

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, March 20, 2012 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of International Francophonie Day

Hon. Ms. Taylor: *[Member spoke in French. Text unavailable.]*

Mr. Speaker, as the minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate, I rise today to pay tribute to all francophones in the world, in Canada and in our territory, as March 20 marks the International Francophonie Day.

Since 1999, the Rendez-vous de la Francophonie is one of many celebrations around the Journée internationale de la Francophonie on March 20 of every year. The Rendez-vous de la Francophonie is taking place until March 25 and celebrates the French language and the cultural diversity of French-speaking populations worldwide. Today, 200 million people speak French all around the world; nine million of them live here in Canada.

French language has been deeply rooted in our territory for over 150 years. It's part of our history, our culture, our identity and our future. Francophones continue to contribute greatly to the development of the Yukon and I'm proud to say that here in the territory, children can indeed be raised and live happily in French.

So on behalf of the Yukon Legislature, I invite all Yukoners to join us in celebrating the Rendez-vous de la Francophonie 2012 and the Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

I wish to thank all of those who have joined us today. I would just like extend a warm welcome to those in the Legislature who have joined us for this tribute today. We have in the gallery, among many others: Angélique Bernard, présidente, Association franco-yukonnaise; Sylvie Geoffroy, présidente, Association Espace France-Yukon; Yann Herry, coordonnateur des programmes en français au ministère de l'Éducation; Carol-Ann Gingras, membre de la communauté-franco-yukonnaise; Serge Dugas, Michel Lemaire, Jean-Marc Champeval, et Jeanne Beaudoin, direction des services en français. We also have in the Legislature Jean-Sébastien Blais, who is also with Association franco-yukonnaise.

Please extend a warm welcome to these individuals.

Applause

In recognition of Help Fight Liver Disease Month

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise in the House today because March is Help Fight Liver Disease Month. The liver helps fight off infections, neutralizes toxins, manufactures proteins and hormones, and helps control blood sugars. It is essential to life.

There are over 100 types of liver disease, only one of which is related to alcohol consumption.

While we don't know the causes of some liver disease, we do know the causes for the most common types. These are viral hepatitis, obesity, alcohol, genetics, autoimmune disorders, drugs and toxins, and cancer. An estimated 3 million Canadians live with liver disease. The most common forms of liver disease are hepatitis B and C, liver cancer, and fatty liver disease. The Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit deals with hepatitis C, which is a chronic liver disease, on a regular basis. Thanks to our association with Dr. Romanowski, an infectious disease specialist, who flies up on a regular basis to consult and treat hepatitis C sufferers, Yukoners have access to the most up-to-date testing and treatment.

The Canadian Liver Foundation has been working since 1969 to promote liver health and reduce the incidence and impact of liver disease. According to the foundation, livers are the second most frequently transplanted organ. In 2010, 74 people died on the waiting list.

The miraculous thing about the liver is that it is the only human organ that can regenerate itself. This makes liver transplants possible and means one organ donor can help save many lives. Help Fight Liver Disease Month is a means of raising awareness about liver disease and the resources available to combat it. I encourage all Yukoners to inform themselves about the risk factors and modify their lifestyles, if necessary, to ensure the health of their liver.

**In recognition of Arctic sports pioneers
(Delma Kisoun, Eddie Arey and Sam Johnston)**

Mr. Elias: On behalf of all members of the House, I stand to pay tribute to three pioneers of the Arctic sports and Dene games who were recently honoured at the 2012 Arctic Winter Games.

I will begin with my Auntie Delma Kisoun. Delma was involved with the northern games as an athlete from the age of 15 and as a coach and official for over 40 years before her passing in a tragic boating accident in 2008. Delma's favourite traditional Arctic sports included the one-foot and two-foot Alaskan high kick, arm pull, kneel jump and the airplane. Delma met a lot of talented athletes and many friends during her competitive years in Arctic sports. As a coach, Delma has supported and trained many youth in reaching their goals. Delma told stories and instructed the traditional northern games in many schools in the Beaufort Delta and in the Yukon. During her time with Arctic sports, she travelled across Canada, Greenland and Alaska, teaching and sharing the traditional games. Delma's fondest memories of these trips were meeting people from different communities who had a real interest in the northern games. The experience Delma took from the Inuit games taught her patience and teamwork. In the spirit of the games, everyone became family. The advice that Delma passed on to youth, athletes and participants is that once they mastered the games, please pass it on to the next generation and then they will know they have done something good.

We thank you, Delma, for your leadership and pioneering spirit in the Arctic sports.

Another person who has made significant contributions toward building awareness of and participation in Arctic sports

is Mr. Eddie Arey. Eddie was born in Whitefish Station in northern Yukon where he began to learn the proper techniques from his elders and gained the knowledge to teach others.

In 1978, Eddie moved to Whitehorse, Yukon from Inuvik, Northwest Territories. In 1980, he and Gerry Kisoun were approached and asked to coach and participate in the Arctic Winter Games. This would be the first time the Yukon had a contingent of athletes participate in Arctic sports at these games. Eddie brought home the first medal for the Yukon in Arctic sports in the ear-pull competition. Eddie continued on to participate in eight Arctic Winter Games and coached for a total of 14 years, and during that time he collected over 40 medals and some 2,000 pins.

