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

We see the pattern. If something has become an embarrassment, transfer it away — push it away somewhere else and then say, “You can't ask those questions here in the Assembly. Go ask them there. Ask them of the Hospital Corporation.”

We wrote to the Hospital Corporation last year, last winter, asking the simple questions. What are the financing arrangements for the new nurses' residence? What are the interest rates? What is the total cost? A couple months later we got our answer, which was to read all about it in our quarterly newsletter. It's not good enough, Mr. Speaker — it's not good enough.

This new habit of off-book financing has become a real concern. The Yukon Hospital Corporation could be spending as much as \$67 million on three projects — the newly described hospital for Watson Lake, the hospital that has been announced in Dawson City, and the nurses residence — in money that doesn't show up in the Yukon government's budget. That is a very big concern for us.

There are some things that we are pleased to see, such as the funding for the child and youth advocate office, which has appeared here. Although, as I said earlier in my remarks, we wish that the child and youth advocate had the powers to advocate, as opposed to the ability to navigate on behalf of children and youth.

There are other questions we will have for this Premier. The funding for Mayo B came up in Question Period today. Where's our \$71 million coming from? We saw the \$25-million advance to the Yukon Development Corporation from

the Yukon government in this supplementary. Is that advance intended to be paid back or not? Where is the other better part of \$50 million — \$46 million — coming from? How long will the new electricity subsidy last?

We saw all the debate and discussion on how there shouldn't be a rate stabilization fund. The government said it wasn't stabilization, it was subsidization. Then finally last year they heard from enough Yukoners and they put through a new electricity subsidy — \$2,250,000 in the Yukon Development Corporation funding in this budget, a capital expenditure of \$2,250,000. The revised vote for the year is now up to \$6.5 million. Will this continue?

We've seen — contrary to the promises that were made by the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources when he was previously the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — that by the summer of 2008 — actually I think he said 2007 — electrical rates would go down. It turns out that the Yukon Utilities Board has met and it doesn't appear that the rates are going down either from the Energy Corporation or the Yukon Electrical Company Ltd. They have both been granted increases.

There are other questions we will have, such as for the Minister of Community Services regarding the Hamilton Boulevard extension. I first stood on the floor of this Assembly in November of 2005 and lobbied or asked for that extension to be done and asked questions as to when it would be done. We are pleased it is done, we are driving on it, but what about the dips? About 98 percent of it is in my riding, although that didn't seem to be pointed out in the news releases that went out. But I know that my constituents are glad that it is there — at least some of them are; not the ones who had holes put in their roof during construction. But we will have questions as to the road surface and the dips that developed almost immediately.

Is that because it was rushed to get a good-news announcement? As the Deputy Premier referred to it, let's talk about the good-news stories and not all this YEC stuff. Was it rushed to completion before the surface was properly compacted? What is that going to cost government? Does this supplement include any money for a potential settlement with the Yukon Teachers Association? There are many things that we would like to find out when we dig down into this budget.

We had some discussion yesterday about the amount of lapses in the final supplementary budget for 2008-09. I think in 2008-09, the Premier gave the lapses a figure of, I believe, 23.6 percent. Excuse me — in this budget, 23.6 percent. We would like to know exactly what has lapsed and what will be revoted out of the amounts that have lapsed.

One thing that I would point out is that we're down to a surplus for the year of \$222,000. We're very close to a deficit. We have to ask — without this additional estimated amount of \$27.58 million in lapses, we would be in a deficit budget. It's only by the bookkeeping anomaly that the amount of lapses, or \$27.578 million — not just \$27 million — that this is a surplus budget, not a deficit budget. We'll have to see when we get to the end of the year in fact whether it has been a surplus or a deficit.

One thing that is certain is that we're continuing to spend more money than we're taking in. Because of how capital expenditures are amortized, we end up with a surplus budget, but the fact of the matter is that this budget brings the total expenditures of the Yukon government for the year to date to \$1,071,858,000, and the total revenue — be it from Canada, taxation, third party recoveries, recoveries from Canada — is \$964,611,000.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I know, and every member here knows that you can only carry forward at that rate for so long, spending more money than you're taking in. If I compared it to a household, if you spent more money than you're taking in because you built a new room on the house, well, you could say, "Look, that new room is going to last for the next 20 years, not just for this year. So, it's not really just this year's expense; it's a long-term capital improvement, and we're only going to count five percent of it this year in our budget." Well, that would be true, in terms of the reality of how long the room would last, but no homeowner could continue to spend more money every year than they took in in a salary from their employer indefinitely, regardless of how long the improvements would last.

So, we're looking at a budget, the growth of which is likely not sustainable.

The single pots of money, such as the northern housing trust and the more recent housing funds that have been made available, are one-time occurrences and they are not going to carry on forever, so we know that we can't keep this up long term.

We've heard a lot of debate over the past three days regarding the Yukon Energy Corporation. We've heard the Premier say that this can all be cleared up in the Public Accounts Committee, although he knows that, as chair of the Public Accounts Committee, I wrote months ago this summer to committee members asking that the committee convene to consider hearings into just this matter and he knows that the answer was "no". Now there appears to be an about-face, but as the MLA from Klucane very clearly stated earlier this afternoon during the debate on the motion to reconstitute the Public Accounts Committee, the Public Accounts Committee can only look at one aspect of this. They can look at officials and what their role is in implementing the direction they've been given by the government of the day. What the Public Accounts Committee can't do is examine the role of ministers in terms of setting the direction that is given to the officials.

The officials will work as hard as they can and in good faith for any elected government — that's the professional civil service we have in Yukon, and we're very lucky to have it. But as the Member for Lake Laberge pointed out, it's the ministers who need to be held accountable.

So the questions need to be of the ministers and of the Premier, and we will continue to ask those questions tomorrow, the day after — as long as it takes to get answers to why our Premier had embarked on a negotiating process from the corner office, a process that says, in this letter — a letter to the person he had never met — I've discussed your proposal for partnering on a new entity for electrical generation, transmission and

distribution in Yukon, partnering on a new entity with the Government of Yukon caucus and have full approval to proceed — full approval from the caucus to carry on negotiating a new entity.

We can look forward to many interesting days in this Assembly while we do our best to get this out in the interest of Yukoners. I see that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is looking forward to it as well, so I expect spirited debate.

Mr. Speaker, there's more that I could say, but I think I will leave the rest for when we get into Committee and we can drill down into this budget, other than to say that Yukoners have asked us — in fact they've demanded of us — that we stand up for them and prevent this Yukon Party government from selling out their publicly owned corporation, selling out their birthright, selling out the greatest asset of natural resources that Yukon enjoys, to any private company, and keep it under the control of Yukoners in Yukon, and that's what we intend to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Edzerza: I would like to start by thanking all members of the Yukon Party caucus for accepting my desire to once again be a member of their team. It is much appreciated by me, my family, and many constituents. I fully understand my decision will not please everyone, but I will do the very best I can to make a positive contribution toward a better way of life for all Yukoners.

Life is focused around opportunities. One has many from birth until the day one returns to the spirit world. For example, many people have the opportunity for a good education, opportunity for good health care and even opportunities to be politicians, to name a few. I am focused on opportunity because I was given an opportunity as an Independent to help stabilize the political situation in the Yukon.

I was given an opportunity to be involved with establishing a land-based treatment centre in the Yukon, which is something I have been lobbying for for approximately 28 years. I might add, this land-based treatment centre will serve all Yukon citizens because, as most of us are aware, abuse of any nature knows no boundaries.

All political parties have had the opportunity to establish a land-based treatment centre in the Yukon over the past many years. The question I put to everyone: is there one in the Yukon? No, there is not.

I took advantage of these opportunities because all Yukon citizens will benefit from political stability and a land-based treatment centre — of this I am confident.

I would like to correct the record of comments published in the *Whitehorse Star* on Friday, October 23 of this year. I certainly hope my comments today are not taken out of context to discredit any leader, because that's not the intent.

The comments made in the *Whitehorse Star* were around my sequence of events. For the record, I do confirm I did have confidential meetings with both the Liberal and NDP leaders. I must say that I was disappointed they didn't stay confidential, but ended up in the *Whitehorse Star*, and so much for the con-

fidentiality. The Liberal Party strategist made the comment that I wanted an uncontested nomination to run in a riding of my choice — a fascinating comment coming from a political staff member with whom I have never, ever had a meeting. One has to assume he heard this from his boss. The truth, as far as I can determine, is the Official Opposition leader briefed his right-hand man and told him a version of his own. To set the record straight, I merely asked the Leader of the Official Opposition if he had acclaimed candidates for a riding or if he held nomination meetings for all ridings. Of course, I know that the Liberal Party has different rules for different ridings. Maybe the Leader of the Official Opposition was confused with his previous agreements with the two NDP MLAs he recruited to gain Official Opposition status in the House.

I must also set the record straight with regard to the comments made by the new Leader of the Third Party. I did not make any requests of the new leader. Our discussion focused around some recommended possible changes to the NDP constitution. I merely made the comment that she might want to review this area, because it creates some unnecessary stress on candidates who already hold a riding for the party and it also cuts into campaign time.

