

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Wednesday, October 13, 2010— 1:00 p.m.**

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order. At this time, we will proceed with prayers.

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of Yukon Literacy Week

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I rise in this House today to honour Yukon Literacy Week and the work of organizations throughout Yukon who support people on their empowering journey to improved literacy.

Once upon a time, literacy simply meant the ability to read and write. Today it also means the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute. It is a continuum of learning that enables individuals to achieve goals, develop their knowledge and potential and participate fully in their community and wider society.

Literacy helps us navigate forms and legal obligations, share a book with a friend or a child, catch up on the news, choose a product or a destination, or learn about a new work opportunity. Those with highly developed literacy skills may take for granted things like reading prescriptions and food labels or helping their children with schoolwork.

The 2000 final report of the groundbreaking international adult literacy survey revealed that more than 40 percent of adult Canadians, at the time, were marginalized by low literacy levels. Literacy affects people's health and their ability to secure and maintain employment and the role they play in their community and family.

Yukoners have access to multiple literacy support systems. The Department of Education works very hard to make sure that our children leave school with the essential skills needed to promote lifelong literacy. Local organizations like Yukon Learn, the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, the Kwanlin Dun House of Learning, Challenge, Yukon College and the Literacy Coalition work tirelessly to improve literacy and pre-employment skills. Their dedication and the dedication of teachers, parents, and First Nation communities have contributed to Yukon scoring high, both nationally and internationally, on the 2003 edition of the international adult literacy skills survey. The average proficiency of Yukoners was higher than the Canadian average in all four areas surveyed: prose, document, numeracy and problem solving.

This week is a time to celebrate our success and prepare for the important work that remains. We must continue working in strong partnerships with our First Nations to ensure that all Yukoners walk together and share the same literacy and lifelong learning opportunities. We must continue supporting

those exploring their potential for the first time in their lives and help others find the courage to seek help; and we must continue supporting those who are facing challenges in their literacy journey.

I encourage everyone to head to Family Learning Centre's open house this Friday from 3:00 to 5:30 p.m. at the Canada Games Centre and visit their Literacy Week book launch on Saturday afternoon.

In honour of Yukon Literacy Week, let's all just take a few moments to reflect on how vitally important literacy is to our lives and to building healthier communities, whether banking, reading a book, searching the Internet, scouring the classifieds or reading a bus schedule. Thank you.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to Yukon Literacy Week and all those in Yukon who work in the cause of literacy. This is the week to mark our ongoing commitment to boost and support literacy. Literacy is defined by the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contents. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society. These skills are essential to be able to function effectively every day at work, at home, and in the community.

The social and economic implications of literacy are phenomenal. Literacy is not just about educating; it is a unique tool to eradicate poverty and a strong means for social and human progress. The focus of literacy lies in acquiring basic quality education for all, eradicating poverty, reducing infant mortality, and reaching gender equality.

In the Yukon, as noted, our literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving scores among adults are significantly higher than the national average. However, average scores are just that — they don't indicate where individual people may fall on that continuum. For individuals who are challenged by literacy, for those people who cannot read at all or cannot read well, life can be very difficult. Without being literate, it is impossible to perform many jobs in our modern society. People who are not literate earn significantly less than those who are, which leads to difficulty in affording good housing, in being able to purchase adequate nutritious food, in providing clothing, and all the other necessities that a family requires.

Fortunately, we have organizations that offer help with literacy. Yukon Learn offers adult tutoring in reading, writing, math, and computer skills, and these services are offered throughout the Yukon communities. The Yukon Literacy Coalition is also active here and in the communities, working closely with First Nations and their communities offering on-site literacy training and supporting literacy in all Yukon languages.

And, of course, we have dedicated educators from pre-school to Yukon College who strive to improve literacy for Yukoners. For literacy to become successful, we must all do our part. We can take the first step by offering to volunteer our time to help the many non-profit organizations that deal with

literacy. Without making the entire world literate, we cannot expect global development or the eradication of poverty or social change.

We would like to say a heartfelt thank you to the volunteers, teachers, boards of directors, and supporters of the organizations that deal with literacy. You offer people empowerment and a chance to be proud of their accomplishments and themselves; you offer them hope. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Are there any further tributes?  
Introduction of visitors.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I have for tabling today the document entitled *Annual Report for the Year Ended March 31, 2009* of the Yukon Housing Corporation. I also have for tabling today a box of black Magic Markers so that each member may have their own personal one.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I have for tabling today *Surviving in Whitehorse: Where to Get Free or Low Cost Goods & Services in Whitehorse, Yukon*, a brochure that was published by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and which can be of great benefit to people who are struggling to find assistance.

**Speaker:** Are there any further documents for tabling?  
Any petitions?  
Any bills to be introduced?  
Any notices of motion?

## NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government, in recognition of Poverty and Homelessness Action Week, to continue meeting the housing needs of Yukoners by providing a continuum of housing initiatives, such as:

- (1) a \$34.4 million, 48-unit seniors housing complex and 36-unit student housing complex at Yukon College;
- (2) the innovative Falcon Ridge affordable housing project;
- (3) the 10.5 million, 32-unit Whitehorse affordable housing project;
- (4) the \$2.2 million, nine-unit seniors housing project in Haines Junction;
- (5) the \$3 million, eight-unit seniors housing project in Teslin;
- (6) the \$4.5 million, eight-unit seniors housing project in Watson Lake;
- (7) the \$2 million, six-unit seniors housing project in Faro;
- (8) the Habitat for Humanity three-plex located at 810 Wheeler Street in downtown Whitehorse;
- (9) \$2.5 million, Abbeyfield project providing modified independent living suites for seniors;
- (10) the \$7.5 million, 19-unit replacement for Korbo Apartments in Dawson City;

(11) \$2.682 million for replacement of obsolete trailer units in Carmacks, Ross River and Dawson City;

(12) \$2.2 million for six social housing units in Whitehorse;

(13) \$3.7 million to upgrade existing social housing units Yukon wide;

(14) \$11.25 million for the replacement of 207 Alexander Street seniors housing in Whitehorse; and

(15) \$1.85 million for the six multi-bedroom townhouses in the Ingram subdivision in Whitehorse.

**Mr. McRobb:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the decision document done by Management Board Secretariat referenced by the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation in the House on Thursday, October 7, 2010.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Housing, social

**Mr. Mitchell:** I have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. As we mark Poverty and Homelessness Action Week, Yukoners are getting used to a lack of action from this government on the issue of homelessness and supported living. It has been in office for eight years and is just beginning to address the issue. For eight years, the plan has been to study, analyze and study some more. The social inclusion strategy work will not be completed when this government leaves office, and it will fall to the next government to take action on this social problem.

The Northern City Supportive Housing Coalition is advancing the need for supported living in Whitehorse. They have a proposal into this government. Why has the government not come forward to support this project?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I thank the member opposite. I was just listening to the motion put forth by the Member for Klondike, and it demonstrates what we've done in providing housing services for all Yukoners right across the Yukon. That has been identified in great numbers and great dollars and cents — again, for all Yukoners. With regard to the specific housing identified by the member opposite, we are in conversation with the group in question, and they'll be making a presentation to caucus with regard to their facility in the very near future.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I didn't hear anything about supportive housing in the list of things that have occurred in the past, so it remains in the future. Social programs have never received the same priority as economic ones under this government, and that is obvious after eight years of talk and little action. Again, as we mark another Poverty and Homelessness Action Week, we draw the minister's attention to the word "action". For a number of years we have been advocating for a permanent shelter for our youth who are homeless, at least part of the time. They need a place to go.

The government has come up with excuse after excuse and, after eight years, Yukoners no longer buy it. This is not a priority and it shows. When is this government going to quit studying the issue of youth homelessness and take action to address it?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** Well, we haven't addressed the social issues with the same value as the economic issues — I take total offence to that particular statement. This government has taken a substantial amount of movement on the social side of the ledger since we've come into office.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on for a long time on all the things that this government has done on the social ledger. For the member opposite, just two items: first of all, it was this government that did the review of the social assistance — first time in almost over 20 years. This government took action; we did it. We reviewed it. We increased the rates to social assistance and we've indexed those social assistance rates. We've done it. This government has provided the action to do that.

Also, for the member opposite, it has been 17 years since any government has done any review of the foster parents plan. This government took action. We took the time. We provided that increase. We did the review. This government did what was necessary. We provided that very important service with the increase needed — again, the first time in 17 years, and again, it's indexed.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Youth at risk and homeless people have been waiting for a long time too. They see through the endless study, discussion papers, round tables and symposiums. They see them for what they are — a substitute for action. They want a new government, one that will make a priority of tackling homelessness. I've just raised two examples of things the government could be doing and the response is the same: "We'll study it. We'll look into it. We'll talk about it. It needs more work."

Another housing issue that needs attention is second-stage housing for abused women. The government has had a proposal from the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society sitting in its inbox since 2008. Why has there been no progress on this proposal either?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** For the member opposite, again, I will just ask him to think about it for a minute and I will correct the record. It is this government that has increased facilities and monies for our housing facilities for women, especially in the rural areas of Watson Lake and Dawson City, including Kaushee's Place here in Whitehorse. We've increased the funding to those facilities to assist them in dealing with their situation. It's this government that has done that particular aspect. We have provided that assistance to those individuals — organizations that assist women in need. It's also this government that is working with the local Kaushee's Place on second-stage housing and that is currently well underway, and we are working with them to alleviate that situation in the future.

#### **Question re: Housing, social**

**Mr. Mitchell:** I have more questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Now, the minister took offence at our saying that this Yukon Party government has always placed a higher priority on economic issues than on social is-

ues. The fact that only after eight years in office is the issue of homelessness finally on the radar proves our point. There are consequences for ignoring the problem, and we are seeing them now.

A national homelessness expert said today, "All the ingredients are here for a housing crisis." The "here" he was referring to was the Yukon. This is a sad comment after eight years of Yukon Party rule. This is the record of this government. All the ingredients are here for a housing crisis. How does the minister respond to this expert's evaluation of eight years of Yukon Party rule?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** I don't know where the member opposite is getting his information, where he's digging his hole. I guess he might be looking for an early election so he can get something to stand on. It's not going to happen. This government has provided a substantial amount of services for all individuals since it came into power in 2002.

Okay? We haven't done anything. Well, what did the previous Liberal government do? Nothing. What did the previous NDP government do? Nothing, with regard to that process. So, what have they done? They've sat across the way here and made noise. So, what are we going to do? We've done a substantial amount, as I've already indicated, in providing services for housing, and all issues related to those in greatest need, those who can't afford to look after themselves, and we are working substantially to ensure, through the social inclusion matter, that we get off on the right foot and that we have a program that addresses everyone in the Yukon.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Well, if the minister wants to talk about digging a hole, he should try digging one and building a shelter for youth at risk and for people needing supported living. Now, a national housing expert has said that all the ingredients are here for a housing crisis. This is what happens when you ignore an issue for eight years. We have several housing problems in the territory and the government knows what they are. The problem for eight years has been a lack of action. It has never been high on the priority list of this government. We have overcrowding, lots of substandard housing, waiting lists for people to get into government housing, an almost zero vacancy rate and very high rents when housing becomes available.

Why has the government waited until the dying days of its mandate to begin addressing homelessness?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** Since we've in power, since we've come to looking after the status of Yukon's economic situation, we've built 162 social housing units here in the Yukon. We have provided that service right through from 2002 until now.

Mr. Speaker, that's the largest increase in social housing in any government process since way back before when the federal government was involved in the process. In fact, you have to go back to pre-1993 using the same expert's comment that the member opposite is using. We have done a substantial amount of work with the funds that are available here from Yukoners to assist Yukoners and we will continue to do so.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, we in the Official Opposition, and to give credit where credit is due, the Third Party as well, have been urging the government to put more political focus on homelessness and poverty, not just this week, but

every week. I know the minister gets tired of answering these questions, and we get tired of asking them. Just last week, the minister said some people choose to be homeless. We don't share the government's defeatist approach. We think there is a lot we can be doing, particularly when it comes to youth. The same expert I quoted previously said today, specific housing projects geared to youth, and these are projects that provide support and a supportive network in addition to four walls and a roof are part of the solution as well. When does the minister plan to act on this suggestion?

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** For the member opposite, as I discussed with him, regardless of this situation previously in the past, both with himself and members of the Third Party, we are working with the stakeholders who have been involved not only with youth but with all aspects of homelessness, both adults and youth.

We are working with those stakeholders to come up with a solution, not only for housing, but also on social inclusion and getting that information from them. We anticipate we'll get to that information, as I previously said, early in the new year. We will go from there, get the information from them, make a prioritized list and move forward on it.

As I stated previously, it's important that we get off on the right foot and that the information we have is proper. There have been several previous studies, as the member opposite indicated. If we build a facility just for youth, will that solve the problem? We don't know. We're going to wait until we get the information from the group that's doing the study and the data collection and we'll go forth with the recommendations presented by those groups.

#### **Question re: Water quality testing**

**Mr. Cardiff:** The Department of Environment has ample experience in doing water quality testing. It is responsible for water testing and inspections for industrial, municipal, hydroelectric, agricultural and quartz mining use licences. The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has long had the file on water licences involving placer mining operations.

A few years ago, we discovered that water monitoring for the Minto mine water licence was transferred from Environment to Energy, Mines and Resources through a memorandum of understanding.

We understand this MOU has been renewed again. We also understand that another MOU is expected, transferring the responsibility for water testing at the Yukon Zinc mine to Energy, Mines and Resources. I want to give the government an opportunity to clear the air on this one because MOUs, though legal and sometimes necessary, are hardly the most transparent method of announcing a major change in environmental policy.

Why has Environment, with the most experience on water issues, been —

**Speaker:** Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** This government certainly takes very seriously the responsibilities that we have, and one of those responsibilities is safeguarding the environment and ensuring that people are following the appropriate regulatory processes that are laid before them. Within the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, our client services and investi-

gation folks do an incredible job of working with industry and with Yukoners to ensure compliance with the appropriate regulations, to enforce the regulations and to raise the appropriate flags when the issues are out of compliance.

I have the utmost faith in the folks in our regulatory process. I know they take their job very seriously and work with a lot of integrity. I trust them to do their job. I trust them to do the job that Yukoners have entrusted them to do.

**Mr. Cardiff:** The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said earlier that the Yukon has a strong regulatory regime and we have in place controls for the orderly, responsible development of Yukon's resources. I think this government needs to provide more detail and evidence of this strong regulatory regime because some cracks are emerging. Consider that staffing levels for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources have been the same since 2002, despite being given added responsibilities of water monitoring at major mines. Consider that advanced exploration work is going on at Selwyn, despite the Liard First Nation's concerns about water quality issues on their traditional territory and the Yukon River watershed. Consider that Western Copper has filed a suit, asking Yukon Supreme Court to quash the Water Board's decision to deny them a water licence. How will the minister be defending our strong regulatory regime before the Supreme Court?

**Speaker:** You're done, thank you. Minister responsible, please.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has substantial human resources to address many of the issues that it faces. There are broad areas of responsibility within the whole department. We've increased the capacity of the department through devolution with the transfer of federal employees, and they're doing the good work for Yukoners. I certainly trust all inspectors in the Government of Yukon, whether they work in the Department of Environment, Health and Social Services, or in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. To impute that because they're working in one department or another means that they're going to take their job less seriously is just, frankly, offensive to me and to the employees in the department.

**Mr. Cardiff:** It's not the employees I'm worried about, it's the minister. A recent study said that by 2050, clear, fresh water will be worth more than gold. This government takes a lot of credit for the mining boom, but it's the management of the boom that needs to be put under some scrutiny. This government will be judged on how it managed this boom, and it will all be negative if we emerge from all this development with fouled rivers, creeks and lakes. This government position is basically "Don't worry, everything's fine." We have a strong regulatory regime but there are cracks emerging.

I understand that an internal review suggested amendments that would strengthen the *Waters Act* but it has been gathering dust at the Cabinet table for years. Is that true?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** This government has significant responsibilities and we live up to them every day — whether it's working in the Department of Health and Social Services or Yukon Housing Corporation to build 156 new units for Yukoners, we'll take very seriously the obligations before us. And

yes, of course we will work with all parties involved: Yukon First Nations, the federal government. We only have to look at the placer authority to which the member opposite is referring to see how we can put in appropriate adaptive management tools and techniques to address the issues that we have in our environment.

We're not muddying the waters, unlike the Member for Mount Lorne who is tossing into this discussion considerable situations that are outside of the topic at hand. We take very seriously the professional work that our regulators do, that our inspectors do. We have trust in them; we have faith in them. I would ask the member opposite to recognize the competency of these officials and to recognize the good work that they do.