Throughout his years as coach, Eddie travelled to Yukon communities to promote the games and provided demonstrations in our schools. Eddie influenced the lives of many Yukon youth. Many past athletes respect him and are grateful for the time and energy he took in teaching them the games. Not only did he teach them the techniques, but he also helped them build strength, learn patience and have respect for their competitors. The 2012 Whitehorse Arctic Winter Games committee was excited to have Eddie as the head official. We are thankful for the contributions that Eddie has made to the Arctic sports.

Finally, Mr. Sam Johnston. Sam is a well-respected elder of the Ishkaahittan Clan and of the Teslin Tlingit Council and is recognized as a founder and for his many years of coaching and developing Dena games within the Arctic Winter Games. Sam began teaching Yukon children the diverse sports of the Dena games in the 1980s. His connection with youth and the sport crossed over to coaching the Yukon Dena games teams at the Arctic Winter Games for over a decade. He played a very integral part in introducing women into the sport with their first appearance in the 2004 games in the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo.

Sam takes great pride in all the youths he has taught, and he has always believed that what is important is not so much the chance to compete as it is the chance to become proud of one's efforts. He instills in his athletes leadership qualities that include honour, trust, respect and integrity. I have also had the opportunity to learn under his tutelage in the Dene games, Mr. Speaker.

Many athletes, coaches and officials who have had the pleasure to get to know Sam over the years respect his advice, knowledge and prayers. Sam says he will coach, teach and instruct the Dene games until the Lord calls him home. Our present and future athletes and coaches of the Arctic sports and Dene games will forever owe Delma, Eddie and Sam a debt of gratitude for their vision and hard work. Thank you.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any introduction of visitors?

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, he has already been introduced, mais j'aimerais introduire mon professeur de 7^eme, 8^eme et 9^eme annie, l'homme responsable pour mon passion d'histoire, M. Yann Herry. Merci, Monsieur.

Applause

Mr. Barr: I would like to introduce my friend and neighbour, a hard worker in the community, Gisela, from Crag Lake. Welcome.

I would also like to acknowledge Don Roberts in the audience — a past minister here in the House. Welcome.

Applause

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

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I have for tabling today a letter to the other House Leaders asking their caucuses to participate in the Select Committee on Whistle-blower Protection and to confirm who their representative on that committee will be.

Mr. Elias: I have for tabling today two pieces of correspondence between me and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees? Are there any petitions? Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 41: Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I move that Bill No. 41, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act and the Condominium Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 41, entitled *An Act to Amend the Land Titles Act and the Condominium Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 41 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any other bills to be introduced? Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr. Hassard: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to continue to follow the land use planning process set out in chapter 11 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and complete the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*.

Ms. McLeod: I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to support fish, wildlife and habitat management and planning by conducting inventory projects throughout Yukon.

Ms. Stick: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to immediately begin an in-depth evaluation of the *Yukon Substance Abuse Action Plan* and all Yukon government services for alcohol, drugs and gambling addictions and to review similar programs in western Canada with a view to de-

termining their adequacy and the need for implementing new programs in the following areas:

- (1) medical and housing support for substance detoxification;
 - (2) professional and volunteer group and one-on-one counselling;
 - (3) residential treatment options including land-based facilities;
 - (4) supportive after-care services, particularly in rural Yukon;
 - (5) preventive programs, especially for children and youth;
 - (6) special needs clients such as persons affected by FASD;
 - (7) harm-reduction counselling and projects; and
 - (8) pilot projects of innovative detoxification, treatment and after-care options;
- AND to establish a Yukon addictions strategy within the present fiscal year.

Mr. Tredger: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to respond to the housing crisis looming for seniors and elders in rural Yukon by developing a comprehensive seniors and elders housing strategy through:

- (1) consulting with all stakeholders to determine a continuum of care;
- (2) ensuring that rural seniors and elders do not have to leave their home communities; and
- (3) completing this investigation by September 2012.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Environment to verify with the federal ministers of Environment, and Fisheries and Oceans that salmon and other fish stocks, migratory water fowl, and ocean mammals have not been contaminated by Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor meltdown and accordingly are safe for Canadians to consume.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to immediately take steps to invest in affordable housing projects in the territory by using the remaining \$13 million in funding that it received from the federal government years ago to development affordable housing in the territory, which the government continues to claim as savings.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Peel watershed land use plan

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, over the past six months, the Yukon Party government has repeatedly claimed that it would be irresponsible to implement the Peel Watershed Planning Commission's plan because they say it would bankrupt the territory. This is irresponsible. It is claims like this by the members opposite that are creating fear.

Yukon is not the first jurisdiction to have to deal with finding a balance between resource claims and the public good. Unfortunately, the Yukon has chosen to allow the issues to drag on, rather than take action. Both British Columbia and Alberta have established policies and regulations that balance competing land use without harm to their economies or the public purse. In 2012, the public expects governments to address values for land beyond mineral staking. So I ask the Premier what guides his balancing of competing land uses for the 21st century.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: What I'd like to recap with the member opposite is the member knows during the 2011 election campaign, we criticized the proposed plan that the Commissioner presented and we criticized the other political parties for committing to accept the plan. We committed to seeking a final plan that protects the environment and respects all sectors of the economy. The key phrase I want to emphasize in that is "all sectors of the economy". We believe and we committed to during the election campaign and stand by today the importance of ensuring that the final plan works for all sectors of the economy and doesn't pick winners and losers.