The reporter for the *Whitehorse Star* reports that the Leader of the Third Party turned down my request. The truth is that there was nothing to turn down, because I made no requests of the new leader.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to put on public record that both leaders of the Official Opposition and the Third Party were interested in what my future political interests were; however, I did not make my intentions known to them.

I also want it to be known that the previous Leader of the NDP was at my kitchen table asking me to cross the floor and join the NDP before I even left the Yukon Party.

What I want my constituents to acknowledge is that I was being pulled in many different directions. I can confirm without a doubt, today I am where I want to be and where I will remain. I made the decision I did because I did not like the political instability the opposition was creating in this territory. In my opinion, they were approaching the minority government situation from a position of power and not as a window of opportunity.

Overnight, the opposition became the bully and intimidator. I want no part of this emotional, political roller coaster of instability; therefore, I made the decisions I did.

On a more positive note, I would like to thank the Yukon Party government for their dedication to honouring and establishing a positive government-to-government partnership working arrangement with Yukon First Nations — for example, the Kwanlin Dun First Nation cultural centre. In the partnership agreement, the government is committing \$7.4 million toward the centre, plus an agreement to house a public Whitehorse library in this new facility.

As a Kwanlin Dun First Nation member, I certainly appreciate this commitment by the government because, without this kind of partnership, I do believe Kwanlin Dun First Nation would be really tasked to be able to sustain this expense on their own.

The 6.47 acres secured for the cultural centre is a prominent and central location on the Whitehorse waterfront along the Yukon River. The location is of immense significance to the Kwanlin Dun First Nation as the riverfront was the traditional location of Kwanlin Dun communities. The construction by Kwanlin Dun First Nation of their new cultural centre on the banks of the Yukon River therefore represents the symbolic return to their ancestral communities. In addition, the construction of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation cultural centre in downtown Whitehorse will reinforce the physical presence of Kwanlin Dun as an integral component of Whitehorse, expand the Whitehorse experience for tourists to their area, and will provide a much-needed focus for the Kwanlin Dun membership.

The Kwanlin Dun First Nation has been defining and refining the vision of its new community centre for a number of years. There has been a significant community consultation process involving the chief and council, the cultural centre steering committee, elders and the Kwanlin Dun First Nation membership.

The main components of the Kwanlin Dun cultural centre will be as follows: a gathering space for up to 1,000 people usable for conference and convention activities as well as community and cultural events; multi-purpose space for up to 250 people, usable for conference and convention activities as well as community and cultural events; workshop and artist spaces that will double when conference and convention spaces are required; an elders lounge, gift shop, display gallery, spiritual space, kitchen and catering spaces for special events; washrooms, administration offices, storage coat rooms and maintenance spaces; a space for community activities. Space will also be allocated within the cultural centre for the Whitehorse Public Library — again, Mr. Speaker, bringing the citizens of the Yukon Territory, especially in the Whitehorse area, and the First Nation under one roof. The public library being located in this cultural centre only adds to the purpose of unity — bringing all the people together.

I believe that this cultural centre building is probably going to really increase and enhance a lot of the spirits of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation people. Regarding our traditional ways — we certainly do appreciate the help from the Yukon government, the federal government, and the involvement of the municipal government in helping this cultural centre to become a reality. We all live in this territory. We all live together, and there are intermarriages, so having a centre such as this, right in the very location it's at on the waterfront, is really going to be a blessing, I think, to everyone.

At the present time, I am reviewing a document consisting of 34 pages of examples of Yukon government and Yukon First Nation governments working collaboratively to deliver government programs and services. When I look at some of the headlines on this document, where we have examples of collaboration in capacity development and training, economic development, governance, heritage and culture, resource management, education, health and wellness, justice, women's issues, youth — it pretty well covers the whole scope of what is

needed to sustain and provide services for a healthy community.

Without all these areas being addressed in some capacity, I believe the whole existence of the Yukon population would be very difficult. These examples that I just mentioned are all examples that are necessary — necessary examples of headings that really set one's spirit in good standing, and repairs to the spirit can all be done under such headings as this.

In my own personal opinion, I feel that this is something that has really been amiss in the Yukon since the days of the mission schools. I know a lot of people would like to shove that era under the rug and pretend that it never happened, but it did and the repercussions today are still being felt by all First Nations people. The mission schools were in existence for hundreds of years, and I think it's going to take many, many, many years to be able to overcome some of those hardships that were experienced in the mission schools. I believe that without a sincere, honest attempt at land-based treatment centres, this territory and other provinces will be mired in social problems for many, many more years.

There's no way around it, because when you have thousands of people who were victims of abuse and never, ever had any kind of intervention, it's only understandable that it will filter down to the children, to the grandchildren and to the great-grandchildren. Until there is real intervention where the First Nations are totally involved in partnerships, working with other governments to try to overcome some of the social problems, then we are going to be very slow at making any advancements. We need to get involved. I strongly believe that the land-based treatment centre is the vehicle through which First Nations can become partners in helping their own people to overcome some of the hardships that they went through in the mission schools.

I'll close by saying that I want all citizens in the Yukon to realize good government-to-government working relationships and partnerships increase employment for all citizens in the Yukon, because they increase the number of employees on all fronts. The amount of expertise needed by all 14 First Nations now is as high a demand as it is for the Yukon government.

I certainly hope that all First Nations across the territory who are self-governing, and those who aren't, really take the opportunities that come to them by developing a good, positive working relationship with whichever government is in place.

Thank you.

Mr. Elias: I must say, it's once again an honour and a privilege to speak to this supplementary budget and stand on the floor of the House as the representative of the Vuntut Gwitchin riding.

This summer was a wonderful time to reconnect and bond with family and my community. During the summer months, I spent time with friends and relatives as much as work would permit, and I'm glad I did because I found it very rejuvenating and refreshing. Living and travelling out on the land in north Yukon and visiting the people proved to be very therapeutic for me from territorial politics.

Old Crow is the centre of my universe. It always has been and always will be. It is the place I was raised and learned all of life's important lessons. It's where our people, many of my constituents, and my heart live. It is the place where my mind goes when I'm faced with difficult decisions. There has never been a time when I didn't feel a sense of pride and gratitude welling up inside me when I spoke about my community of Old Crow. The community has always had very strong leaders, and many of them have taught me well. I feel so rich to be part of such a wonderful community and family and to represent such a wonderful riding.

Coming home is like hitting the reset button for me. Nothing beats it. I will be travelling home tomorrow to participate in the 2010 Olympic torch relay. From the hands of the High Priestess in Athens, Greece, to the homelands of the Vuntut Gwitchin in Old Crow, it will be such an incredible honour for our community to be a part of the Olympic torch relay and to host the international message of peace. It will surely be an honour for me to welcome the representatives from the Olympic committee to our community.

Tomorrow will be a wonderful opportunity to showcase and share our rich Gwitchin culture, traditions and athletic excellence with the world. There are many examples of athletic excellence over the decades in my community. A couple of them I like to mention are the torch bearers themselves in my community. Martha Benjamin was the Canadian women's cross-country skiing champion during her time who did get an invitation to go to the Olympics but chose to raise her family in Old Crow. Allan Benjamin was the world champion 100-mile snowshoe race champion in the State of Alaska. Ms. Mary Frost-Doppler, who is in a battle right now with cancer, was once the Canadian junior women's champions as well as the North American women's cross-country skiing champion. Ms. Glenna Frost-Tetlichí was also the Canadian junior women's cross-country skiing silver medalist at one time. The list goes on and on. Derick Kapuschuk from our community was the runner-up to represent Canada in the Olympics at one time for the sport of Tai Kwon Do.

The athletic achievements in our community are — for such a small group of people — something to mention. Last year, I had the privilege of coaching the Gwitch'in Braves and the Gwitch'in Gladiators youth hockey teams to the championship of the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament to gold and silver medals. It's testament to the athletic excellence in my small community of Old Crow. The Olympic torch is supposed to say something about the country in which the games are being held. To me, Mr. Speaker, the torch exemplifies strength and survival and it's symbolic of our true north, strong and free.

The flame has a sacred history and symbolizes the principles of peace and friendship. At this time I would like to thank Ms. Lorraine Netro and the Olympic torch relay coordinator and the Olympic torch relay committee in Old Crow for their hard work in making this dream a reality. What a great day it will be for our torch bearers Martha Benjamin, Allan Benjamin, Trey Charlie and Erika Tizyia-Tramm. The Olympic torch coming to our community of Old Crow will forever be in our hearts and the pages of Olympic history.

To all the kids who survived the 1960s, 70s and 80s — first we survived being born to mothers who probably smoked and took Aspirin, ate blue cheese dressing and tuna from a can and didn't get tested for diabetes.