**Question re: Lake Laberge zoning**

**Mr. Cathers:** I have some more questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources regarding the application by Takhini Hot Springs Ltd. to significantly change zoning regulations for their property. A large majority of my constituents in the area oppose the application and are against any change that reduces minimum lot size or allows the corporation to build condos. They made that clear at two public meetings with more than 50 people at each, and through a petition signed by over 100 residents. Yesterday, I tabled a motion asking the government to publicly release the Land Planning branch's report on public consultation regarding this application, including the branch minutes from two public consultation meetings. Will the minister agree to do that?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I'm not sure what kind of new information on this issue I can provide for the member opposite. I've been very forthcoming with the information in previous questions about this.

Both the existing plan and the zoning allow for the development of the property. We've had a discussion about how the residential development potential can be transferred from one piece of property to any other contiguous parcel. We've gone through the math on this. I don't want to tear this application through this kind of process. We have a subdivision process to go through that's designed to address these things. It certainly looks at and respects the existing planning and zoning in the area. That's what we intend to do.

I'm not sure if there's any additional information I can provide to the member opposite.

**Mr. Cathers:** My constituents in the Hot Springs Road area are concerned about this application by Takhini Hot Springs Ltd. Their concern strengthens when they hear government repeating incorrect figures used by the applicant — figures that exaggerate the development potential.

By now I expect the minister has confirmed that the property's residential development potential under existing zoning is much less than 24 units. Topography prevents subdivision into that many lots, and there are existing residences on site. Those facts were confirmed by the director of Land Planning over a year ago. To hear inaccurate numbers surface again worries my constituents and makes them wonder what the Land Planning branch's report on public consultation regarding this application says. Will the minister agree to publicly release that report?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** Mr. Speaker, we know the land mass that we're talking about is of 122.11 hectares; we know how the equations work. Mr. Speaker, I am not an architect, but I've certainly seen some houses put in some very interesting places. To some, difficult topography or different types of hills make for a more interesting place to live; it certainly makes a much more interesting place for an eco-resort. What the member is characterizing as difficulties, others will certainly characterize as benefits or advantages.

Mr. Speaker, the government is certainly working with the proponent on this, respecting the wishes of the community. We're looking at ways to identify and address all of the needs that have been raised by various stakeholders in this issue. I know that the proponent has proposed many mitigating steps to address some of the concerns or unfounded fears of the people in the community, and we'll continue to work through this process to ensure that we provide an appropriate solution to meet the needs of Yukoners.

**Mr. Cathers:** Again, I have to correct the minister and point out in fact that, of course, neither he nor I are land planners, but the correction that I reminded the minister of — that the numbers he used the other day in the House were incorrect — was confirmed by the director of Land Planning over a year ago. Unfortunately, these numbers appear to have surfaced again and residents are concerned about why that is.

The local area plan and zoning regulations were never intended to allow condo development. They contain a provision intended to allow a small co-housing project by shareholders of the corporation. Residents were repeatedly given assurances about the nature of the plans and government representatives told them regulations would be drafted to permit that small co-housing project. The intent of the plan and regulations was never to allow condo development, and my constituents do not understand why the application has not already been rejected.

Will the minister agree to publicly release the Land Planning branch's report on the public consultation?

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I appreciate the concerns being voiced by the Member for Lake Laberge. I appreciate the perspectives of his constituents. I also respect the regulations in the local area plan, and we also have to respect the legislation that is before us with regard to the *Subdivision Act*.

As I said before, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources will continue to work through this process, continue to work through this application, both with the community that has been involved and the proponent, in order to identify a solution that is within the law of the land, within the bounds of reasonableness, and one that helps to address the interests of all the parties involved.

**Question re: Communication infrastructure**

**Mr. Inverarity:** I have a question for the Cabinet Commissioner for Highways and Public Works and Community Services. Yesterday he rose in this House to urge this government to work with Northwestel to improve Internet and cellphone reliability. The member clearly has some ideas in mind, and I hope that he will rise again today to provide more detail on exactly how he expects this government to resolve

this issue. What specifically are the commissioner's plans for working with Northwestel on Internet and cellphone reliability?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I appreciate the member opposite's question this afternoon. Certainly, some of the outside areas of the Yukon have had some questions about their access to the Internet and, of course, we are expanding the cellphone facilities throughout the Yukon and have done over the last eight years.

We do have to work with Northwestel — they're our partner in this — to make sure Yukon has access to proper communication, and that's exactly what the member put on the floor yesterday, recommending the government do just that — work with our partner, Northwestel, and their other agency, which manages the cellphone infrastructure throughout the territory.

But certainly, we will work with Northwestel and our partners to make sure all communities have access to communication on whatever level it is.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Yesterday the Cabinet minister tabled a motion that related specifically to his — the commissioner's — responsibilities. He wants this government to work with Northwestel to improve service reliability. It's good to see that after eight years the Yukon Party has developed an interest in reliability on these issues.

With that much lead time, the member has no doubt worked out some details to his plan. What plans does the commissioner have for working with Northwestel, and how much public money will he set aside to spend?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I would remind the member opposite it's this government that invested in cellphone communication throughout the territory. Millions of dollars were invested so that Yukoners would have a modern form of communication. It was this government that invested in that. This government also has invested so that Yukon's representation of population on Internet throughout the territory is one of the largest, as far as jurisdiction is concerned. Certainly this government is aware of our partnership with Northwestel; certainly this government has invested many, many dollars over the last eight years to upgrade and to work with our partner, Northwestel, but this government put cellphones into the communities of the territory; this government put the funds aside to do exactly that. So, as far as the member opposite, I'm sure that if he looked back on who invested what into what, he would find that this government has invested more in communication than any government has done in the past 30 years.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Considering that cellphones have only been around about 20 years, it has been an interesting discussion. The Cabinet commissioner tabled an interesting motion yesterday, and we would really like to hear more about it from him. He has responsibilities for this area. He proposed that the government get involved with the territory's private sector company to address long-standing Internet and cellphone reliability issues, specifically in rural Yukon communities. He raised several questions, and I'd like to ask a few,

What does this government plan to do to ensure cellphone and Internet reliability? Will the communities be upgraded to at least G4 standards, and will Whitehorse also get G4 reliability

in new cellphone service, and how much will this cost? These are serious questions and Yukoners are really interested in seeing if we're going to get better service.

Would the commissioner tell us exactly what work this government has done to address cellphone and Internet reliability, and will it also include upgrading to G4, and what is the price tag?

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I would remind the member opposite that if cellphones had been around for 20 years, the Liberal government never invested one dime during their term in office into cellphone communication in the territory. This government has led in communication investment in the territory.

As far as working with Northwestel and our partners, we will continue to work with them to modernize and invest in our communication system. This government has a track record of investing in communication, and we will continue to do just that.

#### **Question re: Yukon Housing Corporation mortgage portfolio**

**Mr. McRobb:** The minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation happened to mention yesterday that this government seriously considered selling Yukoners' mortgages to private interests but decided against it.

That's interesting because he still hasn't retracted his on-record denial that it was ever happening. He was asked a clear question during the spring sitting of this Assembly. It was a fair question asked on behalf of Yukoners who were concerned about this government's privatization of their home mortgages without their knowledge. The minister denied it point blank. His words were emphatic: "It absolutely is not true." He repeated that response last week. Does the minister still stand behind his vehement denial, or will he now correct the record?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Certainly, I'll correct the record, and the record is flawed by the member opposite, who says that this actually ever happened. It has never reached the Cabinet table, it has never reached Management Board, and it has never been considered. What is removed — and I do hope that the member opposite uses his own personal black Magic Marker now for documents in the future — as I say, I read that in the House yesterday: "...Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors approved a one-time offer on the removal of a prepayment penalty for Yukon Housing Corporation mortgage clients and encourage those clients to transfer the mortgages to a bank." Banks have more flexibility. They have an ability to run lines of credit for purchases of vehicles, cabins, further education, et cetera. This is a common thing that clients of Yukon Housing Corporation have asked for.

However, our mortgages have a penalty clause and what the board of directors was saying in that motion was to waive that penalty clause so the clients could look at their options and not be tied to a contract. The document was never tabled, it was never put to Cabinet, it was never put to Management Board, it has not been considered — and in fact, the member opposite seems to have missed the \$7.19 million added in last year's budget. Did we do that bad a job in trying to sell the portfolio by supplementing \$7 million into it?

**Mr. McRobb:** The hard evidence before this House proves this government did in fact consider the sell-off of Yukoners' mortgages, yet this minister remains in hard denial of those facts. Minutes from the Yukon Housing Corporation's board indicated the reason for ditching this option was concern about the public reaction to selling Yukon assets at a discount. I will quote from those minutes: "The public may perceive this option as the privatization or selling of a YG asset at a reduced cost." Déjà vu — "ATCO II", Mr. Speaker. Was this privatization stalled because it would rekindle last year's scandal?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Again, the member opposite seems to be creating his own documents here. If the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors, as they pointed out at that time, waived three months' penalty, there is a loss of revenue, but it's only reasonable, especially when the Yukon taxpayer is the one that owns the asset. They owned the asset before, they own it now, and they will own it in the future, but passing up on the three months' penalty could be seen as intentionally downplaying that.

Now, the Management Board Secretariat does a marvelous job of analyzing these documents and giving pros and cons. That's what they do for a living. Again, I understand that the member opposite has never been in government and doesn't understand how the government side works, but the Management Board Secretariat does a marvelous job of analyzing and giving us all of the pros and cons. That's what they do. The document was never presented to Management Board; it was never presented to Cabinet. We have no intention of reducing or selling off assets. In fact we supplemented them by \$7.19 million, which we added to the portfolio. The member opposite is not in touch with reality on this one.

**Mr. McRobb:** I think this government is doomed to learn the hard way, that trust can't be bought; it must be earned. It's totally unacceptable for a minister to reject—

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Point of order

**Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** That "trust can't be bought" — is the member opposite imputing a motive here?

**Mr. McRobb:** Mr. Speaker, there is nothing wrong with stating a principle; that's not against House rules.

#### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Members, please allow the Chair to do some research on this point of order.

**Mr. McRobb:** Anyway, trust must be earned. It's totally unacceptable for a minister to reject responsibility for actions within his area of responsibility and then deny —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Point of order

**Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** The member continues with "reject responsibility" — again imputing motive and implying that

the minister is not doing his job. I ask that the member opposite at least take it up in a different direction.

#### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** I think that until the point of order is decided upon, honourable members, please avoid that terminology, because it is just going to cause another point of order. Question Period is in its waning moments here, so let's carry on with this natural process. The Member for Kluane has the floor again.

**Mr. McRobb:** I'll just repeat the start of that sentence. It is totally unacceptable for a minister to reject responsibility for actions within his area of responsibility and then deny those actions in the Assembly.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Point of order

**Speaker:** The Minister of Justice, on a point of order.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, I refer to Standing Order 19(h) regarding uttering a deliberate falsehood and (g) regarding imputing false or unavowed motives to another member.

**Mr. Mitchell:** On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, there was no motive whatsoever implied. It's a matter of opinion in terms of this being a falsehood. There's no falsehood. The member said that the minister is not accepting responsibility for actions of a corporation for which he is responsible.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Speaker:** Let me recognize you first. I understand everybody is getting excited here. The Minister of Economic Development on the point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** I'll add to that point of order. Standing Order 23(4) — Mr. Speaker, you ruled moments before and asked that the member not use that terminology until you have made a determination. He then repeated the sentence.

#### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** If it is the honourable members' wish to spend the rest of the afternoon in Question Period, let's just keep this up. However, Member for Kluane, if you would like to rephrase your question, then we'll carry on. If not, we're going to carry on with the points of order.

**Mr. McRobb:** Thank you. It wasn't long ago this government was exposed for secretly trying to sell off Yukon's energy future to private interests from Alberta. Hard evidence was later discovered that proved it was true, but what did this government do? The same thing it's doing now; this government remains in hard denial. Good governance requires openness and honesty and fairness to all. How is denial of the facts providing good governance for Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** Good governance, of course, is the fact that we added \$7,195,000 to the mortgage portfolio, which the Member for Kluane concludes, is "trying to sell it". Again, how in the world could this member miss \$7 million in the budget, and not notice? He voted against it, so I have to conclude that there is something going on here. I won't speculate

and cause any further points of order, but again, for the member to miss a \$7-million investment in a mortgage portfolio is absolutely astounding.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has mercifully elapsed. We'll proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

#### Motion No. 1173

**Clerk:** Motion No. 1173, standing in the name of Mr. Nordick.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Member for Klondike

THAT this House recognizes and supports the important work of projects like the Sisters in Spirit campaign in raising awareness of violence against women and addressing its devastating impact on communities.

**Mr. Nordick:** It gives me great pleasure to rise and speak to this motion today. Before I debate this motion, I know members opposite will once again, like they do every Wednesday, ask why — why debate motions? Well, Mr. Speaker, debating this motion today will bring this issue to the public's attention. It is our job as the elected representatives to bring important issues to the citizens of this territory and to help inform them that it is up to all citizens to eliminate violence against women.

The Yukon Sisters in Spirit campaign project is designed to include the voices of missing and murdered aboriginal women's families and communities and will work to develop and support ongoing relationships based on trust and reciprocity.

The Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council — the Yukon Sisters in Spirit coordinator — has been working directly with families and communities to research the circumstances and events of missing and murdered aboriginal women in the Yukon.

The Yukon government is committed to supporting aboriginal women and providing opportunities to decrease violence against aboriginal women and advance aboriginal women's equality, leadership and wellness. We recognize this must be done collaboratively and have been working closely with the aboriginal women's group, individual aboriginal women and Yukon First Nations on implementing the recommendations of the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summits.

Aboriginal women's organizations will develop and deliver six projects over three years in the areas of public education and leadership development, which include a Yukon Sisters in Spirit project, which will be completed by the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council with capacity support from the Women's Directorate.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the individuals involved in this initiative. It gives me great pleasure to help bring this initiative to the public's attention.

The Yukon Sisters in Spirit initiative will link closely with the national initiative that the Native Women's Association of Canada has been working on. The Women's Directorate has also increased their annual funding to prevention of violence against aboriginal women to \$200,000 for innovative projects that address aboriginal women's safety and wellness in communities.

The Women's Directorate supports the implementation of the recommendation arising from the 2007 Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summits held in Whitehorse and Watson Lake.

At the Yukon Forum held last September, a total of \$450,000 of the northern strategy trust funding was approved for the Women's Directorate for work with aboriginal women's organizations to deliver programs and services to further equality.

The summit provides an opportunity for Yukon First Nation women to determine educational, leadership and wellness priorities for their communities. These new programs and services, designed and programmed by aboriginal women, will improve their quality of life.

In November 2007 the Women's Directorate and the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues co-hosted two regional summits to communicate the outcomes from the National Aboriginal Women's Summit and giving Yukon First Nation women the chance to bring forward recommendations.

Over the next three years, Yukon aboriginal women's groups will deliver six projects that will address topics such as education, leadership development, and wellness in the communities. These Yukon-based projects involve developing and delivering an aboriginal women's professional mentorship program, developing by the youth, for the youth violence prevention, and healthy relationship awareness campaign, creating a land-based camp for opportunities to exchange traditional and modern life skills and educational practices, developing a culturally relevant, gender-based, balanced analysis course for delivery to First Nations and other community agencies, organizing aboriginal women's groups in communities and profiling missing and murdered aboriginal women in Yukon as part of the Native Women's Association of Canada's Sisters in Spirit project.

The Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council will receive \$63,680 for the Yukon Sisters in Spirit project, which is part of the Native Women's Association of Canada's Sisters in Spirit project. The council will research information about missing and murdered Yukon aboriginal women and raise awareness about related violence against aboriginal women.

Addressing violence in Yukon is a high priority of this Yukon Party government, in contrast to the former Liberal government. The former Liberal government cut the Women's Directorate — not from the budget, but from the government. They removed the Women's Directorate completely. We, this Yukon Party government, reinstated the Women's Directorate when we came to power in 2002. We recognized that Yukon has a high rate of family violence and government departments and other agencies, including the Yukon's three women's shelters, continue to work together to address these issues.



One of the ways we are working together is through the implementation of the new *Victims of Crime Strategy*. The three women's shelters in the Yukon — Kaushee's Place in Whitehorse, Help and Hope for Families Society in Watson Lake and Dawson City Women's Shelter — are primarily funded by the Government of Yukon, through the Department of Health and Social Services. They all work closely with Health and Social Services, Justice and the Women's Directorate, which would not have been there if the Liberal Party government got into power again in 2002. Over the past three years, this government has increased support to the shelters by bringing the government's total commitment to women's shelters to over \$1.4 million for this year. This is an increase of more than \$400,000 over three years. The Government of Yukon will continue to work with the shelters and others to address family violence in the territory.