Ms. Hanson: It would appear from that answer that the Premier — and I'm hearing from the minister — believes that free-entry staking is the preeminent land use in the Yukon. There is no balancing of interests in the Peel under this Premier's government. Under free-entry staking, mineral and oil and gas claims can override agricultural concerns, trapping concessions, tourism opportunities, even residential development. All this will continue while we await land use plans in the Yukon.

In short, the Premier and the Yukon Party government believe that in 2012, that free-entry staking trumps all other uses of land and dictates land use planning. The Peel plan is responsible; land use planning is responsible; the Premier's position is not responsible. Could the Premier explain to this House how he is addressing competing land use in areas without land use plans?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, Mr. Speaker, the member is not properly reflecting the facts as we have indicated during the election campaign. We believe in an approach that protects the environment and respects all sectors of the economy. For the member to suggest that mining trumps all other interests is simply not reflective of the facts within today's regulatory environment and it's certainly not reflective of this government's position. We believe very much in the importance of all livelihoods, of all sectors of the economy and of course other uses, including cultural uses, subsistence hunting, recreational purposes, resident hunting, and of course the protection of the environment and the protection of wildlife within the area. So again, the member is absolutely incorrect in that.

What we committed to and have talked about in the election and today is seeking a plan that protects the environment and respects all sectors of the economy and is focused on looking at models, such as in north Yukon, where they took an approach that managed intensity of use, rather than type of use, and came up with a very successful plan.

Ms. Hanson: I would remind the member opposite that we are not in an election campaign. He is government; I acknowledge that the Yukon Party won the election. What we

are looking for is responsible government. If the Yukon Party government extends this position taken with respect to the Peel to all areas not under land use plans in the Yukon, it is a betrayal of the public trust and it undermines the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the new relationship created under the land claims process. Wherever Yukoners decide that land should have uses other than resource extraction, they will be blocked by this government. This approach means that mineral and oil and gas extraction will trump all other uses in future land use plans.

Will the Premier stand up and support a balance of modern values, or is 19th century free-entry staking the predominant land use in this territory?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I know the NDP does not support mining. We see the anti-mining comments come up. We have taken an approach and will continue to take an approach that respects all sectors of the economy, including resource extraction, but also areas including tourism. The significant investments that this government has put into tourism over the last nine years stand as a testament to that. We believe in seeking an outcome that works for each and every sector of the economy, taking an approach that is evidence-based, that is fair, that is equitable and that, rather than engaging in the type of heated rhetoric the Leader of the NDP likes to engage in, we are talking about seeking an approach that protects the environment and respects all sectors of the economy.

Within the remaining stages of the planning process, we will, as I have emphasized before in this House, continue to follow our obligations under the First Nation final agreements — continue to follow the process — and present proposed modifications to Yukoners that are aimed at reaching the goal we outlined to the public last fall. It is a final plan that protects the environment and respects all sectors of the economy.

Question re: Whistle-blower protection legislation

Ms. Hanson: I am pleased to hear that the government is prepared to move forward with whistle-blower protection legislation. I just have a simple question. Before I do this, I just want to point out to the Premier that, in the conversations that we have had in the past, we have pointed out that the Select Committee on Whistle-blower Protection met 13 times between 2007 and 2010. They received the opinions of many, including former labour, retired civil servants, the Ombudsman, the Public Service Commission and concerned citizens, and came up with a series of 10 recommendations. Both opposition caucuses signed a minority report and supported the recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, the bulk of the work is done. This work is too important to be delayed much longer. I'm pleased to see that the Premier, through the House Leader, has indicated they are prepared to introduce a motion to get the important work of this committee going. What I'd like to hear from the Premier is the timeline for this. When will this motion be brought forward?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: We too are very pleased to hear that the Official Opposition will, indeed, be participating in the select committee for the purposes of developing whistle-blower protection. As the members opposite are very familiar, this is a priority of our government and has been for some time. As the member correctly points out, a significant amount of work has been done in previous years on this very topic; however, it is

incomplete. As soon as we receive the names from the respective Official Opposition — as well as the Liberal Party, of which I don't believe they have expressed their willingness, which is truly unfortunate — then we can actually proceed with the work of the select committee.

Ms. Hanson: A brief response, because I do encourage the government to move forward on this and in fact the minister opposite need not be aware, although the letter tabled in the Legislature today by the House Leader makes it clear that the Official Opposition did provide a name for participation in this important committee in the December sitting, so the Official Opposition has made it clear that we want to move it forward.

When I met with the Premier a week ago Monday, I clarified with him the importance that we place on this legislation. There are too many issues at play here, in terms of the importance of the public sector being able to do their job unimpeded and unhindered by perceived threats or real threats in terms of their professionalism and their public service to all of us as Yukoners. So I ask the minister if she could provide us with a timeline and when the targeted introduction of whistle-blower protection legislation would be completed. As I mentioned earlier, there were three years of discussions. What is the anticipated timeline for introduction of legislation?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Actually, the letter that the member opposite makes reference to is requesting confirmation of the name that was earlier put forward. We have not received that confirmation as of yet, so we look forward to receiving that confirmation.

Likewise, we also look forward to receiving the official response from the Third Party. We hope that there has been a turn or a change in opinion as to their participation in this important work ahead.