Then after that trauma, we were put to sleep on our tummies in baby cribs covered with brightly coloured, lead-based paints. We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, locks on doors or cabinets. When we rode our bikes, we wore baseball caps and pigtails, not helmets on our heads. As infants and children, we would ride in cars with no car seats, no booster seats, no seatbelts and no air bags — probably with bald tires and sometimes, no brakes. Riding in the back of a pickup truck on a warm summer day was always a special treat. We drank water from the garden hose, not from a bottle. We shared a soft drink with our friends from one bottle, and no one actually died from this. We ate cupcakes, ate white bread, real butter and bacon. We drank Kool-Aid with real white sugar and we weren't overweight. Why? Because we were always outside playing — that's why. We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on. No one was able to reach us all day and we were okay. We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and then we would ride down the hill, only to find out we forgot an important thing — to make the brakes. After running into the bushes a few times, we learned to solve that problem. We didn't have Play Stations, Nintendos, X-Boxes — there were no video games — no 150 channels on cable TV, no videos, movies, DVDs, no surround sound or CDs, cellphones, no personal computers, no Internet, no chat rooms, no iPods or iPhones. We had friends, and we went outside and found them. We fell out of trees, got cut, broke bones and teeth. There were no lawsuits from these accidents.

We ate worms and mudpies from dirt, and the worms did not live in us forever. We built forts and treehouses and had little armies. We were given BB guns and slingshots for our 10th birthdays. We made up games with sticks and tennis balls, and although we were told it would happen, no one really lost an eye. We rode bikes or walked to friends' houses and knocked on doors, rang the doorbell, or just walked in and talked to them. Hockey and softball teams had tryouts. Not everybody made the team. Those who didn't had to learn to deal with disappointment and weren't protected from it. Imagine that. The idea of a parent bailing us out if we ever got in trouble with the law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law. They stood back, arms crossed, and watched us be responsible for our actions. We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned how to deal with it all.

You might want to share these thoughts with others who had the luck to grow up as kids during those times, before the academics changed so much of our lives for our own good.

This generation has produced some of the best risk takers, problem solvers and inventors of our time. Ironically, in the last 30 years, we have witnessed an explosion of innovation and new ideas. We have a pill or a gadget for almost anything. While you're at it, tell your kids so they will know how brave and lucky their parents were. Also tell them that they will inherit a rapidly changing world. Tell them that, although we are

pretty good problem solvers, we are also reluctant to solve the most dangerous risk to our future, and that's climate change.

We as a human race have been through many ages — the stone age, the copper age, the bronze age, iron age, the industrial age, the technological age, and now, as far as I'm concerned, we're in the age of stupidity. We have to hit the re-set button and take bold action to solve the climate change problem.

David Suzuki said we humans are just one part of nature, but it's our ability to alter natural systems to their detriment that sets us apart.

There was a "hug the legislature" initiative a couple of weeks ago. The theme was 350. Why 350? It's because it's 350 parts per million of CO₂ in the atmosphere that will bring climate change and global warming back to normal. Right now we're at 383 parts per million of CO₂ in our atmosphere. We must get focused on the greatest challenge of our time, because we're facing a global warming catastrophe and the foot-dragging of the rich and developing nations has to stop.

Yukoners know that climate change is a real and present danger; we are already living with the effects and have been for years, but it's becoming very apparent to me that smaller jurisdictions, states and districts around the globe have set the example and are leading the way on the climate change front, so it is possible for our territory to do the same.

Just as recently as a couple of weeks ago, 77 developing nations walked out on Canada's address during the climate change talks in Thailand, because of what they viewed as an abandonment of the Kyoto Protocol. I support the Kyoto Protocol, Mr. Speaker. The Yukon Liberals support the Kyoto Protocol.

Last year I accepted an invitation to accompany our Yukon Environment minister, the Hon. Ms. Taylor, along with Mr. Hardy of the NDP — right, no names — the NDP to Poznań, Poland, to attend the United Nations climate change conference in early December.

There were leaders from around the world and approximately 12,000 delegates. It was important to me that we all went and worked together. I believe that many Yukoners appreciated the efforts of all our political stripes representing Yukon's issues and submitting our climate change testimony to the world, from the spruce bark beetle infestation to our melting glaciers, the effects that climate change is having on our fish and wildlife populations, the impacts that the Old Crow Flats are experiencing, the melting of permafrost, draining of lakes and the fact that Herschel Island is slowly falling into the sea. We made it clear to the world that the effects of climate change are already being felt here at home. At the United Nations conference, I listened and learned from the leaders from around the world about how they are addressing the climate change issue in their respective jurisdictions. The comments from a leader from Scotland resonated with me when he said that there are no excuses or alibis to avoid bold action on climate change, especially from industrialized nations.

The climate talks in Copenhagen are coming very soon. Unfortunately, the expectations on reaching an agreement are not very high, but I would always hope and pray world leaders

can find a way to commit to leaving the world a better place than they found it and putting getting re-elected behind saving the planet, to secure a world where their children's children continue to sustain and enjoy what we enjoy today.

If we do not act to stabilize global emissions by 2015 and we allow average temperatures to increase by two to six degrees, then people will be responsible for wiping out most of life on earth. You know what? We would have done it knowingly. In my mind if we can find a way for the fight against climate change to be profitable, we are half way there, because industrialized nations want to continue to make a profit and developing countries want to continue to grow. At the same time, we must help our local citizens and businesses address the escalating economic and environmental costs of energy. We must support greater investment in green technologies and be seeking out more opportunities for investment and research to be done here in the Yukon through the new Yukon Climate Change Research Centre of Excellence.

We cannot turn our backs on the planet. Canada needs real environmental leadership now and it starts at home. What more can we do here at home? Make it easier for Yukoners to live sustainably through urban and rural food production programs, biomass community heating, district and neighbourhood heating, net metering that promotes energy efficiency and to create our own energy and sell it back to the grid — the newest building in Old Crow for instance, harnesses energy from the sun and puts it back into the community — development of local targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions and free bus service to increase the use of transit in our capital city.

On June 6, 2007, three large lakes within the Old Crow Flats rapidly drained due to a combination of the banks overflowing from heavy precipitation and the melting permafrost.

These lakes were in the traditional lands of Vuntut Gwitchin families who lived and used the area for generations. My family was one of them, and I can't begin to explain the social ramifications of this disaster. We all went through a grieving process, and it still hurts to speak about this today.

One of those lakes was equivalent to 2,300 Olympic-sized swimming pools of water. Those lakes supported a vast array of fish and wildlife. Yet the message is that we have to adapt to climate change. Yes, we do. We have no choice in the matter, however. I'd like someone to show me how to adapt to something like this that affects our cultural lifestyle so drastically.

The evidence of the effects that climate change is having on the Porcupine caribou herd is also strong. We are just beginning to understand the effects that early green-up in the spring, early arrival of mosquitoes, and early watershed breakup are having, but information is limited.

In May of 2004, the Porcupine River ice broke up three weeks early, and I watched as 200 cows got swallowed up by the river and the ice, as they tried to swim across. These are realities of the effects that climate change is having on the Yukon food supplies, our cultures, and ecosystems. As Yukoners, we get much of our strength from the mountains, the sea, the land, wildlife, rivers, our lakes, and the clean air. Those are our monuments to the world that say to the world, "This is who we are as Yukoners." Keeping them all healthy is our legacy to

future generations. We must make and keep our promise to prepare the next generation of Yukoners and ensure they are ready to inherit the challenges of a rapidly changing north.

When you look at the earth today, with all of the tsunamis, floods, hurricanes, tornados, droughts, earthquakes, wind, ice and snowstorms, mudslides — and the list goes on and on — the Earth is fighting back. She's trying to cleanse herself from the damage we've caused, and she's on bended knee. If we don't heed these warnings and act decisively now, the permanent impoverishment of humankind may be the result.

What happens as a result of our inaction or action happens to us all. I've witnessed salmon, with their last breath of life, flip themselves on the river shore. I ask myself why it gives itself back to creation with its last breath. Every single living thing expresses in its own way a willingness to live, a vitality to exist, from the Arctic poppies that follow the sun in the summer months, to the fish, birds and larger mammals that try to escape when there is danger nearby. We have to respect that.

Remember, we're all in this together. It is sometimes difficult to change our behaviour. I struggle with it myself. To each and every one of our Yukoners and neighbours who do their part in changing their behaviour to reduce the carbon footprint, I salute you.

There is a Gwitchin saying: Jii nan yeendoo Nokhwah k'eejit kat eenjit gwiinzii vak'atranah tyaa. We look forward, or we look after the land good for the young people of the future.

Finally, to those who say it's too late, that global warming and climate change cannot be reversed and we can't bring the parts per million of CO₂ in our atmosphere down to 350 parts per million, I say to you that I will not participate in allowing despair to be a burden of our next generation. I say to you that we will never give up in fighting global warming. I have all the confidence that the youth of today will look this monumental challenge in the eyes and say, we will prevail.

In closing, I would just like to say that, once again, it is an honour and a privilege to stand on the floor of the Legislature today and represent my constituents of the Vuntut Gwitchin riding. Mahsi' cho and thank you for your time.

Mr. Nordick: I am pleased to speak to and support Bill No. 17, *Second Appropriation Act, 2009-10*. I would first like to start by thanking the citizens of Klondike for allowing me to represent them once again in this Assembly. I also would like to encourage them to enjoy and experience the arrival of the Olympic torch in Dawson City tomorrow and the international exposure it will bring to our great community.

I regret I will not be there to participate in this once-in-a-lifetime event. My wife Tracy and I are having our own life-changing event tomorrow with the expected birth date of our first child on November 4.