I'll give a couple of examples of the budget highlights in this year's budget. Women's housing funding has been increased consistently ever since 2004-05. In 2009-10, funding for the women's shelters: Kaushee's Place — \$988,000; Help and Hope in Watson Lake — \$415,000; Dawson City — over \$210,000, totalling over \$1.6 million.

Prevention of violence against aboriginal women came into existence in 2004. Prior to that, there was no specific funding targeting aboriginal women. The fund was \$100,000 until 2009; funding increased to \$200,000 commencing in 2009-10. The women's equality fund started in 2007 and in 2008 was \$175,000. The women's community projects fund increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000 in 2009. This fund was intended to cover small projects or educational and professional development for women's organizations across the Yukon.

To meet our commitment to gender equality in the Yukon, this government initiated a new women's equality fund in 2007. That allowed organizations to apply for three-year funding to support their very important work. The Government of Yukon established the women's equality fund in response to a need identified by a number of women's organizations for more sustained funding. The women's equality fund was renewed and enhanced for another three years — 2010-13 — in order to build on the progress made in the first part of the fund.

The funding criteria has been brought in in response to an evaluation of the fund that has indicated it would be effective to permit longer term funding and operational, as well as project support. The ceiling for requests per year has increased from \$35,000 to \$50,000, and the yearly allocation has risen to \$300,000. The total funding over three years is \$889,985.

The Liard Aboriginal Women's Society receives \$60,000 over three years to design and carry out youth violence prevention and public education campaigns to reinstate women's equality through the cultural traditions of their communities and to build capacity to strengthen relationships with aboriginal women's groups, the Women's Directorate, and a range of other organizations supporting the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society's mandate.

The Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle receives \$60,000 to support the establishment and maintenance of a new permanent office space for the Whitehorse Aboriginal

Women's Circle and staff, and to administer and deliver two 18-month projects funded by the northern strategy trust — an aboriginal women's mentorship training program and a culturally relevant gender-based analysis program.

Les Essentielles received \$105,000 over three years to promote social justice and awareness and prevention of violence, enhance francophone women's involvement in community development, promote community wellness and participation and ensure a positive image of francophone women.

The Yukon Women in Trades and Technology received \$150,000 to maintain the McCrae permanent workshop and office space, secure funding for day-to-day operational cost, hire a part-time administrative assistant, increase the skills of Yukon women, further increasing of female instructors in Yukon and help the Yukon Women in Trades and Technology to become the go-to place for trades training for women in northern Canada.

The Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre received \$149,885 to continue to mark annual periods of awareness including Sexual Assault Awareness Month in May, Women's Abuse Prevention Month in November and Take Back the Night in December and International Women's Day as well as increase programs on the issues such as transportation, leadership, health, work, mothering and violence awareness. The centre will also increase awareness of barriers to women's equality, expand the number of women accessing programs and further develop the centre's visibility and community consecutiveness.

The Yukon Status of Women Council receives \$60,000 over three years to continue to promote its publication and resources, advocate for gender equality, support marginalized women, promote the application of results and recommendations of the Yukon Status of Women Council homeless report, *A Little Kindness Would Go a Long Way*.

The Elizabeth Fry Society of Yukon received \$120,000 over three years to increase public awareness and promotion of the declaration of women, reduce the number of women who are criminalized and imprisoned in the Yukon, increase their availability of community-based, publicly funded social service, health and education resources for marginalized, victimized, criminalized and imprisoned women, employ a part-time outreach worker and maintain an office in Whitehorse.

The Yukon Association for Community Living received \$144,000 over three years to provide support for the Yukon Association of Community Living, which is a collective to help women with disabilities express themselves through a series of artistic endeavors, including workshops to develop writing, singing, visual arts and dance skills, and grow the next generation of performers, writers and artists. The project will also develop a mothers-and-sisters team/sibling group to mentor and empower the Yukon Association for Community Living members to make their own life decisions.

Statistics Canada reports that rates of violence toward women in the north exceed the national average; rates of spousal violence and spousal homicides are also higher for aboriginal women than for non-aboriginal women. In fact, aboriginal women experience spousal violence at a rate that is three times higher than for non-aboriginal women.

Last year the government increased the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund from \$100,000 to \$200,000 annually. This Government of Yukon is meeting its commitment to reduce violence against aboriginal women in the Yukon by dedicating annual funding to aboriginal women's organizations for projects aimed at preventing violence against aboriginal women.

The prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund supports projects designed and developed by aboriginal women for their communities. Since 2004 the Women's Directorate contributed approximately \$900,000 toward this fund.

Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council received \$45,000 over three years toward securing and staffing new permanent office space in Whitehorse building capacity, hiring an executive director, developing and delivering a Yukon Sisters in Spirit project with assistance from the northern strategy trust and continuing to deliver education and training programs.

The Women's Directorate generates an annual call for proposals focused on preventing violence against aboriginal women. The next intake will be in the spring of 2011. I will list a few of the groups that received funding in 2010-11: the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun received \$225,000; Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation received \$11,425; the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle received \$25,000; the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council received \$25,000; the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon will receive \$49,680 and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation will receive \$49,297 over the 2010-11 budget year; Kwanlin Dun First Nation, \$43,450; Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, \$30,350; Selkirk First Nation, \$28,070; Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, \$38,469.

With respect to what this Yukon government has accomplished and promoted to Yukoners as ways to decrease the violence against women in the territory, through the Women's Directorate and the Department of Justice we have announced funding for a three-year public awareness campaign aimed at improving women's safety, called Circles of Respect and Equality.

In April 2008, the community development fund approved funding in the amount of \$276,313 to the Help and Hope for Families Society in Watson Lake in order to construct a second-stage housing unit. The unit is attached to the existing transition home and allows for the provision of long-term supported and affordable living for the women and children escaping abuse.

The construction of the new women's annex at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre started in 2007-08 and was completed in 2009. Programming that is specific to the needs of women is in place.

We released the two Yukon-relevant videos and accompanying training manual in support of violence prevention work — *Getting Real*. The *Getting Real* resource is a culmination of a three-year public awareness and education campaign, Circles of Respect and Equality, that started in 2005 and focused on violence against women and children.

The resources have helped further educate and raise awareness of what community resources are available to assist those leaving abusive partners and other violent situations. The

Women's Directorate and the Department of Justice co-hosted two "Train the Trainers" sessions using the *Getting Real* resources.

\$47,000 was provided through the Women's Directorate for a self-advocacy program for women through the Yukon Public Legal Education Association.

\$60,000 was used to create the position of the First Nation liaison worker within the Women's Directorate. The First Nation liaison worker has been so successful that the First Nation Training Corps has approved the addition of a trainee in this position working in the Women's Directorate for 18 months starting in 2010-11. This is an investment of over \$120,000.

The Women's Directorate has doubled the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund established in 2004 from \$100,000 to \$200,000 annually, and now allows organizations to apply for either one- or two-year project funding. Since 2004, the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund has supported projects designed and developed by aboriginal women for their communities.

Each spring, the Women's Directorate generates a call for proposals, and it has provided a cumulative total of approximately \$900,000 in funding. In 2008-09, six community-based projects received support from this fund. Six further community projects will receive funding of \$200,000 over the next two years.

VictimLINK crisis line is offered in partnership with British Columbia. This toll-free service, available 24 hours a day, staffed by professionals trained to provide victims of crime access to Yukon support information, referral services and crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence.

Domestic Violent Treatment Option Court is offered in Whitehorse and Watson Lake. The Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court is a process that recognizes that family violence is a serious criminal act. This court provides a more innovative response to the issue of domestic violence by combining court proceedings with the proven benefits of treatment for the offender.

Our Way of Living Safely program was announced in 2006. The cost of this program is expected to be over \$216,000, up to the end of 2010. It is a program to assist children who are exposed to domestic violence. It is funded through the federal victims of crime initiative on a five-year agreement that began in 2006 and is available to children whose parents or parent are involved in the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court.

The sexual assault response team is an inter-agency team of professionals whose primary objective is to promote consistency and coordination between the member agencies in order to successfully prosecute cases of sexual assault. In 2008, the Kits on Ice program was introduced in Yukon through this team. This permits women who have suffered a sexual assault to save evidence until they are emotionally prepared to proceed with the criminal process.

The Protect Yourself, Protect Your Drink campaign was also known as the coaster campaign and is a public awareness campaign that highlights the dangers of date-rape drugs, which can be placed into victims' drinks. This campaign has been launched annually since 2005.

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 the Yukon and best practices in the area of women and substance abuse. The Women's Directorate commissioned and released a report on this issue in 2008-09 and subsequently sponsored a training strategy for professionals who work with women who are addicted.

Yukon substance abuse workers, counselling professionals and other service providers in women-centred care received training in working with women who were addicted in February 2009. Front-line service providers and program managers in Yukon government, non-governmental organizations and First Nations participated in the workshop. The training was offered in response to recommendations in a report entitled, *Improving Treatment and Support for Yukon Girls and Women with Substance Abuse Problems and Addictions*.

This government partnered with the Recreation and Parks Association of Yukon to launch a new healthy living campaign. "Today for you I care for me," encouraged women to adopt healthier lifestyles by providing them with messages and information on active living, healthy eating and smoke-free living. We developed a high risk young women fund to assist NGOs and First Nations to implement harm reduction initiatives for young women living in risky situations. Alcohol and Drug Services provides assistance for the delivery of pregnancy-related issues in the management of addictions and training to health care providers to assist them in working with pregnant women who may have addiction issues.

In January 2008, the community development fund approved funding in the amount of \$25,159 to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation for a Yukon women's wellness retreat. The retreat helped women gain a greater sense of self-esteem, empowerment and lessened their social isolation.

A public information session was held for students and parents in September 2010 to provide information about HPV vaccine that is available to prevent transmission of viruses. In March of 2009 the arts fund provided funding to *Go Angel Girlfriends*, a production of the Gwaandak Theatre, which sees women with disabilities develop and perform new theatre work.

In March of 2009 the arts fund supported the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society with their preservation and sharing of Kaska legends and arts project, and traditional storytelling events in Ross River and Watson Lake.

The Public Service Commission has developed an employee equity policy, which identifies women as one of the target groups for employment equity programming. This policy aims for a workforce that is representative of the Yukon's population as, for the last federal census of June 2006, women represented 50 percent of the total Yukon population and 51 percent of the working-age 25 to 64 years population.

As of March 31, 2008, women represented 63 percent of all employees in the Yukon government's workforce. Women represent over half of almost every department's workforce and almost all job-level categories. The exception in job levels is at the senior management level, where women make up 46 per-

cent of those employees. However, the number of women in senior management has been increasing steadily. In 2000, women made up less than 30 percent of employees in this category. The formal policy is regularly reviewed to see if it is still effective. The most recent review took place in 2010.

Once again, in 2000, less than 30 percent were in upper management; today, over 46 percent are in upper management.

The Family Law Information Centre provides legal information and support services to persons who need to have their support orders varied. The maintenance enforcement program helps collect child and spousal support. Legal Aid provides lawyers for a parent involved in child protection matters and permanent custody applications.

Advanced Education has provided \$69,450 through the community training trust fund to assist Yukon College and the Department of Justice in developing and delivering a pilot program for women interested in exploring a career as a correctional officer.

Government of Yukon provides secretarial and financial support in the amount of \$40,000 per year to support the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues annual women's forum. Themes have included "Making Our Way: Yukon Women in Leadership".

The Yukon Fish and Game Association conducts annual outdoor leadership programs and fishing programs specifically for women. The Young Women Exploring Trades is an annual day-long forum that will include grade 8 and 9 girl, Yukon wide participating in a full-day workshop creating things that teach them skills in up to nine different trade areas.

The TEPW, which is a six-week introduction to trades at Yukon College, promotes the benefits of trades careers to women and also provides opportunities for women interested in career development. The Women's Directorate has doubled the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund from \$100,000 to \$200,000 annually. Since 2004, the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund has supported projects designed and developed by aboriginal women for their communities.

Each spring, the Women's Directorate generates a call for proposals and the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund has supported more than 27 projects since 2004, for a cumulative total of approximately \$500,000. In 2008-09, six community-based projects received support from this fund.

In 2008, eight Yukon First Nation women, including two chiefs from self-governing First Nations, accompanied the former Women's Directorate minister to the second National Aboriginal Women's Summit in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Two Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summits that addressed areas of leadership development, education, and wellness were held in 2007. Planning for implementation of many of these recommendations started immediately and implementation started in 2010.

We implemented a priority social housing policy for Yukon Housing Corporation for individuals leaving abusive relationships and seniors from rural Yukon who require relocation for medical reasons. We completed the construction of an affordable housing complex in Riverdale, Whitehorse.

This initiative addresses the largest gap that currently exists — secure form of housing for lone-parent families, particularly households headed by single women. It stabilizes the fund for the two Yukon women's shelters, and the women's community project fund is at \$10,000, providing support for small projects that arise over the year. The Women's Directorate received applications throughout the year until the fund was depleted. More than 17 projects have been supported since 2005 through this fund, including the Finlayson Lake healing camp, the creating safe places project, Yukon Women in Music, Ms. Infinity Conference, Sally and Sisters, and the Yukon Women's Hockey Association. The women's equality fund was created in 2007, and an evaluation of the fund done in 2010 supported the recommendation that it be increased from \$175,000 per year to \$300,000 per year. The fund has been fully expended each year since 2007.

I could go on all day with initiatives that this government has taken to help increase the awareness of Yukoners and the citizens of Canada that violence against women should not be tolerated. It is up to each and every one of us to put that message forward to every individual with whom we come in contact.

I look forward to the debate today and I encourage all members to speak. If we speak as one united voice against violence against women, we can make a difference. That is why we are debating this motion today.

I'd like to end this afternoon by, once again, thanking the individuals in organizations — the volunteers in organizations — who work on such an important initiative as this.

**Mr. Elias:** As always, it's a pleasure to rise in the House today to participate in the discussion with regard to the Member for Klondike's motion on the floor of the House — that is, to support the important work of projects like the Sisters in Spirit campaign and raising awareness of violence against women and addressing its devastating impact on communities.

The Sisters in Spirit campaign, from a national perspective, is an initiative guided through the Native Women's Association of Canada and a coalition of aboriginal women's organizations from across the country. It's a five-year research, education and policy-based initiative, and the goal is to raise public awareness of missing and murdered aboriginal women and the sexual and racial roots of that violence.

The Native Women's Association of Canada had a feeling that aboriginal women were more likely to go missing and it was less likely for their cases to be solved, and they were right. The initiative has, so far, identified 582 missing and murdered aboriginal women in our country of Canada. The Sisters in Spirit initiative looked at murders of women in Canada over an eight-year period. Ten percent of those killed were aboriginal women, although only three percent of our country's population is aboriginal.

The Sisters in Spirit also found that murders of aboriginal women are less likely to be solved. Across Canada, 85 percent of murders are solved. For aboriginal women, barely half are solved — and that's at a percentage of 53.

Also worthy of mention is that, in March of 2010, in a Speech from the Throne in Ottawa, the federal Conservatives promised \$10 million to address missing aboriginal women, but I couldn't find any further details being released.

I'll begin by discussing some of the things that were mentioned in last year's fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly. Our caucus repeatedly brought up the issue of violence against women in the Yukon. Rates of violence against women in the Yukon are alarmingly high, and we all know that. While such rates have decreased significantly over time in southern Canada, the Yukon has not experienced the same improvement. Last fall, I pressed for a comprehensive strategy that will address not only the consequences of domestic violence, but also the social and economic determinants of violence. During Question Period and general debate, we have been pressing the Yukon government for meaningful action on this issue. I just heard the Member for Klondike go over some of the grants that were designed to bolster women's equality. I have those same numbers and same women's organizations and societies that he went over, so I won't go over that again.

Last spring, after the session, I recognized the work of the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate in my newsletter that I sent to my constituents, and I'll just quote a section from my newsletter. I said in there that, "I'm glad to see that the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate provided an increase in funding this year and a new budget item of \$185,207 towards a public education campaign focusing on violence against women and the doubling of the prevention of violence against women program from \$100,000 to \$200,000." That was good to see and I thought that it was well worth mentioning in the newsletter that I submitted in the spring of this year.