Without wishing to pre-empt the outcome of the select committee — because it has actually yet to be formed and because the names have yet to be put forth by the opposition parties — we certainly look forward to reviewing the terms of reference and, of course, that will indeed entail timelines for the future work. In the meantime, I want to be very clear that there are protections available through public sector legislation, through collective agreements and a variety of other dispute resolution mechanisms housed throughout government policy that are available to those employees who feel aggrieved.

Ms. Hanson: It's playing games, I would suggest — when a letter is tabled in the Legislative Assembly on today, March 20, to suggest that we're delaying a response. I said earlier the Official Opposition provided a name to the members of the government party. If the government chooses to play games like that, it's really unfortunate, because what it does demonstrate is that really, there is no commitment to this very, very important piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we said before that we want to get results for public servants. We know that public servants want to see strong rules so that those who witness and report unethical, unlawful and wasteful practices are not at risk of unfair reprisal. So can we set aside the unfortunate sort of playing of games here? We have made it clear — we want to move this forward. We have given a name to the government. We will, of course, as a formality, confirm that name, but we simply want to know —

Speaker: Order please. Minister responsible for Public Service Commission.

Ms. Hanson: — what is the commitment of this government to move forward?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: For the sake of not wishing to remain repetitive, as the members of the opposition would appear to be doing, I just again want to reiterate our government's commitment toward developing public sector legislation when it comes to whistle-blower protection. We want to do that in collaboration with members of the opposition. We look forward to receiving confirmation of the name put forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition; likewise, we also look forward to receiving the name from the Third Party. In the meantime, again, our government does place a great emphasis on ensuring that there are mechanisms in place for employees to challenge actions taken — adhered to by the employer — and that which is upheld by legislation currently — whether it is the *Environment Act*, the *Public Service Act*, the *Ombudsman Act*, the *Yukon Human Rights Act*, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* — are also comprised in a number of different policy initiatives that are all available to employees when it comes to potential abuse of authority or when in fact employees feel aggrieved.

Question re: Fiscal management

Mr. Elias: Last week the Premier offered up a very rosy outlook for the financial future of the territory. I would like to believe him, Mr. Speaker, but for the last two years I have stood here and listened to another Yukon Party Premier brag about surpluses only to have the Yukon Party continue to deliver deficit after deficit.

We had to approve supplementary budgets last year and the year before just so the government could make ends meet. Last week it was revealed that the government's borrowing limit has been increased from \$300 million last year to \$400 million this year. It's pretty hard to see this government has been fiscally responsible when it's already getting ready to dive into the red. If this is a pay-as-you-go government, then why does the debt ceiling need to be raised by one-third?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Mr. Speaker, Canada did issue a press release on increased borrowing limits a few days ago. Now this was a result of a federal review that Canada initiated in May 2010. Mr. Flaherty, the federal Minister of Finance, called for a review of the operation of the borrowing limit to ensure an inclusive and accurate reporting of obligations within the limit. Mr. Flaherty said that the compensatory increases would be made to current borrowing limits as a result of the review.

Mr. Speaker, this increase was not a result of a request from the Government of Yukon but in fact was a result of a review done by the federal government.

Mr. Elias: If taken at face value, an \$80-million surplus is impressive. What's not so impressive is the \$13 million in federal housing money that this government is counting as part of its savings. This \$13 million is part of a chunk of money that was given to the last Yukon Party government years ago. Last year it was revealed that the government had been sitting on this funding to inflate its books. This is morally reprehensible at the best of times, but considering the challenges that all Yukoners are having with housing these days, this is basically

deplorable. I've said this before. Why is the government sitting on this money to make its budget look bigger rather than investing it where it's needed?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I have said in the House previously in our abbreviated sitting prior to Christmas, the Yukon Party government has invested substantial amounts of dollars in social housing — 127 new housing units were constructed over the past two years. Three hundred and fifty housing units were upgraded. So there's now a total of 663 affordable social housing units throughout the Yukon to provide independent living housing for low-income Yukoners. With that progress that we made, there's still a substantial amount of work to be done and we're working on that. Addressing the housing needs of Yukoners is very much reflected in the budget that was tabled by the Premier here last Thursday.

Mr. Elias: Last week when the Premier presented the budget, he talked at great length about the need to diversify the economy. Diversifying the economy means investing in a number of sectors to ensure that there is more than one pillar holding the economy up. Yet he went on to say in his speech, "So goes mining, so goes Yukon."

In a diverse economy, the setback of one sector should not be able to derail the entire economy. Just last week, the Minister of EMR answered every single question that was put to the government. He told us the same thing every time: protecting the Peel will bankrupt the territory.

I'd like to ask the Premier: if this government has created such a diverse economy, then how could the Yukon go bankrupt if parts of it are protected from development?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is referencing attempts — and successful attempts at that — at diversifying our economy. I think this government has made significant investments in diversifying our economy and it's reflected in the budget today. We have a number of funds and programs aimed at promoting other sectors of the economy aside from the mining industry. Of course, we recognize that the mineral resources sector of our economy has driven Yukon's economy over the years and that's a good thing. But we do need to take steps to diversify, to ensure we have long-term health in our economy. We're investing in the Department of Tourism and Culture to strengthen our tourism industry.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is making investments in the forestry industry to ensure that we have a robust forestry industry and my department, Economic Development, has made a number of investments in innovation, research and commercialization to ensure that we've got a diverse, strong, healthy economy.