I will now speak to this supplementary budget. This supplementary provides an additional \$68.6-million increase in total projected spending for 2009-10, to just over \$1 billion, of which \$284 million will be directed toward capital investment. We are able to significantly increase spending and investments

on behalf of Yukoners while maintaining an annual surplus and, more importantly, without moving into a net debt position.

We are continuing investments in important infrastructure projects. \$6 million has been identified in this supplementary for the Whitehorse waterfront project. There is also \$3.223 million for the Hamilton Boulevard extension. Just over \$2 million is allocated for the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport expansion. \$916,000 is for the Kluane First Nation youth and elder activity centre. Those are a few of the many initiatives we are undertaking territory-wide.

I will now focus specifically on my riding of Klondike. I know my colleagues will touch on all aspects of this government's initiatives in their departments in more detail, so I will just focus on my riding.

Community initiatives and sustainable public infrastructure projects remain high priorities for me in Klondike. Front Street is now completed and I have heard many positive comments from residents and non-residents alike. I am pleased to have been able to achieve this for our community. I would like to thank the Department of Highways and Public Works and all the people on the ground for making that a success. I would also like to thank my colleagues for helping me achieve this.

When I was first elected, the current government was looking at building a multi-care facility that would replace McDonald Lodge. After launching a major health care review which considered health care needs for all Yukon, the decision was made to build a new hospital in Dawson City and replace McDonald Lodge as a second phase.

Last fall, the Yukon government drilled the Minto Park playground in preparation for a new facility. Earlier this year, the Government of Yukon transferred the responsibility to build a hospital to the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Since then, the corporation has met a number of times with the citizens and health care providers, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Chief and Council and their health department. They also met with the City of Dawson. Through these consultation meetings, a consulting firm named RGP developed functional programming for this new facility.

The Hospital Corporation went out for a design RFP for a new hospital based on the consultations they did with the RGP group. The design contract should be awarded here very shortly. Last October, the City of Dawson agreed that the current Minto Park playground would be a great location for our new hospital. The City of Dawson has a commitment from YTG to build a new playground once the city determines a new location.

Another initiative I worked on in my community — and I'd like to thank the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation — is Korbo Apartments replacement. We are currently, with the Yukon Housing Corporation, looking at replacing the Korbo Apartments on Fifth Avenue in the old grader station. That is well underway and we should see construction next spring.

Another initiative I've been working on and have succeeded to bring to my community is an expansion of Yukon College on to the existing SOVA building. I'd like to thank the Minister of Education for his work on that. Through the knowl-

edge infrastructure program, the Canadian government has contributed \$1.3 million and the Yukon government has committed \$1.3 million for the expansion of Yukon College on to the SOVA building for a total investment of \$2.6 million.

Yukon College excavated the ground and construction should be able to take place next spring. While speaking about the Yukon College expansion, I would be remiss if I did not mention that when I took office, the Dawson City Arts Society was receiving approximately \$150,000 a year of core funding from YTG and now DCAS and SOVA receive over \$800,000 a year of core funding. This is a significant investment in the arts in my community.

Another issue everybody is very aware of is the Dawson City waste-water treatment facility. We took a different approach in solving this long outstanding issue. The approach we took was to ask industry how to solve this problem. We only had a few requirements: (1) financially affordable O&M to the City of Dawson; and (2) that it meets all legal requirements. Now just over a year later, we have a contract signed with the Vancouver-based Corix Water Systems for the design and construction of a waste-water treatment plant in Dawson City. We were able to achieve this through working jointly with the City of Dawson. The project is making real progress toward solving a long-standing issue for the community that has been talked about for way too many years. Many hours of careful research and collaboration have gone into selecting a technology that will meet Dawson's needs for a long-term sustainable and affordable solution.

On September 2, 2009, a contract with Corix for just over \$24 million — almost \$25 million — was signed for this solution. We also supported the City of Dawson's request to further repair the arena, as opposed to replacing it. The Yukon government has provided \$4 million in funding assistance over five years to the City of Dawson to make improvements to the Art and Margaret Fry Recreation Centre, and in this budget there is \$250,000 allocated. The investment from the Yukon government will be managed by the City of Dawson. It will use the funds to address structural repairs and building safety and to enhance features of the recreation centre for the residents, including potential upgrades to the rink and second floor.

As you are all aware, this past spring was very difficult for a lot of residents of this territory and Alaska due to spring flooding.

As soon as I was aware of the hardships facing residents of Rock Creek due to the severity of flooding that took place, I went to work with the Premier and the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation Corporation to organize a disaster/flood relief initiative for them. As a result, all homes at Rock Creek have been inspected and eligible repair items are being completed. The Yukon Housing Corporation is working with the residents of Rock Creek to determine cost breakdowns of eligible repairs and those that have been approved will be able to begin work or claim for previous work that is eligibly completed. Work is ongoing; the program has been implemented and funding will begin as soon as invoices or receipt forms are received from approved clients.

On August 28, 2009, at the lookout overlooking Tombstone Valley on the Dempster Highway, the Premier, the Minister of Environment, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Chief Taylor, and I signed the Tombstone Territorial park management plan. I was able to help negotiate a management plan between these two levels of government. This plan includes a three-year review. It is a plan that was put in place to protect the natural and cultural values of the area as a commitment to honour and implement the land claims final agreement. It was a result of our two governments working collaboratively together for the protection of our environment for generations to come.

The management plan encourages public awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of the park in a manner that ensures it is protected for Yukoners and visitors alike. As well, on August 28, I was happy to open the Tombstone Interpretive Centre with the Tourism minister and the Premier. This is a significant investment in tourism infrastructure and an investment of over \$2 million that produced an interpretive centre that leads in energy and environmental standards and minimizes its environmental footprint. I can personally tell you it is a beautiful building. We opened it briefly this fall to ensure that all tourism operators knew without a doubt that this facility is open for the entire season next year and they can market it accordingly. We will be having a grand opening next spring. I thought it was very important to show industry that the facility is operational.

A major initiative in the Yukon government is the community development fund. I am going to list a couple of the organizations that received funding in my community recently: Dawson City Arts Society received \$46,353 to replace the flooring in the Oddfellows Hall; the City of Dawson received \$95,000 to construct and install a new anchoring system for the Dawson City dock; the Klondike Centennial Society received \$149,558 to develop interpretive exhibits and walking trails on the Discovery Claim called the Discovery Claim Heritage Trail project. The Klondike Visitors Association received over \$440,000 to undertake a number of recommended structural upgrades, including related renovations to current heating and storage capabilities in Diamond Tooth Gertie's. The Dawson City Firefighters Association received over \$75,000 for a cold storage and display facility to expand the display of the existing museum to preserve its rare and valuable collection of municipal firefighting artifacts. The enhanced display will be appropriate for interpretation viewing and photography.

The Dawson City Arts Society also received \$41,350 to install a vertical lift to the KIAC building so that patrons with mobility issues can access events that are held on the second floor. Klondike Active Trails and Transport Society received \$45,000 to improve the Ninth Avenue trail development from Mary McLeod Road to Duke Street, as well as starting work on Crocus Bluff trail, which connects the Ninth Avenue trail.

There has been approximately \$2 million spent in the last few years in the community alone, with over 10,000 hours of employment created in my community. I could go on all day on things like our safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation, our eight-person street crime reduction team, our investment in a new power line connecting Pelly — which removed its dependency on diesel — or our current \$140-million in-

vestment in Mayo B hydro project, focusing on affordable and reliable green energy production in the Yukon.

I could also speak to more than 170 initiatives we launched to improve the lives of Yukoners, but I know my time is limited and I know there are a lot of other people who would like to speak to this bill. Once again, I fully support this and would like to thank my colleagues for all the hard work they've done on Yukoners' behalf.

Hon. Mr. Kenyon: It gives me great pleasure to speak, however hoarsely, to the matter at hand. We've been very proud in what we've accomplished in the last two mandates, and we look forward to continuing that trend. A lot has been done and we're very pleased with it. Look at some of the individual areas that I've been privileged to be responsible for, as well as to represent the riding of Porter Creek North — a diversified area from some beautiful homes and apartments in industrial areas — a little of everything. It's a diverse riding and one that I think represents the Yukon very well.

Look at some of the individual areas and things that we've been able to accomplish. For instance, in the housing front, the social housing portfolio managed by the Yukon Housing Corporation has averaged about 512 units per year from 2002 to 2007. But since taking office in 2002, this government has invested tens of millions of dollars in affordable housing for Yukoners. The Haines Junction seniors building, for instance, and the athletes village project in Whitehorse provided 81 additional units of affordable housing for seniors and college student families.

With that investment, we increased the social housing portfolio by 11 percent and we increased the number of affordable housing units for Yukon College students by 35 percent, rising from 69 units to 93 units. Through Canada's economic action plan, the Yukon Housing Corporation will be constructing approximately 130 new affordable housing units throughout the Yukon over the next two years. Although some of these new units will replace aging housing stock, there will be a net increase to the portfolio of about 100 more affordable housing units. With these significant past, present and future investments by Yukon and Canada, the Yukon Housing Corporation's portfolio of 512 units will increase by 152 to 674 — an overall increase of 29 percent. I could give a breakdown on that, but I think most members of the House are familiar with the breakdown in general.