Violence against women is a commonplace tragedy in Canada and in the Yukon. It affects our daughters, our sisters, our mothers, our friends and colleagues. Through them and through their children it affects the very health and well-being of our communities. Fortunately, in most of the country, we are seeing progress. Reports tell us that spousal violence has been declining steadily over the past 10 years, dropping a full 15 percent from 1988 to 2007. This is good news, but this good news doesn't extend to the Yukon. In the Yukon today, many women continue to suffer violence at rates three times higher than the national average. The rest of the country is getting better. Whatever has been done in the past, whatever list of initiatives the minister can provide, it's clearly not working fast enough, and the years of sobering statistics support my assertion. Yukon women are more than twice as likely to suffer violence at the hands of their partners. Yukon women are more than two and a half times more likely to be sexually assaulted than the Canadian average. These rates are simply unacceptable and have been going on for far too long.

These statistics should be troubling to any government, especially when it comes to the protection of the weakest in our society. This government has a duty to change the trend of violence in our territory. The facts in this territory speak for themselves. For decades now, we've been dealing with these staggering statistics with regard to violence against women so it's

obvious to me that this Yukon Party government needs to take a more comprehensive approach in addressing violence against women in our territory.

The facts are that Yukon women still suffer violence at rates hugely exceeding what other Canadian women are subject to. On average, for every Canadian woman who experiences violence at the hands of her partner, two Yukon women do. It is time to address the root causes of violence against women in our territory, including, but not limited to, economic inequality, lack of education, affordable housing and substance abuse, to name a few.

It is time for this government to take a holistic view of an issue that affects Yukon women more cruelly than it does women anywhere else in our country. I believe a comprehensive approach is necessary for our territory to combat violence against women once and for all. I want the statistics to be well below the national average, if not eliminated altogether, during my time. Thinking about how to accomplish that, if you look at the territory, let's just look at this from a monetary point of view alone, of the different levels of government.

We have our territorial government, which has an average of a billion-dollar budget a year. Then you include the 13 self-governing First Nations, and let's say they have between \$5 million to \$10 million budgets a year. Then there are the budgets of our municipalities and the federal government budget. Together, with the excellent work of women's groups, societies, committees and councils — like Yukon Sisters in Spirit, Les EssentiElles, the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, the Public Service Alliance of Canada Regional Women's Committee, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, the Yukon Status of Women Council, the Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, the Elizabeth Fry Society, the Yukon Association of Community Living, the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon, the Dawson City Women's Shelter, Help and Hope for Families Society — the Watson Lake transition home, Kaushee's Place — the women's transition home, and many, many other national organizations.

In my mind, there is no reason why within our time, if we all push in the same direction, we can't achieve our goal. But there has to be leadership and it starts with us individually.

When I say I would like to see a comprehensive approach being developed by the Government of Yukon, where all the departments have a hand in accomplishing the goal of having violence against women well below the national average, and hopefully eliminated altogether within our time, every Yukon government department — Justice, Energy, Mines and Resources, Economic Development, the Executive Council Office, the Department of Environment, Highways and Public Works, Tourism and Culture — should have a hand in this and individual goals and responsibilities for achieving this end, because the statistics of violence against women have been terrible in our territory for far too long.

To me, whatever we are doing or whatever money has been allocated, it isn't working fast enough. All the women's organizations in our territory and the hard-working officials in the Women's Directorate are doing a phenomenal job in fulfill-

ing their responsibilities around the territory. It is commendable, with regard to the task at hand. However, what I don't see is a powerhouse of an effort, with everyone involved, pushing in the same direction, to deal with this issue on a long-term basis with long-term funding, and long-term commitments — a comprehensive strategy.

I think it is the public government's responsibility to lead such participation in a comprehensive and different, unique way. One of the questions I posed to the Education minister last fall was how his department could participate in a comprehensive approach, and take a bit of a leadership role, because I see his department as being one of the ones that could take the leadership role with youth in lowering the statistics of violence against women in our territory.

The ideas and concepts like abuse prevention, life skills, leadership development, trades and apprenticeship programming, housing, addressing poverty — all these overarching, very large issues could have an impact if they were a priority of a department, like the Department of Education, and taught to students at an early age and throughout the primary and secondary school years. In my opinion, educating the school-aged children through their primary and secondary years about violence, about violence in our territory, about violence against women and about violence against aboriginal women will undoubtedly save and pay dividends later in lowering homelessness rates and poverty numbers or court costs, or violence prevention — the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

Having a comprehensive and holistic interjurisdictional, interdepartmental plan is required. I just wanted to ask that fairly large conceptual question today to each and every minister on the government side of how he or she sees his or her department moving forward with that very large concept.

I would like to see a consistent, long-term, monumental movement at all levels of government to address this issue of violence against women because I think we can do it, because we need to do more. That is why I bring this concept up again because, 10 years from now, I don't want the statistics to be where they are today. I think we need a comprehensive approach and obviously our public government in the territory can coordinate itself in that fashion and look for partners to move forward.

It has to be done because it affects again the health and well-being of all Yukon communities. Everyone is touched by this. When these kinds of terrible statistics continue decade after decade after decade, the costs are only going to continue to rise in all aspects of our lives.

I ask all the government ministers to rise and speak about the comprehensive approach concept and how they see their departments achieving the goal of eliminating violence against women in our territory. Again, violence against women and violence against aboriginal women are two to three times higher than the national average. This is troublesome to many Yukoners because those statistics have been pretty high for quite some time. I would like to know how each minister will work toward dramatically lowering those statistics that have been plaguing the Yukon for far too long, and the Member for Klondike mentioned it earlier: it's not only a government's

responsibility. It comes from the individuals, to non-governmental organizations, to all levels of government to help make this a reality.

The Minister of Community Services had some ideas last year about helping with this issue, like scholarships being given from within his department to women, work placement programs for women, targeted training, and fire-management skills for women. That is what I hope to hear from all the government ministers today — their ideas, what they are doing and what they hope to do.

Last week on October 4 we all paid tribute to the Sisters in Spirit campaign. This marks the fifth annual Yukon Sisters in Spirit vigil. Do we support the Member for Klondike's motion? Absolutely we do. October 4 has been designated the day when we honour the lives of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls across Canada. Research done by the Native Women's Association of Canada proves that more than 582 women and girls have gone missing, or been murdered, to date in this country. Yukon aboriginal women experience higher rates of violence than non-aboriginal women, and northern women are more at risk of experiencing violence than their southern counterparts.

The vigil represented the bringing together of people from each and every community to honour the lives of Yukon women who have gone missing or have been murdered. The walk was about being one voice, united in one cause, to stop violence against women and girls. It is a day of remembrance for those who can no longer speak for themselves. They were somebody's mother, daughter, sister, child or grandchild to the families they have left behind. October 4 is a day for celebrating their lives, and we thank the Aboriginal Women's Council, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle for hosting this silent vigil every year in remembrance of aboriginal women and girls who have gone missing or have been murdered.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for providing me the opportunity to support this motion from the Member for Klondike. I will be supporting this motion.

**Hon. Ms. Horne:** I thank the member opposite for his encouraging words in supporting the prevention of violence against women. I would first like to point out that, through our Women's Directorate, each department in the government is involved. We have very actively worked with the Yukon Housing Corporation. They have put in their policies that women escaping any violent situation have top priority on waiting lists. We have the affordable family housing project in Riverdale through Yukon Housing Corporation's cooperation. We work with the Education department.

We meet with every department to ensure that the women's voices are heard. The mandate of the Women's Directorate — I will just reiterate here in the House: by incorporating a gender and diversity analytical lens in policy development and public education, the Women's Directorate advances the economic, legal and social equality of women in the Yukon, in partnership with other government departments, non-governmental organizations and First Nation communities.

We strive to ensure responsive and effective equality-promoting strategies that enhance Yukon women and girls' health, economic security and leadership.

The Women's Directorate's strategic goals: (1) to provide leadership and policy research and development to ensure gender-equitable outcomes in government legislation, policy and programs; (2) to promote women and girls' equality by raising awareness of women's issues through effective public education; (3) to support community-based initiatives that enhance women and girls' equality.

I would like to thank the employees of the Women's Directorate for the good work that they do to ensure that women's voices are heard for the equality of women and girls.

In my comments today I want to focus not only on the Sisters in Spirit campaign, but on the other projects that focus on raising awareness of violence against women and in addressing its devastating impact on families and in our communities.

Just the other day, along with many other concerned Yukoners, I joined together to stand in our fifth annual Sisters in Spirit vigil. In Dawson City they held a corresponding vigil and a march was held here in Whitehorse. To increase awareness, I would like to see this vigil held in each of our rural communities in the future. These events are very near and dear to my heart for many reasons. As the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, and the Minister of Justice, I have an avid interest in these projects. Each of us here, whether we are a woman or a man, has a great interest in this project and others like it.

I know my colleague from Klondike has gone over some of this material; I would like to address it as well, as I want to reiterate and emphasize this project. The Yukon Sisters in Spirit is similar to a national project run by the Native Women's Association of Canada, otherwise known as NWAC. The Native Women's Association of Canada encouraged Canadians to take action by hosting or taking part in a Sisters in Spirit vigil on October 4, 2010.

As I have said many times prior, this day of remembrance is aptly named for we are sisters; we are joined at the heart. We care for our sisters; we want the best for our sisters; we celebrate having our sisters in our lives, for they make our lives richer by being there. October 4 is a day to honour the lives of missing or murdered aboriginal women and girls and their families.

I want to emphasize that this is not about unsolved cases. I believe there's only one open ongoing investigation of an unresolved crime that occurred in Yukon. I also know from my conversations with the RCMP that they remain fully committed to that file. Both former Chief Superintendent Harvie and current Chief Superintendent Clark have shared with me their commitment to this one open case. I would like to say thank you to the RCMP for supplying the refreshments after our vigil and march last Monday. Günilschish for your support.

Sisters in Spirit vigils began in 2005 with the courage, strength and love of families who had suffered the loss of a sister, daughter, mother, grandmother or friend. As of March 31, 2010, NWAC has found 582 cases of missing or murdered aboriginal women and girls. NWAC currently has six Yukon

cases listed in the national database. This project will work with NWAC to ensure Yukon's numbers are accurately reflected in the national database. I'll speak more about the Yukon in a moment.

The Native Women's Association of Canada — hereafter referred to as NWAC — urges Canadians to ask ourselves why so many of our aboriginal sisters continue to go missing and fall victim to homicide, seven times more often than non-aboriginal women. Every human is valuable; every woman is valuable but, sadly, aboriginal women are disproportionately the victims of violence.

The Sisters in Spirit vigils are organized in at least 78 communities across Canada to help honour the lives of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls. That is what this is about. Let me say that again: it is about honouring the lives of missing or murdered aboriginal women and girls. It is about celebrating their lives. It is about sharing the importance of their lives to their families, to their friends, to their community. It is about reflecting on the importance of each woman's life.

I spoke with Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, president of NWAC, who shared with me that, while her organization is pleased that an increase in public awareness of the issues of missing or murdered aboriginal women is starting to resonate with all Canadians, there is still more that needs to be done. Jeannette believes that the survival of First Nation people can be attributed to the strength and resilience of our women. The customs, culture, and language of First Nation people is transmitted from generation to generation by First Nation women in their role as mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and sisters, regardless of the hardships encountered in their lives. Jeannette is living proof that one person, one person with grit can make a difference. Günilschish, Jeannette and your daughter, Mimi, for all you have and will do for aboriginal women in Canada.

Part of the work is to raise awareness about this matter. Another part is to recognize the tremendous impact that the loss of these women have had in our communities, but we can't stop there. Another part of the work is identifying and fixing systemic factors that lead to a disproportionate number of aboriginal women going missing or being murdered. Each one of these women is tied to us in many ways. Their loss resonates throughout our culture.

Native Women's Association of Canada started the important work of gathering the stories of missing or murdered aboriginal women across Canada with the support of the federal government. The 2008-09 proposal that a Yukon project be taken up by the provincial-territorial member association, Yukon Aboriginal Women's Circle, was approved by NWAC and funding was sought to do this important work.

This means that there is an active Yukon aboriginal women's staff person travelling to communities throughout the Yukon to meet with the families and friends of young women who may not have had the opportunity to share their stories with the national organization. Stories are largely gathered in person, and the increase in number of stories told is a result of this personal interaction.

Yukon women are included in the national database. The research methodology is relationship-based and involves tradi-

tional sharing of life stories, which can most successfully be carried out with a staff resource on the ground. As with the NWAC national research project, this work is about honouring these women, their families and friends, and it is also more than finding out about individual women's stories.

It is hoped that the four guiding questions employed by NWAC in their research will be equally successful in Yukon. These questions presented are: (1) what are the circumstances, root causes and trends leading to racial and sexual violence against aboriginal women in Canada? (2) how has the justice system responded to family and community reports of missing and murdered aboriginal women in Canada? What issues, challenges, and gaps exist? (3) what changes need to be implemented in order to improve the safety and well-being of aboriginal women in Canada, particularly, related to this issue? (4) how can these changes be implemented in order to reduce or prevent racially motivated, sexualized violence against aboriginal women, particularly that which results in their disappearance or death?

The Yukon Sisters in Spirit project is designed to include the voices of missing and murdered aboriginal women's families and communities, and will work to develop and support ongoing relationships based on trust and reciprocity. I want to emphasize that this is not a Yukon government project. It is a Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council project; however, I am pleased to support it, because community partners are the catalysts that multiply and amplify your efforts.

Government alone cannot fix every issue in Yukon; however, by working together, we can do better. We can make a difference by working together. Through working with partners, we can address these issues in a meaningful and effective way. The project was originally designed to run from April 1, 2010, to March 31, 2011. However, Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council and the Women's Directorate have recognized the need for increased timelines and resources for the project. Due to the unexpected number of missing and murdered aboriginal women in Yukon, the program has been extended, and will now run from April 1, 2010, to March 31, 2012. The M Division of the RCMP has recently become very interested in working with the Yukon Sisters of Spirit coordinator, including information sharing.

The Yukon government is committed to supporting aboriginal women, providing opportunities to decrease violence against aboriginal women and advancing aboriginal women's equality, leadership and wellness. We recognize that this must be done collaboratively and have been working closely with aboriginal women's groups, individual aboriginal women and Yukon First Nations on implementing the recommendations of the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summits.

The Yukon Sisters in Spirit initiative will link closely with the national initiative that the Native Women's Association of Canada has been working on. Part of the Yukon project has included talking with family and friends of murdered and missing women who have a Yukon connection. I understand that, in the last 40 years, some 27 Yukon women have been murdered or have gone missing.

I'm pleased that the Women's Directorate has also increased our annual funding for the prevention of violence against aboriginal women. This motion today noted the work of the Sisters in Spirit or, I would say, "sisters with grit". This is just one project; there are many others in the Yukon. I don't have time to mention them all here today.

Statistics Canada reports rates of violence toward women in the north far exceed the national average. Rates of spousal violence and spousal homicide are also higher for aboriginal than non-aboriginal women. In fact, aboriginal women experience spousal violence at a rate that is three times higher than for non-aboriginal women. This Government of Yukon is meeting its commitment to reduce violence against aboriginal women in Yukon by dedicating annual funding to aboriginal women's organizations for projects aimed at preventing violence against aboriginal women. Bear in mind that reducing violence against women is everyone's responsibility. It is not just a government responsibility.

We have to start teaching our children the value of a healthy life, the value of healthy mothers, healthy grandmothers, healthy sisters and healthy aunts and, at the same time, healthy brothers, healthy fathers, healthy grandfathers and healthy uncles. Let's all do our part in ending this scourge in our society.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this chance to speak on a matter that is very dear to my heart and I do encourage everyone to support this. This is a good and worthy project. It is one that I am proud to support. I like that it not only recognizes our sisters' lives have been cut short, but also that each one of our sisters' lives had meaning and significance. They were somebody special to their family, to their friends, to their community. They were special Yukoners and they are sorely missed.

**Mr. Cardiff:** I am pleased to be here today to speak in favour of the motion. This is a very pressing issue. Quite frankly it is an issue that, as a society, we shouldn't have to be dealing with, but I think what we have to do is look at what the root causes of violence in our society are. Much has been said already, and quite eloquently, by a number of members of this Legislative Assembly and I would like to thank everyone for their comments.

I would also like to recognize the work of a number of organizations here in the territory: the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle; Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council; the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society, also known as Kaushee's Place, and all the hardworking women who work in that facility; the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society; Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre; Yukon Status of Women; and the Women's Directorate, to name a few. All of these organizations, government agencies and others are working hard to bring this issue to the forefront and to educate the public that something has to change.

It is a public education thing, but there are also societal problems that need to be addressed. I'm going to speak a little bit at first about the Sisters in Spirit and the Native Women's Association of Canada. Sisters in Spirit is a research, education and policy initiative that is led by the Native Women's Asso-

ciation of Canada and through associations in various jurisdictions that are affiliated with the Native Women's Association of Canada.