Question re: Continuing care program

Ms. Stick: The announcement by the Minister of Health and Social Services for 10 new beds at the Thomson Centre and funding for six full-time equivalents in home care is most welcome. Hopefully, this will relieve some of the pressure we've been hearing about at the hospital. We assume the funding decisions for new beds and more home care staff is based on recognition of the scope of community needs. Can the minister provide us with numbers on the current waitlist for long-term care beds in Whitehorse and in the communities?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Currently there are a number of people residing in Whitehorse General Hospital who will be moved to the Thomson Centre. That will relieve some pressure on the hospital. Between people on the waitlist and people we expect will be requiring palliative care in the next few years, we're still about 24 beds short of where we would like to be.

Ms. Stick: That answer is much appreciated. Acute care is the most expensive form of health care delivery. For well over 10 years people who have needed extended care have been inappropriately housed in acute care beds in our hospitals where they may be blocking a bed for another patient or not getting the appropriate programming they need. What a waste of resources. Often we are talking about people who do not have family who can advocate or visit with them. Most need services like rehabilitation, socialization and day programs. Their only socialization — and I speak from personal experience — is sitting in the front lobby.

In an acute care setting and without appropriate programming, their conditions deteriorate. Effective allocation of health care money depends on good statistics. Can the minister give us the number of people who have been housed in the last year, not only in the Whitehorse hospital, but also others?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 10 people currently housed in Whitehorse General Hospital who will be moved to the Thomson Centre.

We also have to take a look at the whole continuum of care for seniors. Not only are we looking at palliative care, we are looking at diversifying the care. We are trying to encourage seniors, first of all, to stay in their own homes longer. We would like to see them with better health. We are expanding our home care program quite extensively. Through personal experience, I know that it has become very successful in assisting seniors to stay in their own homes, but we are also looking at a number of options. That is why in the budget, at this time, there is an extra \$110,000 for planning future care for seniors in the territory.

Ms. Stick: I am very pleased to hear from the minister that there is some discussion — hopefully planning — going on for palliative care, as that is something that has been missing in the continuing care continuum.

Can the minister tell us if these new beds that are going to be freed up at the hospital are going to be occupied by more people? Will there be more people coming in and using those? If there are people in there, can they receive some of the other services, such as day programming at the Thomson Centre, so that they are not stuck sitting in the hospital with nothing to do?

Hon. Mr. Graham: That's a real tough one to answer because we have no idea what's going to happen in the next six months in terms of people arriving at Whitehorse General Hospital. What I can tell the member is that the palliative care program was established by this government in the past. We are fairly happy with it. We are very happy with it.

As you're probably aware, the program currently employs a resource nurse, a social worker, education volunteer coordinator and a contract physician advisory position. It's structured not only to provide education and consultation to all programs that deliver services to seniors or end-of-life care to Yukoners, but it also includes working in the hospital, community nursing, community care and First Nation health and social services

programs. So we're trying to coordinate all the programs. We will, with this planning money, again, continue planning that has already begun in this area.

Question re: Whitehorse Correctional Centre programming

Ms. Moorcroft: In December, the Minister of Justice noted that with the opening of the new state-of-the-art Whitehorse Correctional Centre, there would be "a tremendous shift in programming and cultural importance". It is hoped that the huge increase in cost from \$30 million to \$70 million for the construction for the Whitehorse Correctional Centre will support state-of-the-art programming facilities and delivery.

I've written to the minister asking him for more detailed information on this new programming focus. Since I have not received a written reply, I am asking for an answer here today. I emphasize that I am asking about new programming, as he indicated in his throne speech response. What new programs have been developed and how have these programs incorporated First Nations' cultural perspectives?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: In addressing the member opposite, as she well knows, the move to the new Whitehorse Correctional Centre just occurred last Thursday, so there's going to be a breaking-in phase, where people are getting adjusted to the new environment, and then we'll be reassessing, on an individual basis, what programming is required, whether it be support for FASD, alcohol and drug treatment — but those programs are going to be outlined in the coming weeks, as we move into the new facility. But right now the staff is getting adjusted to the new building. Their training is finished, but all that stuff continues. Like I said, the programming will come out in the coming weeks. There was some implementation of programs, as I just mentioned, with alcohol and drugs, et cetera at the old Whitehorse Correctional Centre, but those will be rolled out in the coming weeks. As they come out, I will be happy to let the member opposite in on that information.

Ms. Moorcroft: I would like to congratulate the minister and the department for a successful move to the new facility.

Yukon First Nations comprise 25 percent of our population and, sadly, the number of aboriginal people incarcerated at Whitehorse Correctional Centre is generally between 75 to 90 percent of the inmate population. The Whitehorse Correctional Centre Elders Advisory Committee offers an invaluable service supporting inmates and staff up at the Correctional Centre. This important committee has a traditional focus and it carries the best interest of the inmates close to their hearts. They deserve our gratitude for supporting many inmates personally and with cultural policy in the institution.

Again, I ask the minister—he indicated in the throne speech address and they speak of it in their Budget Address: what kinds of programming changes are you moving toward based on advice from the Whitehorse Correctional Centre Elders Advisory Committee?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: The member again well knows throughout the whole correctional redevelopment stage, the First Nations have been there, front and centre. Any of the programming for First Nations at the Whitehorse Correctional

Centre will involve First Nations in the development of that program and offering that program.

I don't quite know where the member is going. She's flip-flopping here a little bit with programming and then talking about First Nations. Mr. Speaker, like I said before, programming at the WCC is something that is very unique and individualized for the inmate. As I said before, that programming will be coming forth in the coming weeks as people get settled into the jail and those types of programs are identified.