The social housing portfolio — basically in a breakdown community by community — has gone from 516 to 577 in Whitehorse, for instance, or total in that particular one. But the additional units that I speak of include the following: a 32-unit Whitehorse affordable family housing complex that will be targeting single parents; Watson Lake seniors with another 12 units under construction and moving along very, very well; another eight units in Teslin; six in Faro; attached family housing in Whitehorse with another 12; we are looking at the 207 Alexander Street, which will be somewhere up in the range of 30 units; and the Korbo Apartments, which my colleague for the Klondike mentioned, hopefully will be about 18 units when the design is complete.

I'm very, very pleased to refer to a project that's kind of near and dear to my heart, which is the so-called Abbeyfield project, which will be another 12 and could actually go up quite a bit higher than that. The Abbeyfield concept, Mr. Speaker, if you're not familiar with it, is sort of a — I don't want to say "dormitory", but it's a way of bringing primarily seniors together, who can look after themselves. They may need a little bit of assistance. It will have what would be usually referred to as studio apartments or bachelor apartments, and then communal living room and dining room space. The interesting thing about that is that it brings together seniors who may be in a period of their lives where they can look after themselves but they tend to become very isolated and brought away from people in their own age group.

This was brought to my attention very dramatically last year when we had the opportunity to tour a number of different types of projects in British Columbia. One that we looked at was in Burnaby. As we were talking about this concept and I was learning about what the Abbeyfield was all about, we heard quite a bit of yelling in the room next door. I went in to see what it was all about and in the living room were two women in their 90s watching a hockey game and having a heck of a good fight over the two teams, and yelling and screaming and having a ball. It just sort of goes to show that you can bring people together with their peers. I think it makes a big difference.

We're looking at a number of other projects in there too. One I'm also getting more and more interested in is the so-called "pocket housing". Now, pocket housing — the concept of that is it looks after primarily single men. We are bringing this together based on a couple of other jurisdictions, provinces that have looked at it, but the requirement would be for much lower space. One of the problems in designing any kind of a housing project is, what do you have — studio, one bedroom, three bedroom in some cases? This would be targeting another group of people who live alone. Again, we don't want to emphasize that living alone. We want to emphasize the fact again that they are with their peers or with people. Pocket housing can be rather small but accommodate a fair number of clients, and we will be looking at that much more strongly in the long term.

In some of the other areas, the Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission continue to do a great deal of work and will continue to that in the coming years. Both have been really quite a joy to work with and really enjoy their work, whether it is simply generating money from the revenues from sales — sales are up significantly — and the higher end products, for instance, with the Yukon Liquor Corporation have really become quite dominant in that.

There are also the partnerships we've had and the successful twinning of a partner province or jurisdiction, with Shaanxi Province in central China. I notice the Liquor Corporation has brought in quite a number of diverse products from China — wines and liqueurs and this sort of thing. It will be interesting to see how that develops.

In some of the other things I've been very proud to work on and which we will be addressing more in the individual

budget departments, the supplementary budget for the Department of Economic Development — we'll go through the numbers at that point — but the increase we're talking of individually is \$2.9 million for a variety of ongoing projects supported by the department that had been revoked — some of them twice, I think. We deal with a capacity issue; we deal with something that can be metered out to keep people working and not just have a huge influx and then, all of a sudden, nothing. It has really been quite a treat to work with the Department of Economic Development to see how we can keep this momentum going and gradually increasing.

We've had some funny projects involved with that — for instance, bringing in a contractor from Calgary and taking a bit of flack for that, because there was no one available to do the work here, to find out after the project was completed that the contractor — and I believe all, or certainly most, of the people involved in that — simply moved to the Yukon. I can see why; it's such an incredible place to raise a family.

\$388,000 will be in new initiatives to support Yukon's film industry, Yukon entrepreneurs and technology projects, and another \$235,000 in funding to the business incentive program. There is a slight decrease in operation and maintenance of about \$9,000. Although globally we are experiencing a historic period of fluctuation, Yukon's economy remains strong and continues to grow. We certainly have not been unscathed by the global recession, but we have had the great opportunity and great luck to be somewhat insulated from the most severe aspects of it.

Unemployment has remained well below the national average throughout 2009. I think most people really have to remember that there will always be a certain level of unemployment — that's only fair — of people who simply aren't in a position mentally or physically to be active in the workplace. We're very happy to be down in that range. At one point, we actually went down below that range. I would argue that's not overly healthy either.

The population of the territory has continued to increase from about 2.6 percent if one is looking at June 2009 from June 2008.

The preliminary gross domestic product — or GDP — growth in 2008 was reported as 5.2 percent, which is well above the national average of 0.5 percent. It is actually the second best in Canada.

With regard to developments in the mineral industry, Capstone Mining Corp, Minto mine and Yukon Zinc's Wolverine mine projects continue to drive the economy upward. As several of my colleagues have mentioned earlier today, there will continue to be more projects advanced and more projects announced, certainly this year and hopefully some thereafter.

The Wolverine mine is currently under development and is slated to begin production in 2010, which could very well make it the only base metal mine to open in North America this coming year. That also stands, which I don't think people realize, as the largest investment in mining by the Chinese in Canadian history. The previous speaker referred to the initiative in the Chinese marketplace as not being a long-term strategy.

When we're developing mines that are in the 25-year to 50-year range and still have good, active exploration — again, that's down from the previous years, but certainly not anywhere close to where the predictions were. It makes for good partnerships. We can't continue to develop resources ourselves. We have the resources; we need the partners to develop those resources, so it becomes a very natural partnership.

We are also anticipating a production decision from Alexco Resource Corp on the status of their Keno mine project, so our economy remains strong. We require, now perhaps more than ever, a considered and thoughtful approach to managing the growth of Yukon's economy. Certainly in the last few months the worst complaints that I have had in my travels throughout the territory is that there is too much work and people are having a hard time keeping up with that. That's a good problem to have, I would submit, but metering out the growth and development certainly becomes a challenge.

The mandate of the Department of Economic Development reflects and highlights this thoughtful approach. First the department is tasked with developing a sustainable and competitive Yukon economy that enriches the quality of life for all Yukoners, and that is directly out of our plans and platform in the last election. The second departmental objective is to pursue economic initiatives with a shared vision of prosperity, partnerships and innovation.

There are a number of ways that you can gauge the economy. I can remember at one point, just after the election in 2002, people were complaining that they couldn't get U-Haul trailers or rent trucks to get out of here fast enough. Now I see U-Haul trailers all over the place and parked in the dealer's lot. They're coming up and they're staying here, and that's a huge statement, I think, about our economy.

I had the great honour and privilege of cutting a ribbon to open the new Canadian Tire some time ago. I had a reporter stick a microphone in my face and ask, "What do you think about this?" And my response was, "You know, I think this is the most incredible statement about our economy that I've ever seen." Interestingly, the reporter never aired that clip, but that's another story for another day.

The final departmental objective is to forge partnerships with First Nations in the economic development of Yukon. We are furthering that mandate through our request for a 2009-10 supplementary budget that we'll be addressing later on. We've been very pleased with the partnerships that the incoming mines have set up with the First Nations. There will always be some confusion over what we do and what the First Nations do on this — it's sort of a portfolio.

Our job is basically to expose potential partners and, because of geography, our partners include China, Japan and Korea — the three biggest that we deal with. Our job is to put the groups together, explain the ground rules and explain that yes, they will be held to every environmental constraint that anyone would be. But again, people have to understand that there simply isn't capacity in this territory to develop a large mine. I'll give some examples of that. Some of the reports will look at Chinese investment, while they're commenting on how great another investment is coming when they stop to think that third

investment is New Zealand owned or Australian owned. It's always interesting to see how that can be portrayed.

The former business and trade and strategic industries development branches of the department have merged — we will be addressing that in the individual department debate, no doubt — to form a new business and industry development branch. The new branch is more strategically positioned to service the needs of Yukon businesses through the consolidation in business support, advisory and investment attraction activities. The consolidated branch is placing an enhanced emphasis on working with Yukon small and medium-sized business. It continues to create jobs and to build the Yukon economy. The budget also reflects some new initiatives that fall under the community development trust program.

The Yukon entrepreneur support program is a two-year program intended to partner interested, new or existing entrepreneurs with industry experts who will provide mentorship and advice through the early stages of business development. The film concept development training program — or “Film Fantastic”, it has been dubbed — will provide training to Yukon filmmakers, enabling them to develop projects to a level where they are in a good position to attract the financial support of a television broadcaster, a film distributor or Telefilm Canada. Again, I've had the very good luck to go out on some of the locations and talk to some of the producers and directors. The most common theme is absolute surprise that they can come to a jurisdiction as small as the Yukon and they're not bringing as many of their crew and technical people up from Vancouver or New York or Los Angeles, because we've got them here. We've got active training programs and there are very, very well-qualified people here to do the work. This was extremely evident in *Red Coat Justice*, and *Anash* should begin shooting soon for its second season.

The technology there is mind-boggling and it's for the most part being done by people within the Yukon.