This is an urgent state of affairs when it comes to the protection and the safety of aboriginal women, and all women, in our society. As has been stated, and I will state later, aboriginal women are more likely to be on the receiving end of spousal abuse and violence.

So the goal of the campaign is to conduct research, as the Minister of Justice was talking about, collecting stories, raise the awareness in our community of the alarmingly high rates of violence against aboriginal women and girls in Canada, and ensure that there is effective access to justice for families of missing aboriginal women. I know it has been said many times, but these are our grandmothers, our mothers, our sisters, our daughters, our granddaughters; they're our aunts, our nieces, our friends and, in a lot of instances, could be our co-workers.

The project is meant to raise the awareness of police training and resources to deal with the reports of all missing aboriginal women without discrimination. I know that's a perception in our society and I know it's a perception here locally in some instances. There are a lot of people — I participated in the search for Angel Carlick, walked up and down the riverbank and it was a difficult thing to do, to know that there was a young woman out there — aboriginal or not — who needed to be found. There were tragic circumstances around that and the search went on for many, many weeks and many, many months, but there were concerns that the agencies responsible did not respond quickly enough.

It doesn't matter whose daughter it is or whose sister it is, or whose granddaughter it is.

As the Minister of Justice said, we have to honour their lives and know that their lives meant something. It's not for any of us, or any agency responsible for initiating a search for a missing person, to decide how soon you should respond. These are important matters, and these missing people — missing women, missing girls — all have families and their lives all mean something and it doesn't matter who they are, or where they come from.

The other pieces of the project are to increase public knowledge and understanding at a national level of the impact of violence against aboriginal women, which often leads to their disappearance or their death. The first phase of this is going to conduct ongoing research and gather that statistical information on violence against aboriginal women and investigate the root causes of violence against aboriginal women. The research so far proves that there are more than 582 missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls in this country.

Mr. Speaker, just recently on the national news, just this past weekend, there was another report of a body found in British Columbia along the Yellowhead Highway, also known as the Highway of Tears. It's the third body that has been found in that area in recent times. It just shows that this person obviously disappeared but wasn't being looked for. What does that say about our society?

The body had been there for quite some time and they don't know who it was. They're awaiting the forensic analysis



and evidence to determine who it was, but how can we as a society ignore the fact that somebody has gone missing?

Sisters in Spirit work closely with families to ensure that their experiences, as well as the recommendations they have for dealing with these issues, are well documented and, above all else, focus on restoring the memory of their loved one to document the fact that these people did have families, they were cared about, and that their lives did have meaning.

There are many statistics and you can analyze them any which way you want and they're all atrocious. A Canadian woman is assaulted sexually every three minutes. One in five women will be a victim of sexual assault in her lifetime — one in five. 55 percent of women report having experienced sexual or physical assault in their lifetime. Women are four times as likely as men to fear for their lives. Women are three and a half times more likely to be murdered by a male spouse than vice versa. Eight out of 10 victims of spousal violence are most likely to be women. And, as has been stated by other members in this House, spousal assault is more prevalent in northern Canada, with the Yukon and the Northwest Territories statistics being the highest in Canada for common assault against women. And three times as many aboriginal women suffer from spousal assault than non-aboriginal women.

The thing about all these statistics is that statistics are based largely on reporting, and many women in our society have had bad experiences with their community, with law enforcement agencies, with health care facilities — whatever. If you've had a friend who has experienced an assault — a sexual assault or a physical assault — and made a complaint about it, and it has been trivialized and it hasn't been responded to adequately, you're less likely to report it. So all of these statistics are based on what's reported. I think the question is: how many incidents or acts of violence aren't being reported, and what can we do about them? What are the causes of the violence against women, and specifically against aboriginal women?

In many societies, not just here in Canada, there is a cultural belief that women should be subordinate to men. That's not something that I believe in, and I don't believe that it is something that Canadians in general believe in. We are all equals in society. Women should be equal to men. Aboriginals should be equal to anybody else. Ethnic minorities come to this country to make a life for themselves. They should be treated as equals as well. So there are those cultural beliefs that are largely founded in what I would term "Stone Age beliefs" — that women should be subordinate to men. There are racial prejudices against all aboriginals, against ethnic minorities, but specifically, in this instance, what we are talking about is aboriginal women. And in many cases this is hidden from view, from society in general. It's because it's not reported; it's because people don't feel comfortable going to report it because they don't feel that they're going to be listened to, that they are going to be heard and that something is actually going to result from their reporting it.

We have to look at issues, other causes, such as poverty. That can be inequality of wages, inequality of social standing, which quite frankly this society and our legislation don't allow for. It leads to homelessness; it leads to substance abuse and it

leads to physical and psychological abuse. It becomes an inter-generational thing as children learn that it is acceptable, because they've witnessed it and it has become a cultural norm. We have to turn that around. It's also an issue of dependency of women in their relationships and the denial of access to their family income, which causes them an inability to leave. It is about economic inequality; it's about the fact that they can't get jobs that pay the same as men.

So what can we do? There have been a number of solutions talked about. Education — we need to educate our children; we need to educate the public; we need to educate adults that this is not acceptable. We as politicians have to demonstrate that we are not going to tolerate abuse in any form. We all have a role to play, and we have to model that behaviour. We have to speak up when we witness violence against women — violence against aboriginal women; we have to speak out, not just here in this Legislative Assembly, but when we're walking down the street and we witness it happening; we need to have some compassion for people and their situation.

We need more long-term, sustained funding for women shelters, women centres and second stage-housing. Now that's not the answer to the problem of violence against women, but it will give those women some comfort that they have a place to go where they can feel safe, where they feel safer than in the relationship that they are in, or where they are suffering that abuse. It's not the answer to the question; it's not the solution to the problem. The solution to the problem is to encourage the public to take a stand against bullying and verbal abuse and physical violence. Every day, not just on October 4, or not just on December 6, or any other day that we have that commemorates issues like this. This is something that you have to do every day. We're all fallible; everybody trips up sometimes, but you have recognize your mistakes and you have to believe that we can make a better society.

We need to support more public discussion about this issue, and education, and we need to support the discussion and the recommendations that are going to come forth from the policing review. I don't want to predetermine what's in the policing review that's coming, but I'm hoping that there is some real, concrete action. This is one of the most pressing issues facing this territory, this country and our society.

We need to ensure the emotional and psychological security for women reporting and charging violent offences so that they are comfortable with reporting those offences and that action is actually taken to deter this from happening any further.

I know my time is limited; there is much that could be said; but I think what really needs to be said is that, as a society, we need to take responsibility for this issue. We need to turn it around. It's not necessarily — I mean, it is about providing services to battered and abused women, but ultimately the only way that we're going to deal with this is to end that violence. We have to show society that these women's lives meant something and that's what Sisters in Spirit is about: it's about recognizing that these people were members of our society and that their lives meant something, not just to their families, but to their communities and to the world in general, that they had

something to contribute, and so Sisters in Spirit is about their memory, but it reminds us every day that we need to do something to end the violence. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Kenyon:** When you look at this motion, violence against anyone is unacceptable, period. That's the simple statement. Whether it is directed against children, or women, or men, or seniors, or people with disabilities, visible minorities, orientation or anyone else — it's all basically unacceptable, but violence against women affects all of Canadian society and perhaps gets most of the word out, I suppose, and that's perhaps a good thing.

It occurs in public, family, and intimate contexts and can be experienced by a woman at any age and any stage of their lives. "Violence against women is a complex matter that is linked to women's equality in society." Ethnicity, culture, age, relationship type and economic status can all affect the rate and impact of violence against women.

The statistical indicators in this case provide a partial portrait of women's experiences of violence. There was a report done in 2002 on indicators, and I'll try to get to that in more detail, but important advancements have been made in the availability of data, specifically on aboriginal women and the women in northern territories — I include all three — criminal harassments, sentencing outcomes, the availability of victims services, victims' use of these services — however, gaps do remain in all of this data and are required to paint a complete picture of the nature, extent and impacts of violence against women.

I try to paint this in a broader picture: in my experience working as an auxiliary member of the RCMP, I can remember coming upon a couple in a heck of a good fight on Second Avenue. The member I was with knew the couple. For a moment there was more of a struggle than anything else, and it became relatively apparent that it was the woman beating the heck out of the man. They were well-known to police. We broke it up and sent them in different directions. There are different aspects to violence, and this is why I have to emphasize that violence of any sort is wrong.

But we do need more detailed data for diverse groups of women in the population — visible minority groups, immigrants, aboriginals, northern and homeless women. We need more information on sexual assault victimization. We need more information on perpetrators of violence, and attitudes and perceptions of violence among Canadians. People have to understand the economic costs of violence, and that is a factor, even though sometimes that may seem to be a crass way of quantifying it, but I think people have to understand that that may be, in some families, a huge economic factor.

There are other forms of violence, such as trafficking of persons. We like to think that maybe we don't see that in the Yukon, but I am suspicious that probably somewhere under the surface there are examples there.

So this set of statistical indicators addresses the major areas on concern on violence against women, "including severity and prevalence, impact, risk factors, institutional and community-based responses and victims' use of services...."

In terms of severity, and prevalence, the data should indicate, and has indicated, that women are more likely than men to be victims of the most severe forms of spousal assault, as well as spousal homicide, sexual assault and criminal harassment. Following evidence of decline, and a lot of the statistics in the early days did show a decline, particularly up to around the early 1990s, the most recent surveys suggest that there has not been a significant change since 1999 and that's very disappointing.

The past decade has witnessed a general decline in the number of spousal homicides — maybe that's good news — but the downward shift may be partly attributed to institutional and community-based responses, a diminished tolerance for violence against women and improvements in women's socio-economic status. Additional data is also needed to answer the questions of whether violence against women has decreased for all sub-groups of the population and whether interventions efforts have really made a difference. Governments and communities have responded to violence by providing shelters, treatment programs for abusers, specialized domestic violence courts and other victim services.

The victimization survey suggests that there has been a rise in the percentage of spousal assaults reported to the police since 1993, although this stabilized again between 1999 and 2004. A similar pattern was shown for seeking help from other services. Data from Victim Services indicate that two-thirds of clients they serve are female victims of sexual assault, partner violence, or stalking, which is certainly part of this. These are an indication not only of the impact of violence on individuals, but of the direct and indirect costs to society.

The risk factors identify young women as being particularly vulnerable to criminal harassment, sexual assault, and spousal homicide. One of the most important risk factors of physical or sexual violence against women in relationships is the presence of emotional abuse. This type of abuse, including jealous and controlling behaviour, the use of verbal bullying and financial abuse provides a significantly stronger predictor of violent behaviour toward women in relationships than does alcohol abuse or — I should mention — income or education. It's a much stronger predictor.

Women living in common-law unions are at a higher risk of assault and homicide by their partners than married women. Separation can also increase the risk of violence and potentially trigger homicide for women in violent relationships.

Ultimately, the impact of violence against women is felt by everyone, either directly or indirectly. Ongoing collection and analysis of reliable statistical data is important for monitoring the prevalent risk factors and intergenerational impacts of violence. Data such as these indicators are intended as a useful tool for all levels of government and all orders of government, as well as non-governmental groups, for tracking change over time, highlighting new and emerging issues, and developing legislative policy and program responses to help prevent violence and to assist women.

Now, why focus on women? As I mentioned before, they perhaps experience violence more commonly; "however, particularly intimate partner violence and sexual assault, repre-

sents a unique aspect of the wider social problem of violence, and requires specific attention and solutions. Individual experiences of violence against women must be assessed against the backdrop of historical, social, political, cultural and economic inequality of women.”

Now, as I mentioned, there is a lot of qualitative analysis and evidence indicating that the violence is linked, one way or another, to inequalities or power imbalances in society. “As a rule, women’s experiences of violence will vary depending on the impacts of gender and other factors such as the woman’s race... her sexual orientation,” — that’s certainly part of it — “her age, her cultural, educational and economic status, as well as her experiences of dislocation or colonization.” So these are all things that have to be looked at. “Women who face discrimination on various grounds are more vulnerable to violence and abuse and face greater barriers when seeking services.” I think we’ve all come to that conclusion.

Now, there was what’s referred to as the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in 1995, and I will quote and read this: “Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms ... Violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women’s full advancement.”

Interesting statement — but, really, “Violence against women in society seriously affects the ability of women to achieve equality. It is not only the incidence of violence against women which limits women’s lives, but the fear of violence which affects their daily existence, how they dress, where they go, with whom they associate, and their mode of transportation.” — a lot of different factors that have to be dealt with on a daily basis. “Violence against women continues to be a significant and persistent social and economic problem in Canada with serious impacts on our health, justice and social services systems.

“The focus on violence against women does not deny or diminish the rate of violence against men....” Again, this is a two-sided sword, so to speak. All orders of government must struggle with this. I can’t follow this line of discussion very far because there are court cases pending that I can’t discuss, but it certainly affects both sides. “...women represent the vast majority of sexual assault victims, and spousal assaults experienced by women tend to be more severe overall, more frequent and cause more serious physical injury and psychological harm.”

Now the Supreme Court of Canada is another place to look to see where the law sits on this. In a 1990 decision of *R. v. Lavallee*, the majority of the Supreme Court of Canada made the following comments concerning the gravity of domestic violence against women. “The gravity, indeed the tragedy of domestic violence, can hardly be overstated. Greater media attention to this phenomenon in recent years has revealed both its prevalence and its horrific impact on women from all walks of life. Far from protecting women from it, the law historically

sanctioned the abuse of women within marriage as an aspect of the husband’s ownership of his wife and his ‘right’ to chastise her. One need only recall the centuries-old law that a man is entitled to beat his wife with a stick ‘no thicker than his thumb.’” This is from our Supreme Court of Canada.

What do we mean really by “violence against women”? Again, I think we have to look at a wider definition than we would ever utilize — perhaps a dictionary definition. It’s a continuum; it’s not a single event or a single thing. It is “a continuum ranging from psychological abuse such as put-downs, to severe physical violence including murder. In its broadest sociological sense, violence against women is an abuse of power that results in harm to women, including acts of psychological and financial abuse, physical and sexual assaults, gang rape, trafficking...and sexual harassment in schools or workplace.” Again, a complete spectrum.

Interestingly, “There is no specific offence of violence against women or spousal assault in the *Criminal Code*.” It’s a rather interesting fact. “The provisions of the *Code* that most commonly apply to cases of violence against women include the offences of assault, sexual assault, criminal harassment, forcible confinement, death threats and homicide. The *Criminal Code* itself does, however, make specific reference to spousal abuse and gender bias as aggravating or mitigating circumstances that should be considered in imposing sentences for offenders.” But it really doesn’t appear otherwise in the *Criminal Code*. “Civil legislation is in place in Yukon, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island to provide emergency protections and remedies to victims of spousal assaults” but the *Criminal Code* itself stands silent on this.

Indicators — we need to look at some of the good indicators. “Societal indicators are representations or proxy measures of a particular social phenomenon that can serve as benchmarks to chart progress or social change. Governments today are looking increasingly to empirical fact and analysis to inform their decision-making, both to take stock and to help priorities for the future.”

As I have said before in the House, deal with data, deal with fact; anybody can make it up as they go, but we have to deal with fact.

“The social concerns most often identified with violence against women include changes in the prevalence over time, identifying correlates of violence to better intervene and target prevention efforts; and improving institutional responses to help victims and provide treatment to the offenders. Indicators are intended to tell us something about these concerns and to monitor trends over time.” This is sort of the analysis that has to be done on this.

“The key to the development to any system of indicators is to select those that will best approximate the phenomenon under study. Validity is therefore the most important selection criterion.”

Other important selection criteria should be meaningful and should be examined in more detail.

They should be unambiguous, and relatively easy to interpret — sometimes much easier said than done.

“Indicators should be factors that have a clear relevance to policy makers, service providers, and stakeholders.

“Indicators should be timely, available at regular intervals, and sensitive to change. They should be able to assess whether an improvement or deterioration has taken place with respect to a given concern. They “should reveal the specific circumstances of different population groupings” — between women and men, youth, or aboriginal and non-aboriginal people. They “should be available at different geographic levels...”: urban versus rural — always quite different, which, to a large degree, is why many of us are living in the Yukon, but specific to provinces, to regions, to language groups, to any of these things — you would need to look at those sorts of indicators to be really relevant to policymakers. “The number of indicators should be comprehensive but limited to prevent information overload and to facilitate data management and the comparison of results.”

Data is nice — you could have huge amounts of data, but you have to interpret it, manage it and compare it and deal with it.

“Too few indicators would be inadequate to give a broad and reasonably full view of the concern being measured, whereas too many would be unwieldy and difficult to interpret.”

“The selected indicators should reflect key aspects of the issue such as prevalence, populations at risk, and availability of support ....”