Ms. Moorcroft: I am asking the minister a question. Both questions are related to the same question. The minister, in December, said there would be a tremendous shift in programming and cultural importance. I am asking him to tell us what kinds of First Nation cultural knowledge he is bringing into the new programming.

I agree with the minister that reintegration planning must start early to be successful, that in order for inmates not to re-offend, we need to have planning done before they are released from a correctional facility. That planning needs to include housing first, so that with stable housing, people can avoid re-offending. We also need to ensure that there is after-care programming dealing with inmates' addictions.

Can the minister today make a commitment that he will provide me with the existing programs in place, as well as continuing to update — which he hasn't yet — what new programming will be brought forward?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Again, the member appears to be flip-flopping from programming to housing. Programming is provided at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. It's a contracted service — non-governmental organizations, the Elders' Advisory Group and First Nation participation.

The programming that is offered currently at Whitehorse Correctional Centre includes things like substance abuse programming; anger management; spousal assault programming; sexual offending programming; mental health services; cultural activities such as craft, drum making and carving; educational upgrading through Yukon College; Alcoholics Anonymous; and both internal and off-site inmate work programs. The centre also offers spiritual services and cultural celebrations, such as solstice gatherings and feasts. Correctional Services will be piloting a cognitive skills program in the near future.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of government private members' business

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the government private members for debate on Wednesday, March 21. They are Motion No. 84, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake, and Motion No. 81, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 6: *First Appropriation Act, 2012-13* — Second Reading — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 6, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski; adjourned debate, the Hon. Ms. Taylor.

Speaker: Minister of Community Services, you have 13 minutes and 12 seconds.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I am very pleased to be able to speak in response to the budget that was delivered by our Minister of Finance and Premier just a few short days ago. Yesterday I was remiss in not starting my response by extending my heartfelt thanks to the Department of Finance officials and the many employees throughout the Government of Yukon for their hard work in assembling the budget before us.

As Yukoners can appreciate, expenditures housed within each and every department and agency requires much thought. It requires a multitude of different individuals in different capacities to help bring the government's mandate to fruition. I can say that I very much appreciate the professionalism that our public service brings and all of their valued contributions to the assembling of this very budget.

The 2012-13 budget, as I have already referenced, is the largest budget to be tabled in the Assembly to date, totalling some \$1.16 billion, of which roughly \$231 million is directed toward capital. Building on previous budgets delivered by the Yukon Party government, the budget is comprised of a number of strategic capital investments in support of land development, municipal infrastructure, building development and maintenance and transportation. I might add that all these are extremely integral to the continued growth of our territory.

As has been the case the past several years, Yukon's economy continues to outperform pretty much the majority of the country when it comes to employment opportunities — so too has our population and of course the demand for housing. Between 2006 and 2011, Statistics Canada recently reported that our population rose by some 11 percent, so making land and affordable housing available is and continues to be a priority for the Yukon government. Again, building on previous investments by the Yukon government, this budget we are speaking to today includes approximately \$35 million in support of land developments throughout the territory that will result in some 300-plus residential lots being made available by the end of 2013.

These developments are primarily in support of subdivisions and neighbourhoods, such as the Whistle Bend lots, the first phase of which will be made available this fall, followed by the second phase a year thereafter. Taken together, of course, we will see, at the end of the day, 199 single-family lots, 32 duplexes, 17 multi-family lots and 48 town home lots. That is all inclusive of the 300 lots I spoke of earlier.

There are land developments being planned, not only in Whitehorse, but also in Carmacks, Dawson City, Mayo, Watson Lake and, as I mentioned, here at home.

We will continue of course to work with our municipalities and First Nation governments on a range of land-development options to meet the growing needs of our communities. When it comes to land availability, it is and continues to remain a high priority of this government and is an important factor in overcoming many of the challenges related to affordable and sustainable housing in the territory.

The budget also includes investments in the opening of 10 additional continuing care beds at the Thomson Centre continuing care centre, bringing the total number of beds to 29, I understand. This year's budget includes just over \$2 million for the hiring of 17 various staff to administer each of these continuing care beds.

As the Minister of Health and Social Services recently referred to, building on that — I should also add that Copper Ridge Place has seen their facility grow to capacity, and it was this Yukon Party government that actually saw the opening of some 24 beds in past years. Now I believe there are almost 100 residents residing at Copper Ridge Place, comprised of many long-term, continuing care needs, including respite for children and others. This year's budget includes \$110,000 available for the ongoing assessment of long-term continuing care needs in recognition of our aging and thriving population.

I also wanted to make note that under the ministry of education, we also have dollars available. I believe it's just under a \$2-million investment for the ongoing administration of the licensed practical nurse program delivered at Yukon College. It has been a tremendous success in terms of bringing graduates, all of whom have been placed in jobs throughout the territory, whether it is in home care, whether it's working in Copper Ridge Place or at the Thomson Centre. It is a really great news story because it is all about investing in our own Yukon citizens and ensuring that we are able to take advantage of the employment opportunities that are afforded through the expansion of health care initiatives such as continuing care.

Again, I commend the Minister of Education for working in collaboration with the Minister of Health and Social Services to bring these two initiatives to fruition as well. When the program was established back in 2008, I believe a class of 11 graduated, while a class of 13 is set to graduate this year.