\$170,000 of the supplementary budget in this area is recoverable through two federal programs. There is a \$100,000 commitment from the community adjustment fund for the first year of a two-year project to support the filming of 13 “webisode” commercials promoting the Yukon as a choice for filming location. The other \$70,000 is from Industry Canada to support the community access fund. This program is administered by the Yukon government and supports the set-up of locations in Yukon communities where people can use computers and access the Internet at no cost.

We remain, as I think most people know, an incredibly well-connected jurisdiction — probably the best in Canada and I suspect the best in the world. Ninety-nine percent-plus households in Yukon have access to broadband Internet. I was talking to someone from Edmonton the other day and he lives in city limits of Edmonton and he can't get Internet service through anything but a dialup, the old modem technique. That will also have a great deal to do with how we develop the economy and how we can go to a much broader base in more diversification in our economy.

The budget changes reflect the ongoing status of how many programs the department administers. The programs also

include the business incentive program, which requires an additional \$235,000 in anticipation of an increase in the number and value of rebates due to major construction projects planned or underway. I should mention again, Mr. Speaker, that people who are concerned about the *Agreement on Internal Trade* — that is exempt. We have exempted a number of different local projects within the Committee on Internal Trade.

Among the funds requiring a revote is the regional economic fund, which facilitates coordinated economic planning at the regional level and the community level, as well, and the community development fund, which funds Yukon community, industry and professional associations.

This, I think, gives a broad overview of some of the things that are in this budget. It gives me very great pleasure to introduce and commit it to the House.

Hon. Mr. Rouble: Mr. Speaker, I have realized that this will be the third Yukon Party member to speak in a row. That is a bit out of the ordinary for this Assembly, where we usually take turns back and forth, of exchanging ideas, exchanging views and opinions, so we can have a bit of a debate. I don't really know why members of the opposition aren't choosing to participate in the debate today, so I'll just assume they don't have any criticisms of the budget and that would be their reason for not being here. Otherwise I'm sure they would be leaping to their feet to point out what's wrong with the budget, but they apparently don't seem to be taking that opportunity today.

I'm very proud to be here as the member for the beautiful Southern Lakes, representing the variety of different communities in my riding. Again, I would like to thank the voters of my constituency for sending me here to carry out the people's business.

I, too, had an opportunity to spend a considerable amount of time in my riding this summer, talking to a variety of different constituents, hearing about their concerns, ideas, hopes, aspirations and satisfaction, and also the concerns they have about the territory and our future. I'm pleased to be part of the government, to have an opportunity to help shape government policy, spending and the practices of government in order to address the needs of our citizens.

I would also like to thank all the departmental officials in the two departments I work with, the Public Service Commission and the Department of Education, for their tremendous amount of work in putting the supplementary budget together, as well as their ongoing work throughout the year. I would also like to thank the Department of Finance for their considerable work in helping to manage the finances of the territory.

Earlier this year when we tabled the original budget for the year, it was built on the themes of promoting a strong, diversified private sector economy, protecting and preserving our environment and wildlife, and providing good government to the territory. I am very proud to be part of a government with those objectives. They are very consistent throughout our budgeting process and consistent in our guiding principles.

We were also faced, though, with the challenge of the global economy and the impacts that could have had on the

territory. Indeed, when the budget was originally tabled this year, one of the comments from the Premier was it was constructed to meet the challenging economic times. We were strongly encouraged by opposition members to take strong action to prevent negative impacts from happening in the territory.

There were a variety of different opinions expressed but we did realize we needed to make commitments to the territory to encourage the economy, to continue to grow and diversify. We also recognized the situation the federal government was in, where they too were being urged by their opposition parties to contribute to economies in order to help prevent Canada as a whole from going into a severe recession or even depression.

We have had some significant opportunities in this budget cycle and in these economic times, and we have taken some extraordinary steps in order to address many of the situations going on in the territory. We have also been faced with extraordinary revenues, or sources of funds, from the federal government. Those that have been received by the territorial government have been often earmarked for specific functions or with specific projects tied to them or, in some cases, required a matching contribution from the territorial government. But when all was said and done, we are in a very enviable situation where we have responded appropriately to the economic times.

As the Minister of Economic Development has discussed, there has been a significant stability to the population, and there has been significant employment stability. In fact, if members will take a look at the recent Bureau of Statistics information regarding employment statistics in the territory, they will see that Yukon has the third lowest unemployment rate of any jurisdiction in Canada, hovering at about 6.5 percent, I believe — or 6.3 percent, I think is the specific amount.

So we have taken some significant steps to ensure stability within our employment sectors, without overheating our economy and creating undue pressures from Outside companies that would have looked north as opportunities in their home jurisdictions started to dry up. Throughout this, we've seen the creation of long-lasting assets that will serve the territory for years and decades to come. These include transportation infrastructure assets, things like the airport expansion or major road reconstruction. We've seen an increase in health facilities, energy infrastructure, including the Mayo B project, which we've worked with the federal government on quite substantively. Additionally, the tying together of the power lines; we've seen water infrastructure. I know in my riding of the beautiful Southern Lakes, we're also seeing major potable water infrastructure programs going in. Education facilities are being created throughout the territory and indeed, housing facilities, so while we have been faced with a very negative outlook on our economy, the Government of Yukon, the Government of Canada — and indeed, all our partners involved — have taken great strides to take extraordinary measures to prevent a strong negative impact from happening here in the Yukon. That has paid off and will be paid off with these assets that we've created for many decades to come.

In my riding in particular, we've seen some significant projects happening in the last year. These include the recon-

struction of a portion of the Atlin Road, which serves the constituents out there very well and which could lead to additional economic stimulus in tying together Yukon and British Columbia.

We have seen the upgrade completed on the M'Clintock River bridge, and I know that at this time of year I am receiving a lot of compliments on the great work that was done to widen that bridge. The bridge — if you are not familiar with it, Mr. Speaker — is a curved bridge that was very narrow, and during times of snowfall, the road would appear even narrower. Going around a corner and meeting a transport truck on it was often a white-knuckle experience. The reconstruction of the bridge and widening it does make it a safer road to travel on, not only for the constituents of Southern Lakes, but also for all of the travelling public on the highway.

We have seen significant resources going into FireSmart to assist not only with local employment opportunities but also with a reduction of the wildfire risk throughout a variety of different communities in Southern Lakes — from Carcross to Tagish to Marsh Lake. We have seen the expansion from the Department of Environment for community-based recycling centres. I know this is a major concern for many of my constituents. We have seen an expansion of recycling programs throughout the riding.

This past year when we have had the community tour, the Minister of Community Services also announced that the areas of Carcross and Tagish would also be going to become a transfer station, which will also provide more and more reasons and encouragement for people to reduce, reuse and recycle, and sort their garbage before putting it into the pile that is destined for a solid waste disposal site — in other words, trucked to the landfill here in Whitehorse.

The constituents in the Southern Lakes are very excited to see this next step in our solid waste management strategy. It is another step that the Yukon Party government has taken in order to protect the environment and conserve the resources that we have. Mr. Speaker, that is a great step forward and I'm very encouraged to see the solid waste strategy ideas being adopted and implemented, and put into day-to-day practice.

As I mentioned earlier, we have seen the Army Beach water treatment area. This is a very important component to Marsh Lake which, as members know, really only has one source of community potable water. We have a summer population, which some put at over 1,000 people, but there is only one source of potable water for the whole community — that being at the Marsh Lake fire hall. If a resident of Army Beach needs to get water, what they typically do is get in their truck, put their water tank on the back of it, drive the approximately 20 kilometres to the fire hall, fill it up and then take it back to their home — about a 40-kilometre round trip. Or they have the option of having commercial water delivery, which right now I believe is about \$130 a load, which creates a significant financial burden for many people, especially if you're ordering multiple loads of water per month — and many people are in that situation.

Having a second source of potable water, having a source of bulk water for commercial fills and having a source of water

for emergency firefighting in the north end of the community will be a very important asset. I'm glad to see that significant progress is being made on this issue. Currently, the pumphouse portion is under construction and the intake line has already been put in.

We've also seen the benefits to seniors through this budget with increases to the Yukon seniors income supplement. The budget has already benefited people on social assistance with increases there. As I mentioned, there are strong impacts from the Yukon-wide solid waste strategy.

Also this year, I had the pleasure and privilege of attending the opening of a couple of facilities in Carcross. These include a new daycare the Government of Yukon participated in with the Carcross-Tagish First Nation and also the opening of the carving shed in Carcross. This is part of the Carcross waterfront development project.

It has always been said that Carcross is a jewel in the Yukon and is in need of a bit of polish, and I'm glad to see the waterfront development project — which has already replaced the walking bridge, put in the beach-viewing platform and the washrooms, and now the carving shed — work is well underway. The carving shed is a very interesting facility. For members who haven't seen it, I would encourage you to make the trip out to Carcross and take a look at it. It houses Carcross-Tagish First Nation carvers who are learning their traditional skills, creating artwork for the community and artwork that will be sold commercially. It's a way of re-engaging people with their culture, teaching the skill and creating an economic development stimulus. It is a very important part of the waterfront development project and I was very pleased to see that opened earlier this year.

Indeed, there are additional waterfront development projects in Carcross, with road realignment work, and they had a couple of other projects that will be unveiled very soon, including the boat launch and docking facility.