Why develop these indicators specifically for women? This is really what we’re talking about. Initiatives that do address these factors, of course — and we’ve mentioned them many times in the House — are shelters for abused women — Kaushee’s immediately comes to mind — sexual assault centres and crisis lines, other community-based counselling assistance services. I mentioned Kaushee’s, but certainly we can’t leave out the others in the territory — the Help and Hope for Families Society in Watson Lake. You need to coordinate inter-agency committees in many different communities. One of the challenges we have, of course, is that in a small community everyone knows where the shelter is or where people go. You might establish a good shelter in a small community and find that most women leave for Whitehorse anyway. You’ve got to sort of examine those sorts of things. You have to limit — and this is a huge challenge — the use of voluntary intoxication as a defence for offences. Saying you’re drunk just doesn’t cut it. It just simply doesn’t in my opinion.

“Introducing charging and prosecution policies in sexual assault cases; training for police and Crown prosecutors;” — I think this is a big part now of what the RCMP looks at. There has been, obviously, a very radical change to RCMP members, and I mean that in the sense of large numbers of retirements, and a lot of the members are significantly a lot younger than they used to be. They are getting promoted significantly at a younger age and so the training becomes a huge thing — and introducing civil domestic violence legislation. I could go on and on, on this subject. It’s obviously a big thing and something that has to be really looked at in great detail. So I certainly support the motion and I hope everyone in this House supports it.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Much has already been said today regarding Motion No. 1173, and I can agree with much that has been said. I don’t want to repeat everything that has been said, but there are some things that need to be repeated.

First of all, I want to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing forward this motion for debate. The member indicated that we, in opposition, question the value of these Wednesday motion debates. That is not correct; we question the value of some that are clearly infomercials and some that are clearly partisan.

This motion, however, speaks to an important issue and we are pleased to be joining in the discussion. For it isn’t really a debate. There is much agreement and little on which we disagree, so we shouldn’t characterize it as a debate, but it is a very important discussion. The Member for Klondike listed much of the important work that is ongoing, as did several of the other speakers. The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, my colleague, stressed the benefits of a comprehensive and holistic interdepartmental plan to address the issue of violence against women and I agree with him. The Women’s Directorate minister says this is already underway and we encourage her to continue with this initiative and this approach.

Mr. Speaker, the Sisters in Spirit initiative is a national initiative, as has been noted. It was developed through the Native Women’s Association of Canada, which is a coalition of aboriginal women’s organizations. It incorporates five years of research, education and policy development. Its goal is to raise public awareness of missing and murdered aboriginal women and the sexual and racial roots of that violence. As has been stated already, the initiative has so far identified 582 missing and murdered aboriginal women in Canada.

There have been a number of local events in Yukon, most of which have already been listed today, in partnership between the Yukon Aboriginal Women’s Council, Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, Les EssentiElles, the Yukon government, the RCMP, and many others. It is a shocking statistic that of the 22 cases the Sisters in Spirit have identified in the Yukon, only six were ever reported in the news. This means that 16 cases existed in anonymity as just statistics to all Yukoners except those who were intimately aware of their missing family members. I’ll come back to that shocking fact shortly. The fact that when the Sisters in Spirit examined murders of women over an eight-year period, they found that 10 percent of those killed were aboriginal, although only three percent of the population is aboriginal. This is both shocking and shameful. The fact that murders of aboriginal women are less likely to be solved; that across Canada 85 percent of murders are solved, but only 53 percent of the murders of aboriginal women are solved, is shocking and also shameful.

This statistic may be associated with issues of poverty, as we know that our aboriginal population across Canada has a higher percentage of people living in poverty and, sadly, our society disenfranchises the poor in many ways. These statistics underscore this, and are perhaps the most tragic consequence of issues associated with poverty.

A little while ago, I mentioned that it is tragic to mention these numbers as statistics, and it is unacceptable to allow these people to remain only a statistic — a number on a page. Every one of these missing and murdered women was someone's daughter, sister, mother, or friend. In fact, no doubt they were most or all of these things to different people who miss them, and always will. I refer to two articles that appear recently in the *Yukon News* on this subject. The first was about Angel Carlick. The article interviewed Angel's mother and noted that she disappeared on May 31, 2007, just days before her graduation from Porter Creek Secondary School. I attended Angel Carlick's graduation, even though she couldn't. I remember when her name was called out and her photo appeared on the screen. Having known many Carlicks over the years in the North, particularly from Atlin families, I wondered whether Angel was the daughter of one of those families.

I remember wondering why she had missed her graduation, not yet being aware of her disappearance. It turns out that I didn't know Angel's mother, but Angel wasn't just a statistic; she was her mother's pride and joy. Angel hadn't had an easy life but she had persevered and earned her diploma. She should have been at her graduation. She had friends and a family who loved her and who continue to miss her. She will not be forgotten. Her name is now forever associated with our need to do more to create a safe haven for youth at risk and that will be her legacy.

Mr. Speaker, the other article talks about the late Barbara Jean Jack who went missing from a group home in Whitehorse some 37 years ago. I do know that family, and they certainly missed Barbara Jean. She, too, was much more than a statistic. She, too, was missed and mourned by her family. The point is that 582 is much more than a number. It represents 582 precious children who were once the delight of their parents and siblings and extended families.

It represents hundreds, perhaps thousands, of grieving friends and relations — mothers, grandmothers, fathers, grandfathers, siblings, sons and daughters. It represents an unacceptable failure of our society, not just in Yukon but across Canada, to deal effectively with the issue of missing, abused and murdered aboriginal women and, indeed, women of all ethnic origins. It represents an unacceptable prevalence of racism within our society, despite our heartfelt denials that this exists in any of us in this Assembly.

We commend this motion, but we also commend the Sisters in Spirit and the need to eradicate violence against aboriginal women, violence against all women and the racism and poverty and misogyny that underlie the statistics that we've talked about today. Let's continue to support the Sisters in Spirit, Les EssentiElles, the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, the PSAC Regional Women's Committee, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, the Yukon Status of Women Council, the Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, the Elizabeth Fry Society, the Yukon Association for Community Living, the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon, the Dawson City Women's Shelter, the Help and Hope for Families Society — the Watson Lake transition

home; Kaushee's Place, the Yukon women transition home; the RCMP and all others who are working to end this tragic issue of violence against women, of missing or murdered women, of missing or murdered aboriginal women in Yukon and across Canada.

The existence of so many organizations that are working on this speaks to how terrible a problem this is and how much our society does care about these women, but the work is not done, so I will support this motion and I thank the Member for Klondike for bringing it forward today.

**Hon. Mr. Lang:** I would like to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing Motion No. 1173 forward to the House here today, recommending that this House recognize and support the important work of projects like the Sisters in Spirit campaign in raising awareness of violence against women and addressing its devastating impact on all of our communities throughout Canada, and specifically the Yukon. In our discussions this afternoon there have been a lot of comments made by the members, both in the opposition and the government on the resources and the impact that this has on our society.

As a community, it affects all of us. You only have to read the newspaper in the territory to see that it goes on; it's almost a weekly basis that this kind of violence is a thing that goes on in our communities; and it is something that we have to address as a community. The education component to this is very important. The family is very important in this issue, too, that the families have a healthy outlook on the family and also the responsibility of the family to make sure people are educated, that children are educated from an early age, to do the job and to be aware that this is not an acceptable way of treating your fellow citizens in your community or your family members. These are things that fall under education, whether it's in the family or in society: that people have to have education and they have to lead by example.

I hope that with the resources the government has put into women's organizations and other organizations, this is one avenue where we can work toward eliminating violence against women.

We are very aware of the aboriginal women component to the problem of violence, but violence also affects all of our society and all of our communities, whether it is aboriginal, First Nation or otherwise. It is an education issue. When this government was elected, when the Liberal government was defeated in 2002, the first thing we did was reinstate the Women's Directorate. We thought it was very important that women had a voice in government and that the Women's Directorate would be the tool that could be used as a voice in government.

The previous government didn't feel that way. They had taken the Women's Directorate and absorbed it into other departments, but we as a government made that crucial decision to activate the Women's Directorate. In looking back on that decision, that probably was one of the better decisions that our government made on the social side of the ledger, because it is

an important component to what this government does on a daily basis.

We've had debates in the House on resources for different avenues, for different support agencies, whether it's violence against women, secondary housing, housing for youth, or housing for other individuals in our communities and in our society. Yukon Housing has done a stellar job over the last eight years of putting together the almost 160 more units that are out there today from when we acquired government in 2002. Kudos to Yukon Housing Corporation for filling that void. The resources put toward that endeavour is money well-spent.

As I drive through the communities today and see the new apartment complex going up in Dawson, whether we go to the senior complexes in Faro, Haines Junction, Watson Lake, Teslin now, and as you drive through our city here, you'll see a lot of investment on the ground in housing, in social housing, whether it's seniors or other housing, to add to the inventory we have in the territory but also to be conscious of the responsibility we have as a community to make sure that we answer some of the needs of the less fortunate.

If we were to look at some interesting figures on investments on the ground, these are some of the highlights in the budget items. Let's just narrow the focus down this afternoon; my address is looking at the investment in women's housing. The funding has been increased consistently every year since 2004-05. In 2009-10, funding for women's shelters — now, we're talking about three specific shelters in three specific parts of the Yukon — Kaushee's Place has resourced just under a million dollars, \$988,000 per year; Watson Lake Help and Hope, which has been there for many years, \$415,000; and of course the City of Dawson has a \$210,000 budget. That's a total of \$1,613,000; those are the investments we make on a yearly basis in the 2009-10 budget.

Those are well-spent dollars, as the Women's Directorate is working with the local Whitehorse branch to jump-start secondary housing. That's a commitment we made as a government and we look forward to acting on that and we'll resource it accordingly as we move forward.

The prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund came into existence in the year 2004. Prior to that, no specific funding targeting aboriginal women existed in government. That fund was \$100,000 a year until the year 2009. The funding increase doubled in 2009-10. There's a \$200,000 line item for that. In addition, the funding period increased to two years — in other words, we've expanded the resources so that the group can do the good work they have to do, the prevention of violence against aboriginal women, with a line item on a yearly basis, which makes their job easier.

There are other avenues for aboriginal women organizations to work toward resources so they can do the work that they do. Women's community projects are another thing. As we move forward in the discussion this afternoon, I guess the resources that we have put toward this — as I read through it, I see that we have doubled the resources that women's organizations have access to, but also we've expanded and increased the timelines on it so that they have the resources not only for this year, but they have a two- to three-year agreement, which

makes their job easier as they move forward with planning and putting the work that they do out into the community.

As we talked about this afternoon, the Sisters in Spirit — missing or murdered aboriginal women — the murder situation that goes on over Highway No. 37 and Highway No. 16 has been an ongoing issue for many, many years. It is a concern to us as a society and to the individuals who live and work in the area where most of these crimes have been committed. The local police, the RCMP, have been investigating this for many, many years. The number is staggering when you look at the number of individuals who have gone missing over the years in that specific area — some of the victims or some of the individual have not been found, but it all leads to that specific area.

So these kinds of things that go on in our community we have to be aware of on a daily basis because, as members have said in the House today, they shine a light on all of us; this kind of situation, this kind of targeting of a specific part of our community — in this case, the majority are aboriginal women who go missing in our community — reflects on all of us. It reflects on families, which is certainly understandable, but we as a society have to do more to make sure that these kinds of things do not become the norm and that we respect individuals — whether it's violence against aboriginal or non-aboriginal, it's unacceptable.

As we move forward into the oncoming years, and the education and the work that's being done now to address this issue, the Minister of Justice and the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate was very thorough in her review of what the departments are doing. She also talked about what other departments are doing and what the Women's Directorate is doing in partnership with government. I compliment her and her staff on how much work they have done to draw in government and to make sure that government is aware of the responsibility that we all have — as a government and as elected members here in the House — and as a society.

The job is not done. Whatever we do today is an investment in the future, but there's still more to be done. If you were to look at our communities over the last 10 or 20 years, I would hazard a guess that we are getting better, that we are talking about these issues here in the House and there's more talk about these issues out in the general public. When I was growing up in the communities here in the territory, there was not discussion about this issue. I am not sure whether it was an issue that was suppressed intentionally by individuals, but we didn't hear about the incidents that were happening in our communities as much as we do today. As we talk about these issues as a community or as a society, I think we accept that it is going on and that we have to do something about it as a community. Certainly, as we all stand up as a community with one voice and say that this is not acceptable, and as we put on more and more pressure and more and more education in place to make sure that individuals understand that this is not an acceptable lifestyle, it does have an impact on decisions made by individuals who would do these kind of things. I think as we make it more and more unacceptable to do certain things in our society, it seems to trickle down. It seems to have an effect on individuals who tend to do these kinds of things.

Violence against women, violence against people or individuals in our community, is not acceptable. I imagine it's not acceptable to the majority of the individuals in this House and I am sure if you ask the majority of people in the territory if violence is acceptable, they would say that it is not acceptable.

As we move forward with education and resources, and make sure that we have the tools in place for individual victims of this kind of lifestyle — in other words, secondary housing, the investment we make in women's organizations and working with aboriginal groups, whether aboriginal groups or government — we must make sure that they have the proper resources to make possible the education and proper decisions in their own lives. I would say that in the upcoming years, it will become less and less acceptable to have these kinds of things go on. The consequences have to be in place to make sure that individuals who live and do these kinds of things see that there is a price to pay.

Our community has changed in many ways. We used to be able to drink and drive in our community. If you told somebody today that that was going on, they would just laugh and say, "That's crazy." That was something that was acceptable. Something else that was acceptable years ago was smoking. Smoking was an acceptable way of life, and 90 percent of the people in the territory smoked. It's not acceptable now, through society, to smoke in the public or smoke where it affects other individuals. You see less and less people smoking. That in itself is societal change where we decided as a community that that wasn't acceptable for our society, whether for a health reason or otherwise, to have smoking in public places, smoking around children or the many other rules that are in place. That has been effective because we, as a society, have gone out and said, "No, that's not acceptable. It's not acceptable to smoke in my house." I'm sure that most individuals who live in the territory today, if they do smoke, go outside and have a cigarette, but they understand the simple fact that it isn't acceptable to smoke in public places. Those kinds of things change because society changes. When we talk about this motion this afternoon, we have to change society.

We have to make sure that this kind of lifestyle or this kind of impact that we have on our communities, whether First Nation issues or non-First Nation issues — this is not acceptable. As a community, if we can lead here in the territory on an education level and come back with a common voice and say, "No, that isn't acceptable. There is a price to pay and it isn't acceptable to live a life where other people suffer like they do because of the impact it has on the whole." It has an impact on all of us. It has that impact, so we as a community have to stand up and accept the responsibility that these kinds of things go on in our community.

As one here this afternoon, I thank the Member for Klondike for bringing this forward. I really hope that as we move forward from this motion today, we can speak in a common voice and say that no, this isn't acceptable, that we have the education and work with our partners out there to make sure that we do talk in a common voice so that the community will not accept these kinds of actions or this lifestyle or this kind of

impact that is brought to the community by individuals or groups that think this is acceptable.

So thank you for the few minutes I have had on this. An individual could talk about this all afternoon, but I think that we've covered most of our bases here this afternoon. Again, I remind everybody that it's not just conversation; it's what we do out there as a community, so once again, thank you.

**Mr. Inverarity:** I would like to thank the Member for Klondike for bringing forth this motion this afternoon for us to debate. I think that as we get into it, I know that a lot of the issues have been brought forward already this afternoon. Unfortunately, I am probably going to have to play the good guy, bad guy here a little bit, but I think that it's worthwhile getting into it a little bit here.

I think that the Minister of Justice, the Minister for Pelly-Nisutlin, summed it up with a few of the words that she said this afternoon when she said that it's about honouring the lives of murdered and missing aboriginal women. That's what this motion is all about.

I may be paraphrasing her a bit. I tried to copy it down as she was saying it, but the general gist was that this was about aboriginal missing women, it's about spousal abuse, it's about a lot of things. But I think I would like to thank the Minister of Justice for her words this afternoon. I know that they were very, very heartfelt. I've listened to a lot of individuals here this afternoon, and I know the words that were spoken by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. If I can quote a few of his words this afternoon, I think it would be worthwhile coining them also, as we get into this very serious discussion.

When he said, "In my opinion, educating school-aged children throughout their primary and secondary years about violence will undoubtedly save and pay dividends later in lowering homeless and poverty numbers, court costs, violence prevention and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker. Having a comprehensive and holistic interjurisdictional, interdepartmental plan is required, and I just wanted to ask that fairly large, conceptual question to each and every minister on how he or she sees his or her department moving forward with this concept. I would also like to see a consistent, long-term, monumental movement of all levels of government to address this issue of the violence against women. I think we can do more."