In fact, I would like to say that I just ran into an old friend of mine I grew up with in the Town of Watson Lake, and she's one of those graduates. I'm pretty proud of her accomplishments and I'm proud of all the graduates. It's just great to see that we continue to invest heavily in education and training initiatives.

Likewise, the budget also includes monies for the opening of six additional beds at the Whitehorse General Hospital. In response, as I mentioned, to our growing population in the territory, approximately \$800,000 is being allocated for this initiative. Likewise, planning dollars are also set for the replacement of McDonald Lodge, for design work — just under \$700,000 — in Dawson City. Planning dollars for the replacement of the Sarah Steele Building in Whitehorse are also included. I just wanted to say that I certainly hope that the members opposite do choose to vote in favour of these and many other expenditures the 2012-13 budget is comprised of, because of these very expenditures. I feel that they are very important and are all part and parcel of an overriding housing strategy for the territory,

which covers a whole continuum of housing needs and priorities surrounding each and every community.

When it comes to second-stage housing, we were very pleased. I was pleased to be able to co-announce with the Premier that the government has committed a total of \$4.5 million to the building of a new second-stage housing facility in Whitehorse. The project is going to see the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society build a 10-unit project, which will provide transitional, supportive, secure and affordable housing for women and children who are fleeing abusive situations. These units are going to be made available to these families for a transition period of anywhere from 12 to 18 months. It has been a project that has been in the making for some time and I certainly commend the staff and the board of directors associated with the society for their ongoing work — working in collaboration with the Women's Directorate and many other women's organizations throughout the territory.

I think that it's a unique partnership. It's going to develop an innovative and environmentally friendly and energy efficient facility that fits within the site chosen to meet the safety and security and the living needs of women and children, and we very much commend this project to the Legislature. We look forward to it.

Of course the building project team includes members of the Women's Directorate, working in collaboration with the society itself and the Department of Highways and Public Works who will continue to provide technical advice in partnership with the society who will be the eventual facility owner.

Of course, as I mentioned, this initiative builds on many other housing initiatives in support of families throughout the territory which includes the Whitehorse affordable housing initiative comprised of 33 units that we were able to build and open just shy of, I believe, just over a year ago. It also builds on the availability of second-stage housing units that were opened within the Town of Watson Lake. I had the opportunity to tour that facility earlier this year, and I am tremendously proud of the work and the ongoing progression of services that they continue to make available to women and children in that community. It also builds on many other housing initiatives that the Government of Yukon has taken over the past several years.

I just want to spend a couple of minutes speaking to that very factor because I think it's very important to point out that previous Yukon Party governments have worked toward and have seen a substantial increase in housing units being made available — whether it's through Yukon Housing Corporation, including approximately 125 new housing units being constructed, which really is equivalent to a 40-percent increase in the overall housing stock delivered by the Yukon Housing Corporation. Likewise, it also builds on over 300 upgrades that we have also made to our housing stock under the guise of the corporation throughout the Yukon when it comes to existing housing units. Of course, some of those units include the Haines Junction seniors housing complex. It includes investments and partnerships with Habitat for Humanity that has made a number of homes — duplexes and triplexes and a single residential home made available within the community of Whitehorse.

We have also been able to see to fruition a new children's receiving home located in downtown Whitehorse. We have been able to partner up to see, as I referenced earlier, a new family-focused housing initiative in Riverdale. The Alexander Street seniors housing replacement on the Whitehorse waterfront has been a very welcomed environment for our seniors and elders situated here in Whitehorse. We have also seen other investments, such as a seniors housing complex in Teslin.

We are within our platform for which we were recently elected. It also includes a number of housing investments that the government is very much committed to. We were re-elected some four months ago, I believe it was. We do have a five-year term, so we are working on planning. We are working in collaboration with other stakeholders.

Speaker: Order please. The minister's time has elapsed.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the time to air my thoughts on this year's budget, but first I would like to talk a little bit about my riding.

Boy, am I lucky. I have amazing people living in Takhini-Kopper King. Weekly, I get re-introduced to someone who can teach me something about something. Last week, it was a lovely couple up at the seniors complex at 600 College Drive. I had a great visit, which reminded me why I chose to run in the first place. For me, it's all about the people. It is with people in mind that I respond to this budget.

I am perplexed by the tone in which it is being delivered and the pride at having the biggest budget ever at nearly \$1.2 billion. It is a budget that encourages and supports industry, but appears to have left most of the population behind. It was said that we have the highest population growth in the country for 2011. Excellent, but where do these people live?

Out of 107 active mining companies operating in the Yukon, how many are based in the Yukon? How many pay taxes in the Yukon? How many of those employees pay income tax in the territory — the ones who are flown in and flown out on a bi-weekly basis? How much money do these companies stand to benefit from their time here? How many have an interest in seeing the communities they affect thrive? Why aren't the operating mines taking more of an interest in the communities around them? Why aren't we, as government, encouraging those relationships?

I'm glad Ross River is getting a rec centre, but why isn't Yukon Zinc a partner in that project? It was said that of the three operating mines, the mineral production value is estimated to be \$421 million. What do the people of the Yukon see of that? Aren't Yukoners the number one shareholder? Don't we have the most to lose? Shouldn't we get the first slice of the pie?