Earlier this year, members of the government caucus had the opportunity to travel throughout the territory to meet many of the people in the territory during the Premier's and caucus' community tour. One of the things I was met with this year was a strong sense of optimism that many people had and expressed. There was definitely a feeling of can-do out in the territory. People are seeing improvements made in their community. We're meeting with municipalities and they're recognizing that significant progress has been made on many of the issues they face and that we as a territory face. I'm very proud to be part of the government that has been able to address many of those issues.

We've also met with First Nations and other Yukoners who have commended us on the different pieces of legislation that we put forward — many that we've put forward in conjunction with opposition parties or that have received unanimous support from the Assembly.

I know that we often focus on the negativity in this Assembly — that is often what gets a headline — but I think people need to be aware of all of the collaborative efforts and joint projects that go on in this Assembly. I do believe that when we work together, we can serve the needs of our constituents better

and serve all Yukoners better. Really, the political rhetoric that we're faced with sometimes doesn't do much to solve many of the problems in the territory. We, as individual members of this Assembly, have the opportunity to raise that bar and to work together to address the common needs of Yukoners.

In my departments of the Public Service Commission and Education, there are some significant improvements and increases in this supplementary budget. I will be able to get into those in considerably more detail in budget debate.

In the Department of Education, there are some significant increases — about \$8.3 million of increased funding, which is about a seven-percent increase in the budget. Really, this is across all the different components of education, including education support services, public schools, advanced education and Yukon College.

I appreciate that I'll go into much more detail in Committee of the Whole on this, but I would like to touch on a couple of things that are happening at Yukon College, specifically the creation of the Yukon College Research Centre of Excellence. I know that members in the Assembly had the opportunity to meet with many of the folks at this centre a couple of weeks ago when it was officially launched. If you haven't been up there, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage you to take a moment to visit it. It's an exciting, vibrant place with researchers there who are looking at doing Yukon-based research to help Yukoners. We talk a lot about climate change and what we are doing about it. Well, this is certainly one of those places where they are in the midst of doing the research, looking at mitigating steps, providing answers, providing solutions, and yes, asking even more questions. I'm really excited to see this additional component to Yukon College. It's bringing researchers, not only from Canada and North America, but from around the world to study Yukon and the impacts on it and also to share their information and to share their knowledge.

It is great to see so many of the researchers looking at providing symposiums and, indeed, courses to Yukon College. That is in part why Yukon College is able this year to provide a bachelor of science degree. This is another great step in the evolution of our education system. In addition to Yukon College providing the bachelor of social work, the bachelor of education program and the master of education program that we talked about before, this year we will also see a bachelor of science program. This is in addition to the tremendous work that the Department of Education — advanced education — does to support individuals' post secondary education throughout the territory.

There are a tremendous number of positive initiatives going on in the Department of Education. I look forward to detailing these more and providing more information throughout our budget debate. I appreciate the work the officials and Yukoners have done in providing support and encouragement for this budget. I look forward to working with members of the Assembly to answer some of their questions and explain the rationale as to why some of the decisions were made the way they were. I would encourage all members of this Assembly to show their support for the Yukon — show their support for the initiatives that are underway and to support this budget.

Mr. Cardiff: I'll attempt to be reasonably brief, but this is the first opportunity really to stand and welcome everybody back after being away for the summer and the beginning of the fall. It feels good to be back and do the work that we're doing here in the Legislature.

I'd like to start by saying that I also attended — I noticed the Member for Southern Lakes was talking about all the meetings the Premier held. I had the opportunity to attend a few of those and I'd like to thank all the people at those meetings who came out and offered their advice and input to the government and to me as a member of the audience. It was pretty enlightening. It's amazing how many — it struck me as kind of odd that some of the ideas that were being presented were ideas that we had presented here in the Legislature.

These were met a little differently when they came from the public. I'm looking forward to debating Bill No. 17 when we get into Committee of the Whole in general debate and in the departments. I will have some questions for the Minister of Education and he will be able to go into more detail.

At this time, I'd also like to thank all my constituents. Over the summer, I had the opportunity to run into them at various events both in my community and in other communities. It's always good to talk to them. It's always good to hear what they have to say and the advice they can offer us as legislators. These are important issues they bring to us as their representatives that we can then come here and put forward on the floor of the Legislature.

Of particular importance to us in the New Democrat caucus are the initiatives we put forward on the first day of the sitting — issues and ideas like a social inclusion summit, where the community comes together and talks among themselves and with us as legislators about the solutions they see to the problems that are facing Yukoners on the streets of our communities. They struggle with issues of homelessness, poverty, and issues that deal with mental health — the struggles those people have and how we can look for solutions.

Those are some of the things we see as really important and we're proud to bring them here for debate in the Legislature. Tomorrow we have called a motion to create a standing committee on a bill we presented in the Legislature first probably about six years ago; then we presented it again a couple of years ago. It's on legislative renewal. It's about how we in this Legislature do our jobs, how we're structured, what constitutes conflict of interest, how we should behave, what the public expects of us, how we do our job, how we can better do our job, how we define what our job is and what those duties are.

I look forward to hearing what all members of the Legislature have to say about that tomorrow — another initiative that the New Democrat caucus is very proud to have brought forward in this sitting.

Lastly — although not lastly, because there are more — the other initiative of major importance, I believe, is the creation of a select standing committee here in the Legislature to deal with issues around the *Landlord and Tenant Act*. We've been asking questions around the *Landlord and Tenant Act* for five or six years. We've been asking for a review of the *Landlord and Tenant Act* for five or six years. It has been fairly ap-

parent that it needed to be done, and we're optimistic that, as has been indicated, the government will support this.

I believe that the Official Opposition will support it too, because it's the right thing to do. This has been an issue that has long needed to be addressed. It has been ignored. I look forward to the opportunity to debate that motion here in the Legislative Assembly. I look forward to seeing funding not just in the supplementary budget — Bill No. 17 — but in future budgets, funding to address all these important issues that the New Democrat caucus has brought forward.

We are in second reading and, to be honest, I don't really have a lot to say, other than the fact that we have had a chance to look at the supplementary budget briefly and go over it. I would like to thank the officials who have provided briefings on the departments that have been provided and the ones that have yet to come. This is actually something new and I take it to be somewhat in a spirit of cooperation where we are getting briefings on the supplementary budget, because that hasn't been provided before by this government, to the best of my knowledge — not while I have been a member of the Legislature. I would like to thank the Government House Leader and the officials for taking the time to provide us with briefings and give us the information prior to debating the departments.

The supplementary budget consists of a roughly \$25-million increase in the operation and maintenance funding, and roughly a \$44-million increase in capital, which amounts to approximately a seven-percent increase in general spending and a 19-percent increase in capital spending. The areas in capital spending where we are seeing more spending are particularly Yukon Housing Corporation, and I look forward to hearing about some of the initiatives that are going to be undertaken — some of them have been announced and some of them I believe are still to be announced — and debating some of the merits and coming up with some new ideas about how we could better use some of that money that has come from the federal government. As well, there is considerable capital spending in Highways and Public Works — not surprisingly — and Community Services.

The government talked about a stimulus budget and we believe that's necessary. The government is using funds provided by the federal government and through our own revenues to support infrastructure projects and create jobs. But it was suggested in the spring by the New Democrat caucus as well that with any stimulus budget, we also need to invest in social capital, such as childcare services, and not just the physical capital. We hear about the Minister of Education and the investments in education. I know there are some investments in health care as well. There have been improvements but we can always do better. We have to ensure — it's our job to scrutinize and to ensure there is a balance and to not just throw money around at capital projects. We need to invest strategically. We need to be environmentally responsible and we need to look after the basic and necessary services of all Yukoners in all communities.

I don't have — I probably spoke longer than I actually intended. I look forward to the debate. Contrary to what I heard recently, I look forward to the debate in Committee of the

Whole and to asking questions of the ministers when we get into the departments later on.

Hon. Mr. Hart: I rise today in this House to debate this bill. It gives me great pleasure to do so and I'm very proud of the many accomplishments of our government over the past several years. This afternoon, I'll review directly some of these events in the supplementary budget and go over generally some of the past programs and funding that we provided Yukoners to ensure their quality of life and enjoyment in Yukon.

Before I go too far in the discussion, I would like to say that as the MLA for Riverdale South, I'm very committed to my constituency and honoured to represent them in the House here today. I, too, have been out with my constituency, along with you, Mr. Speaker, with the barbeque. It was very successful again this summer.

I've also fielded many questions from constituents and provided them with assistance in getting their concerns met and look forward to serving them again in the future.

Also, as the minister responsible for Health and Social Services, as well as the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board and the French Language Services Directorate, I'd like to thank those officials and staff for their assistance in ensuring that appropriate information is available at our office so that we can respond to the concerns and casework of members opposite, as well as our constituents, and provide them with information necessary to address their concerns.

Before I get on to the accomplishments, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the hard work that the officials are putting in these days with the H1N1 pandemic situation. Reports from the disease control centres have noted that the influenza epidemic of 1918 was caused by a novel strain of H1N1 virus. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization announced the start of a pandemic. There remains no way to know the ways in which a new virus will mutate or how virulent it will become, which makes it challenging to devise a public health message that strives for balance between reassurance and anxiety about the pandemic.