I think those two individuals who spoke so articulately here this afternoon have summed up a lot of the issues around this particular motion, and I think it's important at this point in time that we actually reread the motion that has not been read since the Member for Klondike brought it forward here early this afternoon — I won't get into the time — after Question Period. The motion moved by Mr. Nordick:

"THAT the House recognizes and supports the important work of projects like the Sisters in Spirit campaign in raising awareness of violence against women and addressing its devastating impact on communities."

I think it's good that we reread that motion so that it brings us back to the focus of what we're discussing. I know that the third speaker we had here this afternoon — actually, the fourth speaker — the Member for Mount Lorne was very, very articu-

late in what he said. You could feel the passion in his voice about the issues that were near and dear to his heart, and that violence against women is something that we should not stand for, and cannot stand for, in the society we have. I think that the motion itself sums up how we should be feeling about this, so I'd like to also thank the Member for Mount Lorne for the comments he made.

Now, I know that the Member for Porter Creek North — he and I usually get into a bit of scrap here over issues in the afternoon. But I would even like to thank him this afternoon for the comments that he put on the floor. They were articulate, they were clear, they were concise. I think that while they were heavy on some of the statistics, that's his way of dealing with the issues. I think it's important that we acknowledge and thank that member also for what he has said here today. I'd also like to thank the Member for Copperbelt for articulating his feelings about violence against women. And also, I suppose, although he tried to digress a little bit here this afternoon in terms of what he was doing, the Member for Porter Creek Centre was also very concerned about violence against women in the area.

I guess the one concern that I have here as I speak this afternoon was the way the mover of the motion articulated his concerns here this afternoon. I was quite concerned at the beginning, as I sat and listened to how he brought forward his arguments. He encouraged us all in fairness to debate this motion; to bring it forward and to try not to make it how sometimes these Wednesdays get to be. So I was a little concerned about the approach that the member was taking and, as I played a little bit of the bad person here, I suppose, I wrote down two thoughts that came to me when I listened to the Member for Klondike. I'm not going to dwell on these, but I'm going to read the thoughts that I had because, clearly afterward, the members who did speak articulated their concerns about violence against women and stayed on topic. I thought that was important and commendable and I think it needed to be stated here.

The first note that I wrote: this issue is about violence against women, it's not about partisan politics. It's not about how much money is being spent by individual departments; it's not about how good we are, or how bad we are, or what we do as a government; this motion is about violence against women and it should be the focus of what we are talking about today.

The second point that I wrote down: for this government to use violence against women as a platform to promote themselves is actually an insult to women. That was the second point that I wrote down here this afternoon. I am not going to dwell on these long because I know that the Member for Klondike takes these issues seriously, and for him to talk and articulate the great things that the Yukon Party has done, or supposedly done, over the course of its mandate, and to break down the issue of violence against women about how much money the department has spent, or not spent, is really a bit shameful, quite frankly. I think that this issue deserves more than that.

This morning when we were in our office, I had an opportunity —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

### Point of order

**Speaker:** On a point of order, Member for Lake Laberge.

**Mr. Cathers:** On a point of order, I think the Member for Porter Creek South just referred to another member's comments in the House as being shameful, and I think that is a breach of our Standing Orders.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** Although I agree that the characterization is unparliamentary, I don't believe that I've ever made a ruling on that term, "shameful". I think it's a fairly wide, encompassing term, and I think in this context it may have been, although perhaps inappropriate, not necessarily out of order. You still have the floor, Member for Porter Creek South.

**Mr. Inverarity:** If I have stepped over the line, I apologize, Mr. Speaker. It was not my intention.

As I was saying earlier, I had an opportunity to talk to a young lady this afternoon. Just a brief conversation; it was about the motion this afternoon. She advised me, or I sort of knew that she in fact had grown up on the Highway of Tears, and she said when she was growing up, there was a standing policy among herself and her friends that there was no hitchhiking along the Highway of Tears because of the violence and the crimes that have taken place in that area. I think that it's important that we focus on that.

I know that we've all probably had someone in our life, someone who is perhaps near to us, who has suffered. Most likely it was a woman. I'm sure we've all met somebody, or had a friend who was perhaps raped. This kind of violence should not happen in today's society and yet it does, it still continues and we need to focus on that.

I think that when we talk about the Sisters in Spirit program — and I'm going to move on; I don't want to talk a long time this afternoon because we pretty much covered all of it. I again would like to thank those people who spoke before me for the great job they did explaining this issue, highlighting the focuses and even for the amounts of money that have been spent and the good work of the departments and the good work of all people in this House who have focused on trying to reduce violence against women.

It's easy for me to stand here as a man and talk about this; it's harder for me actually to go out and do it, because I'm not a woman, quite frankly, and it's hard to understand that perspective because of that. However, I have known individuals who have suffered at the violence it has caused in their house, or in their family or in their lives. I think it's important that we try and understand that violence that happens.

The Sisters in Spirit is a research, education and policy initiative driven by aboriginal women. Their primary goal was to conduct research and to raise awareness of the alarmingly high rate of violence against aboriginal women and girls. As a national voice for aboriginal women since 1974, NWAC believes that they are in an urgent state of affairs when it comes to the protection and safety of their sisters. Their dedicated Sisters in Spirit staff work to increase public knowledge and understand-



ing at the national level of the impact of violence against aboriginal women.

I think that, as we sit here or stand and discuss and debate violence against, not just aboriginal women, but all women, that we need to focus on how we're going to change it. For that I would like to thank the Member for Klondike, because he has brought forward some points. I just felt that the way that he did it perhaps needed to be looked at a little closer.

When we identify 582 missing women — missing or murdered aboriginal women in Canada — that number is staggering. And so in closing I would like to say at this point that we all need to try a little harder; we all need to focus on what we're doing; we need to focus on this motion; we need to raise the awareness about violence against women; and we need to find positive — I stress, positive — ways of how we can change these fundamental issues. It might be related to family, for example; we've seen, over the years, the relationship of family and family life change.

We certainly see more divorce in families; we see fewer marriages, for example, in families, or fewer marriages happening in society is probably a better way to phrase it, not saying that's the be-all and end-all, Mr. Speaker, but certainly we need to understand how it is and how we focus on society as a whole — not just men, not just women, but also children and how they are integrated into society. We need to take responsibility for our actions both within the family and outside of the family. We need to have patience and understanding; we need to have a goal of trying to make these relationships — when I say "work" — at least understand that violence is not acceptable in any relationship, but more so, how can we break that chain of violence so that we're all better off and society can continue to grow.

I know that there's an inherent dependence on government at times for them to step up to the plate and take responsibility for things like violence against women, but in reality it is each and every one of us who has to stand up and make a decision that it is an unacceptable form of behaviour.

On that, I think I'm going to draw to a conclusion. I'd like to thank again the Member for Klondike for actually bringing the motion forward. I think that's a very important one. I know the Liberal Party will be supporting this motion through the afternoon, and look forward to bringing it to a vote at some point. I know that there are a number of other speakers after me, and so I'll leave it to them to continue the good work, and to bring forward honest debate. Thank you.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I first want to open up my remarks by thanking the Member for Klondike for bringing forward this very important motion. It has been heartwarming to hear comments received by all sides of the Legislature in support of this motion. I think it's a very timely one. I think it was on October 5, that I was joined by many women and men throughout the city, from all walks of life, ages and different ethnic backgrounds. We all took part in the annual Sisters in Spirit vigil. I know that some members have made reference to this event already, but it's important to reflect upon that particular event. What I noticed, because I have taken part in that event for a

few years now, is that there was a large participation of individuals from the territory who participated in this event. That too was very well-received, because after all, this motion is about taking actions, whether it's on an individual or collective, government-wide basis in raising awareness of violence against women and children in our communities.

Next month also marks Woman Abuse Prevention Month. During the month, we also come together with community members and we take note of 14 young women who were massacred in Quebec because they were women. It is events like these throughout the year that are really important and provide an opportunity to reflect upon what is going on in our communities. Violence remains prevalent in our communities. Each of these events is held as a means of raising awareness of the violence that takes place in our communities, in our country and across the globe.

Each of these events is held as a means of remembering those who have fallen victim to violence — those who are still with us and those who are not. Of course, as has already been articulated, each of these events also gives us an opportunity to recognize those individuals who have fallen victim, and to pay tribute to those women and young girls, and to honour them for who they are and what they have contributed to our communities.

I don't want to dwell too much on the statistics, because I think that statistics are just that — they are all about numbers. The one point I did want to say today is that violence in any way, shape or form, and in all of its devastating impacts, should not be condoned and that addressing violence in our communities is not just a responsibility of government, it is not just the responsibility of an individual, it's the responsibility of each and every one of us. Through the work of governments, the work of organizations and agencies, and through the work of collectives, it is everyone's responsibility.

Half of women in Canada, over the age of 16, experience physical violence at least once in their lives. Every year, up to 360,000 children witness abuse in their homes. The statistics are staggering, and we know that in the territories — in the northern part of our country — the statistics are even more alarming, and particularly when it comes to aboriginal women, they are even higher.

The one thing I did want to say to this is that violence is a learned behaviour. It is not something we are born with; violence is learned in our homes; it's learned in the school yard; it's learned by watching each of us as individual adults; violence is learned by watching it on television and through the social media networks. It is learned on many different fronts. It is not inherent in each one of us and, in fact, we do learn by seeing others, and it does start at home. I think that has to be really well-recognized and understood.

When it comes to taking action to eradicate family violence in our communities and in our homes, it starts with education and it starts with talking and raising awareness. It is key in helping to eradicate the violence in our communities today. It takes the efforts of an entire community. It's just like raising a child these days — it takes a community to support that individual and that family. And it takes the efforts of our commu-

nity service, our agencies, our educators, our childcare operators, we as parents, health care professionals, police, women's shelters — it takes each of us as legislators to do our work to do what we can to make a difference in our communities and to stop this harsh reality from reoccurring.

Now, I know the Member for Porter Creek South has made reference to how some of the comments made by the Member for Klondike were perhaps viewed as being shameful. It is very unfortunate that the Member for Porter Creek South has taken issue with that because it was in fact his colleague, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, who also made reference to the fact that we need to elaborate on the initiatives that we are taking in this government — working with others to address violence in our communities. By explaining what has in fact occurred, what is occurring, and what needs to occur even further, that is a good thing. I think we need to learn what has occurred, what has worked, and what hasn't worked in order to move forward. I think that any time that we can talk about the initiatives taking place, it not only heightens awareness about this issue, but it also reminds us of the very good work of government, professionals, service agency providers, organizations, individuals at large in all of our communities, whether they are government or non-government, and I take the opportunity to talk about that. When individuals know what services are being offered and provided, what housing initiatives are underway, what education initiative is being undertaken, what initiatives are being undertaken in corrections when it comes to addressing addictions in our communities — it's a good thing to talk about these things.

That's why we're here — to talk about these initiatives and debate them. We may not all agree, and we may agree to disagree, but I think it's very important to have that debate, and it can only strengthen those initiatives and help inform our response to this particular issue.

One of the things mentioned that this government did do upon taking office is that we were able to reinstate the Women's Directorate. One of the key mandates of the Women's Directorate is to advance women's equality when it comes to political, social, economic, and legal equality. As I mentioned before, it's not simply the responsibility of one government department, one agency, or one individual; it's a collective. The Women's Directorate, over the last several years, has done some very good work, working with its respective stakeholders, women's organizations and giving them the tools.

At the end of the day, some of those tools mean funding to give them that stability, that secure ongoing funding. That is something that this government has worked on — three-year funding agreements through the women's equality funding program that was introduced, which was just enhanced to about \$300,000. I wanted to mention it, because I think it's really important and the impact that it's had for Yukon women, including First Nations. It's a large part in meeting our commitment to gender equality in the territory. The fund has enabled a number of several organizations throughout the territory to do good work and supports their very important work. This is work that is generated at the grassroots level; it is work that evolves from the communities, and it is work that develops

initiatives that are made for that community in response to that community's specific needs and priorities.

Again, the fund was also in response to a need identified by women's organizations for more sustained funding. Just earlier this year, we were able to award three-year funding agreements to a number of initiatives that, like the Sisters in Spirit project, work and continue to work to improve the lives of many women throughout the territory. The recipients for 2010, going into 2013, will receive a total funding allotment over three years of just under \$900,000. Funding to Liard Aboriginal Women's Society is under the direction of Travis Stewart. They received dollars — funding to design and carry out a youth violence prevention public education campaign through the cultural traditions of their communities, while building capacity to strengthen their relationships with other organizations throughout the territory and a range of other organizations supporting their mandate.

I would like to — and I know I speak on behalf of the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, who has also worked very closely with this individual — but I would like to thank Ann Maje Raider who recently retired for her tireless work on behalf of Yukon women. She is a very strong advocate for aboriginal women in the territory — and I commend her for her work.

Another organization that received just recently three-year funding was the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle under the direction of Adeline Webber, another tireless advocate who has worked really hard in the spirit of collaboration with women throughout the territory to support the establishment of a new office — a new permanent space — for the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle to administer and deliver a couple of projects funded through the northern strategy fund, one being the aboriginal women's mentorship training program and a culturally relevant gender-based analysis program.

This is really important to point out because one of the things that the Women's Directorate undertook just a very few short years ago was instigated by the National Aboriginal Women's Summit — the NAWS, in other words — which was held in Corner Brook, Newfoundland. The first-ever of its kind, it brought together politicians from all corners of the country. It brought together aboriginal women's organizations and women from all over the territory.

I know that in the Yukon we were very pleased to bring alongside representatives of the Women's Directorate and women's organizations a number of aboriginal women from all corners of the territory. That summit formed a set of recommendations for advancing women's equality. It was from those recommendations that we were able to bring that home to the Yukon to share the outcomes of the National Aboriginal Women's Summit and to be able to share that with women here at home.

It was through another organization that we were able to share and host two summits here at home, one being in Watson Lake and one being here in the City of Whitehorse. It was at that time that there were a set of recommendations coming from women from all over the territory who gathered. The participation at each of these summits was overwhelming.

Alongside the Minister of Justice, at the time, I sat in on each of these summits from morning through night. It was very powerful; it was a very powerful, collective gathering together of women talking about these age-long issues confronting women, one being violence confronting women and children.

It's really unfortunate; I could go on at great length about this very issue, but I wanted to say that steps are being taken by groups, such as Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle and Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, which just celebrated — I think it was — going on 36 years since its inauguration. They are carrying out initiatives such as the Sisters in Spirit initiative campaign. We are working with organizations like Les EssentiElles, under the direction of Ketsia Houde. They are doing good work in promoting social justice, and awareness and prevention of violence; Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, under the direction of Patricia Curtiss, another longstanding women's advocate, who has done incredible work in expanding the facilities to do their good work but also raising the bar in terms of increasing the skills of Yukon women in what has been seen in the past as non-traditional work.

Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre: providing advocacy services on behalf of women; Yukon Status of Women Council, under the direction of Charlotte Hrenchuk; Elizabeth Fry Society of Yukon, Yukon Association for Community Living, and the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council.

I don't have time to actually go through each of these organizations, unfortunately, but I did want to say that I thank each of these organizations; I thank each of the women who have contributed to the summits held here in the Yukon and for putting forward the blueprint for the road map forward. We as a government are committed to working with them in the areas of education, leadership and wellness; and those are the areas where we are taking incremental steps through these organizations, through women at large.

I just wanted to say thank you again for the good work and for taking steps to address this issue — one being to heighten awareness about this very long-standing issue that many individuals throughout the territory and this country are taking steps to address. Thank you.

**Mr. McRobb:** I'll be brief. It's very interesting listening to the submissions from various members this afternoon and I certainly don't want to take up the Assembly's time in repeating everything. There's only one aspect I would like to add and it deals with rural Yukon. I think a lot of praise has been given this afternoon to various non-profit organizations and others who help women in these situations, and I would just like to do the same for the hard-working personnel at our health care centres, also known as nursing stations, and to the dedicated people who serve on our community justice committees. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Edzerza:** First of all, I'd like to start by thanking the Member for Klondike for bringing this motion forward. Being an aboriginal man, I feel the pain very deeply and personally when I hear of my aboriginal sisters being murdered and abused, and possibly just because they are aborigi-

nal. We don't know that for sure, but there's a lot of violence against aboriginal women that needs to be addressed. I also want to put on public record that I feel ashamed when I hear of any man abusing women, not only aboriginal women, but all women. It does reflect on each and every man. It doesn't matter who commits the offence, or who does it, it does reflect on every man in the country, just because we are men. We sort of feel somewhat responsible for what's happening.