We can especially see the efforts of the front-line workers these days as we are dealing with the H1N1 situation. We have nurses and support staff working at clinics six days per week — from early in the morning to late in the evening, seeing literally thousands of people over the course of the clinics. These nurses and support staff are doing an admirable and tireless job. In particular, the first week saw nurses on duty hour after hour, sometimes not even taking a break to eat, because so many people were waiting in line. These nurses came from all areas of Yukon nursing: the hospitals, the Whitehorse and rural health centres, the emergency medical services, among others. In particular I would also like to thank those nurses who, though retired, have kept their licences active and are now on the front lines assisting us.

I have seen the line-ups at the Canada Games Centre as well as those at other clinics. Many hours after the normal closing time, the nurses were still sitting at their stations providing information to patients, obtaining information, informed consents and administering the actual flu shots.

While it is hard to wait so long for your turn, Mr. Speaker, it is important to remember that once you go home after your shot, the nurse who cheerfully swabbed and jabbed you is still working at reducing the lineup and assisting others in the lineup. Yukoners have shown once again that they are up for any challenge, even if it is waiting in line.

Of course, the nurses do not work in a vacuum. Helping them are the support staff who take down our names and ensure we are registered for our turn, who smilingly answer the same questions over and over again, who make sure our child has juice and an encouraging word when necessary. Behind them, away from the public eye, are the managers and the administrators of community nursing, who make themselves available to run more vaccines up to the clinic and/or to provide relief for the nurses or help restock for the next day.

I did want to give this information and acknowledgement of the hard work that the health care workers are doing in the midst of this H1N1 pandemic situation.

At this point, I would like to move on to the accomplishments with regard to the Health and Social Services area.

Earlier this afternoon, I listened while the Leader of the Official Opposition went into his early election routine on his mandate for the next election and basically went through what the Liberals would do — the Liberals would support this, the Liberals would support that and the Liberals will do this. Mr. Speaker, Liberals will support ensuring that nobody will go unwanted. He implied that we, on this side of the House, are not looking after those individuals that he referred to.

I'd like to correct the record for the member opposite and indicate he used the word, "would," and I would say that we are using the word — we've already done it. We are working with those at a disadvantage; we are providing social assistance; and we are covering the social side that the member from Mount Lorne indicated earlier in his speech. This government is doing it. We've done a substantial amount since we've come into power with regard to assisting those on the social side and providing services and programs to all Yukoners.

I'm going to go through a couple of these items — try to go over some of them and provide the member opposite with some of these issues to reassure him. Know that we on this side of the House are taking our social side very seriously and providing assistance to those in need.

Under creating safer communities, for Kaushee's Place and the Help and Hope for Families Society in Watson Lake we provided increased funding. We provided them with a three-year commitment. We supported these organizations with long-term planning to assist the women and children who have experienced violence and abuse. Habitat for Humanity and Yukon Housing Corporation joined forces to build a new multiplex family project in downtown Whitehorse at the 810 Wheeler lot. That address was previously the site of a long-standing drug house, which was removed from the property with efforts from the downtown residents and Yukon government's safer community and neighbourhoods — SCAN — initiative. The Women's Directorate has doubled the prevention of violence against aboriginal women's fund from \$100,000 to

\$200,000 since 2004. The prevention of violence against aboriginal women's fund has allocated \$100,000 yearly for projects designed to be developed by aboriginal women for their communities.

The Women's Directorate generates an annual spring call for proposals and has contributed approximately \$500,000 toward this fund. The Women's Directorate, in conjunction with Health and Social Services and Justice, has formed an interdepartmental working group to look at relevant issues for women in Yukon and best practices in the area of women and substance abuse. The Women's Directorate has commissioned and released a report on this issue and has also sponsored a training plan in this area. The first in a series of training sessions on key gender differences in substance abuse and addiction was facilitated by Nancy Poole and Christine Urquhart in February of 2009.

The Women's Directorate and the Department of Justice co-hosted two train-the-trainer sessions in the use of two northern and culturally relevant videos and accompanying training manual in support of violence prevention and concluded the long-term violence prevention public education campaign. The evaluation of this campaign is now underway through the Women's Directorate and Justice.

The Government of Yukon participated in the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues annual women's forum on October 3 and 4, 2008, with the theme "Making Our Way: Yukon Women in Leadership".

Yukon government increased childcare contributions by 100 percent over the year to improve childcare staff wages. Health and Social Services conducted a consultation on the development of a child and youth advocate. Last October, Health and Social Services doubled the Yukon seniors income supplement for eligible low-income seniors. Last fall, Health and Social Services launched the "Critters" public health campaign that encourages hygiene for the prevention of infection during flu season. I might add, a program that I attended at a local school, Whitehorse Elementary, was well attended and presented through the French Immersion program. It was well received by those teachers and staff at that school and it was very successful.

The Yukon put \$63,000 into the youth investment fund to contribute to 22 projects for youth, including youth camps, physical programs, and cultural events. Many of the programs were designed to help youth susceptible to risk behaviours or those who were considered to be at risk. The Yukon put \$17,000 in projects through the health and investment fund. The smart travel program was launched to encourage Yukoners to travel carefully while in the wilderness. Again, this is in lieu of a situation where an individual is reported lost and was unaware there was no one who knew he was lost. So it's important to file a plan to ensure people know where you're going in the Yukon and to determine whether or not you're late in coming back home.

The government also invested \$245,000 annually in a mammography program to protect the health of Yukon women. A third psychiatrist has been recruited to join the Yukon's mental health providers in March of this year. She subsequently

arrived a little later but she is now here and assisting in that program.

Social assistance recipients received an increase in their food allowance in January of 2009. The food portion of the standard benefit increased 15 percent for a single person, 10 percent for a family of two and five percent for a family of three. I might add that this is as a direct request after speaking with the anti-poverty group and their issues of dealing with the food subsidy that was provided for social assistance workers during the anti-poverty week of 2008.

After we did an assessment of that process, we reviewed that and provided a further increase on top of the adjustment that was made from the July increase to SAs.

The government committed to ensuring our social safety net is adequate to keep people healthy by looking at the food basket and how it's being calculated. We're also ensuring that will be indexed through the CPI so it's always keeping up with the consumer price index.

An internationally renowned researcher and educator trained Yukon substance abuse workers, counselling professionals and other service providers in women-centred care in February 2009. Front-line service providers and program managers in the Yukon government, non-government organizations and First Nations participated in that workshop. The training was offered in response to recommendations in their report, entitled *Improving Treatment and Support for Yukon Girls and Women with Substance Abuse Problems and Addictions*.

Mr. Speaker, we opened the last remaining 12-bed unit in the pod at Copper Ridge Place and it has been fully staffed with a complement of nurses up. I might add that I've been very pleased with the situation in that pod. I've been up to the Copper Ridge Place several times for obvious reasons, myself — personal reasons. The care provided for individuals in that particular facility is second to none. I've been to several places in Canada with regard to providing continuing care and I have to say that Copper Ridge Place is one of the better ones in western Canada.

We've also provided a very important one. We've increased foster care rates by almost \$100,000. It's the first time in almost 17 years that foster care rates have been adjusted to reflect this very important entity in the Yukon. This is a very important issue on behalf of foster parents. When I was recently at their AGM it was well received, and I have to say that it was very much needed at the time. Again, it's something that I think is important to have. These individuals give unselfishly of their care and attention to those children in great need.

We've also increased funding by \$5 million over three years for the Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services. We've launched the alcohol and drug information referral service. Alcohol and Drug Services will assist with the delivery of the pregnancy-related issues in the management of addictions. The departments of Health and Social Services and Education partnered to provide families with the 2009 Healthy Living Challenge calendar and *Good Nutrition = Good Learning* to support healthy living.

We developed a guide to become smoke-free, a new resource to help smokers to become smoke-free. We've launched

a new dental program aimed at families and young children to promote good oral health and prevent cavities caused by baby bottles.

We've increased public awareness on the early signs of mental illness in young adults during Mental Illness Awareness Week with ReachOut Psychosis, the music and the spoken-word performance.

We've invested an additional \$386,000 in apprenticeship and training to support a skilled labour force in order for Yukoners to be prepared for Yukon opportunities that are presented by this budget and previous budgets.

Arts funding in the amount of \$166,000 has been contributed to 15 projects in support of development of Yukon artists. Health and Social Services promoted healthy eating and active living to more than 700 students who participated in the 2009 Polar Games. The Eat Right, Play Hard initiative encouraged students to make healthier food choices during and after the games by providing each participant in the Polar Games with information on healthy eating and healthy food options.

With Education, the community partners hosted the first Northern Health and Learning Symposium. Yukon invested \$300,000 to develop the oil burner technician program. There are several programs provided by this government to assist all Yukoners in making their businesses a healthier living, in essence, in the Yukon. I think I could go on forever and a day with regard to how many programs in these situations are in place by this government to assist all Yukoners in making their homes and living in the Yukon a wonderful place, and I thank you for your time.

Motion to adjourn debate

Hon. Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, due to the Olympic torch arriving here in 15 minutes, I move that debate be now adjourned for today.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that debate be now adjourned.

Motion to adjourn debate on second reading of Bill No. 17 agreed to

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:10 p.m.