I would like to take sort of a different approach to this motion, although I do appreciate all the comments that have been made, but I feel very strongly that a lot of society is addressing this issue too far up the ladder. We are starting too far up the ladder and not going to the bottom to get at the root causes for this discussion today. I totally believe that, with regard to dealing with this issue, the repairing of the spirit is very important. It is up to every individual man to deal with the issues that have them doing the things they do daily. If there is a spousal abuse, it's up to that man to understand why he is committing this type of behaviour. No one else can do it but the individual and this is across the board, I believe. It's not only with aboriginal men. It's with all men and one must ask, why do men abuse women?

It just so happens that I conducted a workshop one time on this very topic and I asked a group of 16 men that very question. I asked, "Why do men abuse women?" I'm going to put on record some of the things that these men said. (1) They get tired of their bitching. (2) Inflict abuse in their own way because they know they can get away with it. They use the law; wives also abuse their men. (3) Women expect more. They put more responsibilities on the man. (4) Children witness it and copy their fathers. (5) Depends on how you are raised. (6) Not asked but told — power and control. (7) Sometimes women use their strong powers in a negative way. (8) Spouse blows up, the man is left with the decision to walk away or fight. At the moment, it would depend on what kind of mood the man is in; (9) He doesn't know any other way to deal with it. When a man tries to apologize, they won't accept it; (10) Always throw the past in the man's face; (11) One wants to heal, the other doesn't; (12) Could never do anything right; (13) Know how to press each others buttons; (14) Don't get to know each other before they get into a relationship; (15) Don't know anything about boundaries.

These are comments that came from a group of men, who just randomly put this out. When I hear things like this, I automatically try to understand where these individuals are at mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and I think just about every one of the men in this group who came out with these comments were at potential risk of committing spousal abuse.

Any one of these individuals, at any given time, could quite easily be before the courts for abusing their wife or their girlfriend, which is kind of scary — to take 16 people randomly and have these kinds of comments coming out of them tells me that they are very unhealthy — very unhealthy people.

Again, I want to go back to how important it is for the individual — this is an individual responsibility — to start dealing with all these things that were mentioned. I have to really thank the Yukon Party today for being so bold as to come forward with the traditional land-based treatment centre because

that, in my opinion, is one of the tools that is going to be the most important tool we're ever going to have to start addressing some of these issues of abuse.

I believe that the more we focus on this very area, the better chance we are going to have of starting to correct some of the wrongs that are happening within the family structure. I keep going back to how important it is to try to seek understanding about what it is we deal with on a daily basis. I've put it on record before and I'll put it on again, because I think it's critically important that people understand that historical trauma, if not dealt with through intervention, will destroy your future. There's not a doubt in my mind about that. We have to start being able to use some of the traditional ways to deal with a lot of these issues. In our traditional way, we know that only you know what kind of help you need. Only you can see a picture of your past. No one else can see the picture of your past except yourself.

We know that historical abuse, if not addressed, will damage your future forever and could continue to guide your daily behaviour. We still have to recognize that the First Nations people have been victims of abuse for hundreds of years with very little intervention on how to deal with historical trauma or even trauma. Without knowing that, it's no wonder that we have so much abuse against aboriginal women. We must remember that both men and women were subject to a lot of abuse in those schools. It wasn't only the men that were abused; the women were also, sexually and otherwise.

I'm going to now read something from a book that was developed by this government in 2004, which was called, *Working Without Boundaries*, an interdepartmental collaborative project with Education, Health and Social Services and Justice.

The whole intention of this booklet was to identify barriers that were between the departments that stopped or hindered progress with regard to dealing with the children. In this book, I'm going to read some observations from the Yukon courts. The cases identified below may not be typical, but in the Territorial Court's view, they reflect some common problems. Examples are neglect and abuse, and reinforce the need for effective and early intervention and coordinated responses to service delivery, et cetera, in order to prevent similar tragedies. The nature of the offences in the following cases generated considerable media attention and public discussion for a time. The case I am going to refer to is *Regina v. J.W., 1998* in Territorial Court. In this case, the offender was sentenced to four years custody for the manslaughter of his girlfriend. He was 16 and she was almost 16 years old.

Sixteen years of age — that's just about almost unbelievable. In the addendum to his reasons for the sentence, the judge spoke of this case as reflecting what is happening in families and communities. The judge noted that the offender had acute alcoholism by age 15 and the victim was drinking to excess by age 15. The judge saw no evidence of effective intervention by family, community, school system, social services or the formal justice system, and noted this scarcity of youth-focused alcohol treatment and counselling programs. The judge considered that a meaningful investigation of the offender's truancy at age 14 would have likely indicated excess abuse of alcohol,

violent behaviour and parental neglect — factors which would have justified intervention. Similarly, events in the victim's life and behaviour suggested significant concerns and a legitimate basis for intervention.

Then we go on to another case. We have *Regina v. M.N. J. 2002* in Territorial Court. In this case, the defendant, age 21, was sentenced to seven years in jail in addition to the one-year credit for the time spent in custody.

He had committed a particularly violent sexual assault and a break and enter, which, for many reasons, the judge considered to have put the offence within the worst case category. The judge reviewed the offender's background, which included difficult placements while in care, incidents of neglect, sexual abuse and physical abuse, including a five-year period in which the offender was sexually and physically abused by the uncles living in the home in which the offender lived. In considering the offender's experience while growing up, the judge stated that unless we change what we do — as families, communities and professionals — there will be many more cases. The judge considered the offender's background and offered nine recommendations, which have been briefly summarized here. The first recommendation is to ask each of us not to be defensive. My view is not that all we do is flawed, but rather that we have the potential to do much better. The second recommendation is that until we extend our understanding of what we do beyond the parameters of our responsibilities, we will not see the value of holistic responses.

So, there were nine of these recommendations. This is a public document and I would encourage all members of the House and all those listening to actually get a copy of this and go through it, because it does all these things. These two cases I cited that went through Territorial Court support exactly what I started out saying: that unless there is an intervention of some sort with individuals who have gone through a lot of historical trauma, you will never be able to minimize or address this issue to its fullest potential.

Again, I say that by the Yukon Party government starting a land-based treatment centre, I would certainly like to see it running full-time. In the future, it would be very interesting to see it after 100 years of operation, just as we have had other agencies running for that long.

What would be the results of having a full-time, land-based treatment centre in the Yukon? I think the results are going to be very favourable because I did go to this land-based treatment centre. For the first round, there were 16 women. I went and did a presentation there — a workshop for them. I asked the women at the end of the presentation how they felt about the land-based treatment centre, and I think one lady summed it up quite well. She said that she was in four different treatment centres that were run by First Nations in different areas, like Tsow-Tun Le Lum, St. Paul and Neechi in Alberta, and she said every one of those infrastructures, as fancy as they were, could not even come close to bringing the comfort that this land-based treatment centre at Jackson Lake did. She was in all three — three or four.

She had mentioned another one in the Williams Lake area. She said not one of them was as good as the one at Jackson

Lake. I also went out there for the second round, when I think there were 10 or 11 men in the group, and again, I asked the men there what they thought of Jackson Lake, and their comments sort of reflected the women's comments. I know one man there said that he got more out of the few weeks at Jackson Lake than he ever did at all the other treatment centres he had attended.

So I think this government is on the right track in addressing this issue, and now a lot of the responsibility is going to be focused fully on the men who feel they need some guidance — it's their responsibility to seek it. And I would say that Jackson Lake services all people — not only First Nations, but anyone who is willing to address historical trauma. Thank you.

**Mr. Cathers:** I rise today to speak in favour of the motion tabled by the Member for Klondike, and I appreciate him bringing this forward. I also have to note, in following the previous speaker, the Member for McIntyre-Takhini — not to minimize the issues of cyclical violence and violence within communities and alcohol and drug use that can contribute to these problems — that there is no excuse for violence against women. It doesn't matter what your personal problems are; there is no excuse for that action.

I would like to focus most of all on the importance of this issue — the importance of the good work that's done by many people in trying to deal with and eliminate violence against women. As the Member for Whitehorse West noted in her comments, some of the estimates suggest that half of women over the age of 16 experience violence at some point in their lives, and that's not acceptable; it's never acceptable.

People who support victims of violence, including volunteers, social workers, RCMP, auxiliary police officers, citizens on patrol, people within the court system, doctors, nurses and many others who try to assist those who have experienced violence all deserve to be commended for this work, as do those who try to prevent that violence from occurring in the first place.

Again, congratulations, or perhaps commendations, for those who advocate against violence against women and those include women's group and others, and the White Ribbon campaign, of course, each and every fall that identifies the importance of men speaking out against violence against women. It is important that every one emphasizes — and the members of this Legislature emphasize — that violence against women is unacceptable. Of course, violence against others, including children and men, is not acceptable either but, as other members have pointed out, there's a disproportionate amount of violence against women and that really is something that deserves specific and special attention.

In my brief comments today, I also want to commend people who speak out when they see violence in their community, who step forward, who have the courage to step out and, in some cases, speaking out against family members or friends who commit violence; those people who take the action, who raise their voices and do not remain silent deserve to be commended for their courage.

Society, communities, circles of friends and families must all condemn it, make it unacceptable and not turn a blind eye when they witness violence against women or suspect that that violence is occurring. I would also note that there was some debate earlier between members about the relevance of focusing on investments that have been made. I note that investments made by government are worth talking about because they do matter. I would also like to commend the Member for Whitehorse West and the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Health and Social Services, as well as the previous Minister of Health and Social Services, the then Member for Klondike, for the work that they've done in supporting investments in these important areas. This is something that, when I was minister, I felt was important: to increase the investments in women's shelters.

Again, talking about the investments is important because of the importance of the area. This should not be about self-congratulations; it should be about focusing on the good work that is done by department staff, by staff of these organizations, shelters and others, people who work on these projects, people who work within the system, people who are working on the front lines in dealing with this issue.

It's important that we stand here today, once again emphasizing the importance of this issue. It is important that members of this Assembly and many others within the community take part in activities, such as the commemoration of the Montreal massacre, to raise the importance of this issue, to remind everyone of the unacceptability of this activity. First and foremost, I believe it is up to families, circles of friends, communities and society as a whole to ensure that, whenever they see violence occurring, they speak out against it, and that whenever jokes are made by friends and family about this type of activity, or whenever someone makes comments that excuse violence against women, they do not let that go unchallenged.

In closing, I want to thank other members who have spoken to this today and, most importantly, thank the many volunteers, staff of this government and other governments, and many others I have failed to mention, who put themselves out on the front line, who work hard on this issue, and who give the message to all around them that violence against women is not acceptable, the devastating impact that it has on communities is not acceptable, and it must be ended.

**Hon. Mr. Rouble:** I would first like to thank all members for their heartfelt comments today and the thought, emotion, and consideration that have gone into debate. This is one of those frustrating topics that, while it's certainly not enjoyable to discuss, it's necessary to discuss; it's important to bring awareness to this issue. Seeing the time, I'll be brief in my comments today.

I've listened to all of the thoughts and comments from members here, and I really do have to appreciate now that violence against women will only come to an end when those who do the abusing stop; that abuse will stop when the abusers stop. They can have their excuses, their rationale, their rhetoric, but it doesn't hold any water for an abuser to stand up and say, "I hit you because I was mad" or "I hit you because you made

me mad" — it's ridiculous. They have to accept responsibility for their actions and the results of that.

I know a very brave lady who was hit by her spouse. She ended up having a black eye. She came to work in a public place. One of her co-workers came up to her and said, "Oh dear, we have to hide that." It was like it was her fault, that it had to be hidden away, that we couldn't talk about it. That very brave lady said, "No, I have nothing to hide. I did nothing wrong; it was him; he's the one at fault; he did this to me and the community needs to know that this is the result of it." It wasn't her fault; it wasn't anything she needed to hide. She didn't have to hang her head in shame over this. He did.

Now, we've made this issue of abuse illegal. It's against the law; it's immoral; it's pretty much against every moral code I'm familiar with, but still it goes on and it has to stop. Abuse will stop when the abusers stop, when they take responsibility for their actions, when they take responsibility to seek assistance, and change their ways and never do it again. That will bring an end to violence.

Are there interventions that we need in society? Yes, of course. We need the emergency interventions that we've heard mentioned by other speakers earlier today, and I really do applaud the work of the people at Kaushee's or Help and Hope, or the emergency shelter in Dawson do. We also have to come to the conclusion and recognize that women in Yukon don't have to stay in abusive situations. We need to increase the opportunities for success for them, whether it's assistance with housing, assistance with education, assistance with daycare, or assistance with counselling. These are all important components of this, and we've heard discussions about this today.

We have to remind women — old, young, young girls — that they have the right to live a happy, healthy, productive life, and we need to increase their opportunities for success and let them know that they do not have to stay in an abusive situation. We do have to have the abusers accept responsibility and change their ways; the abuse will stop when the abusers stop.

I appreciate the comments from other members today; I don't have much more on this one; I would like to give other members an opportunity to comment — it's just a frustrating issue.

I'm glad that we've had an opportunity to bring additional light to it and create additional awareness of it. We do have a responsibility in all facets of our society, whether it's on the individual level, the family level, the extended family, the community, the religious organizations that we're involved in or affiliated with, and finally on a territorial and political level. We all have the responsibility to address this. It's by individuals making a change in their personal lives and being vocal and not accepting it in their community that we'll make a difference that will affect the lives of all of us.

**Hon. Mr. Hart:** My comments, too, will be short, in view of the time available. I would like to also thank all the members who have commented on this situation, as well as my colleagues. I won't repeat many of the comments made. I will say that the stats do reflect an inordinate amount of abuse taking place in the aboriginal women's field, especially in the

north. I think that was brought up by several individuals here in the House today.

This is a very important issue, especially in the Yukon. It also demonstrates the need for society and the Yukon in general to take into consideration and provide action on items presented by groups such as the Yukon women's aboriginal groups, and look to other groups that provide advice to the government for ways to reduce violence and provide assistance to those women who are being victimized by their spouse or their designated other.

As mentioned here several times this afternoon, no woman deserves to be abused. My colleague, the Minister of Education, indicated very well that it's the abuser who has to be taken care of. We have assumed that abuse to women is reflected on the women, but it's something that has to be reflected upon men, in many cases, because men often are the abusers.

So that is something that has to be addressed. The responsibility of dealing with it has to be taken from the female and put more on the male, so that we can even out this process and bring greater awareness to the situation. I think we've seen several instances over the past couple of years in British Columbia alone: the Pickton case, the highway from Prince George to Prince Rupert, and all of the unclaimed situations that happen along that highway just demonstrate that we as a society have to come to grips with the situation and try to alleviate it somehow.

In the Yukon, as I said and many members here have said, we do have facilities available for these individuals, but I think the main focus has to be how we prevent violence against women. We have to look at education and the process used to highlight and indicate that it's the abuser who has to be taken into account in order to stop violence against women.

I've got much more to say on the issue, but I will sit and allow other individuals to speak on this matter. Again, I think it's a very important subject that we are discussing here today, and I'm hoping that the members will support this motion and we'll move forward.

**Hon. Mr. Fentie:** Seeing the time, it is very important that the House bring this debate to a conclusion and this motion to a vote. What we're doing here today is showing a very small element of support for groups such as the Sisters in Spirit that have taken on such a terrible burden. I don't think there's much more I could add to the debate today, Mr. Speaker. Ultimately, even with this motion, the fundamental issues become a challenge to all of us as individuals to stop violence against women. The unfortunate part is that a large percentage happens to be in aboriginal communities across this country, Yukon included.

I can only reiterate that the government and the Women's Directorate and others, including the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Society, are daily doing their best to alleviate this terrible scourge in society.

With that, I look forward to a unanimous vote on this motion. We must all continue our work in this regard.

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

**Mr. Nordick:** Once again, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to close off debate on this motion. It also gives me great pleasure to listen to all members in this Assembly speak in favour of this motion which, in the end, hopefully makes a difference across this territory and Canada in bringing this issue to the forefront of everybody's minds, opinions and thoughts.

We have to get across to everybody, and to men, that violence against women is unacceptable.

So once again I would like to thank every member for the constructive thoughts and input that they had today. Thank you.

**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.

**Hon. Mr. Edzerza:** Agree.

**Mr. Nordick:** Agree.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Agree.

**Mr. McRobb:** Agree.

**Mr. Elias:** Agree.

**Mr. Inverarity:** Agree.

**Mr. Cardiff:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yea, nil nay.

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

*Motion No. 1173 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 stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 5:25 p.m.*

**The following Sessional Paper was tabled October 13, 2010:**

10-1-179

Yukon Housing Corporation Annual Report for the year ended March 31, 2009 (Kenyon)