Instead, government encourages a fly-in/fly-out economy. Companies pay for equipment, they pay for the cost of development and then they pay their investors. They fly employees in from across Canada, sometimes from around the world. Long after the ground is turned, long after our highways are affected, long after our landscape is changed forever, long after our communities are affected negatively by having mines at their back doors — only then do we collect.

How much do we really get? Last year, it showed that campground permits brought in \$119,000 more than land and mineral leases and royalties combined. Ouch. Turns out mining really does pay.

Yukoners are an afterthought, barely a blip on the radar. We only get reimbursement once the company declares a profit and that's above and beyond paying their investors, who are losing nothing. If the territory is doing so well, how come visits to the food bank are at an all-time high? How come the Salvation Army needed sleeping mats for the floor? With a budget that is \$80 million bigger than last year, how come the budget for the Yukon Housing Corporation is \$9 million less? This government has yet to table their housing strategy. We still haven't been told how the crisis they created will be solved.

In the Yukon Party election platform they mentioned working with NGOs to establish a youth shelter. Today, if you were to call the youth organizations, you'd discover that no phone calls had been made, no discussions had. Where in this budget has money been earmarked for a youth shelter? When can we hope to see one open its doors to the youth who so need it?

Heck, if we follow that line of questioning, where is the money to help seniors in communities like Mayo? During the election campaign, Mayo was promised a seniors complex by this government. Where is the money in the budget for that? Has Mayo been accidentally forgotten?

In the fall of 2011, the government put out a call for bids on lot 262, a triangle of land between Mountainview Drive and Range Road — a call for affordable rental units. Whatever happened with that? When will the public and members on this side of the floor be told what plans lie ahead for lot 262? I can tell you that the residents in the area have genuine concerns with the quality of the existing road, with potholes that can swallow pickup trucks. I realize that that responsibility falls to the city, but I hope that we can work together.

I am pleased to hear that we can expect phase 1 of Whistle Bend to be on board for the fall of 2012. I am encouraged by the support the government is offering the city to help with the other phases. I am, however, curious about the new school site. The budget allows for research as to where in the territory a new school might go, with the announcement that, along with the residential lots available, it mentions the school. Are we to believe that Whistle Bend is first in line for that new school?

I applaud the government in recognizing that waste management is an important step when we walk into the future, but I believe we can do more than this budget allows. I'd like to see this government step up to the challenge of zero waste, to encourage large-scale recycling and composting for businesses and to continue supporting citizens in the work they already do. Organizations like Raven Recycling and P&M Recycling need government help to be able to better serve the territory. With a population that sits at nearly 35,000, we could be global leaders in waste management. We could show the world how things could be done differently.

I've attended numerous oil and gas meetings in the last week and they're complicated, to say the least. But one thing is clear at those meetings: Yukoners are saying "no" to the disposition process.

Imagine ma surprise quand une citoyenne ma dit qu'il n'avait pas une Assemblée Publique en Français poste pour la disposition d'huile et de gaz. Je me suis informé, j'ai appris que la population francophone on a besoin de demande a la gouvernement pour les reunions on francais, et que la gouvernement peut en offrir ou non. A ce moment les annonces demande seulement les commentaries submit en ecriture, pas un invitation a une Assemblée Publique et que le department n'a pas de literature en francais disponible concernent les dispositions. Comment esque c'est possible? Avec un sujet aussi complique que celle si, comment c'est possible que cette population n'est pas offrir les meme services?

It's shameful that the francophone population is not receiving an oil and gas meeting in French. In Canada we have two official languages, don't we? I invite the ministers opposite to attend the public meeting with me on Thursday at 7:00 p.m. at the High Country Inn. Maybe they would even like to catch the screening of *Gasland* that citizens are showing at Sport Yukon. By attending this meeting, they would get to hear what people are thinking straight from the source, without any filters. You might even understand why people are so alarmed by the disposition process.

There are some positive expenditures in this nearly \$1.2-billion budget. I like the much-needed investments in community water infrastructure, the contributions to community organizations, and the investment in land-based treatment. I also like the investment in second-stage housing. These are, on the surface, good things for Yukon people. I look forward to more information about these expenditures in Committee of the Whole debate.

Despite some positives, this budget falls well short of Yukoners' expectations. Yukoners expect their government to spend their money addressing key priorities and needs. We know that housing was identified by the public as the number-one issue.

We are in the midst of a housing crisis. There is no rental vacancy. The prices to buy or rent have skyrocketed. The public expected to see some action on housing reflected in this massive budget. Instead, we see a cut to the Yukon Housing Corporation budget, while the government continues to sit on affordable housing funding.

The NDP caucus has been travelling throughout the territory and meeting with the public to hear their concerns. They want to see action on housing, and they will be disappointed by this budget. The Yukon government's budget for 2012-13 lacks long-term vision for the future of the territory. It does not chart a course for economic diversification. It places too much emphasis on extractive industries without thinking of the impacts on key industries, such as tourism.

The dependence on federal transfers is further entrenched in this budget. Funding from Canada continues to account for the bulk of Yukon government revenue, with the much-allotted extractive resource sector contributing very little to public coffers through leases and royalties. Yukoners expect their government to think long-term, to be creative and visionary in how we expand our own-source revenues and less dependence on Ottawa. This budget does nothing to help diversify and strengthen our own economy.

I don't know how a government that claims to be interested in economic diversification would justify cutting \$2 million from the Department of Economic Development. This budget fails to reflect the public's priorities. It lacks vision, and the numbers — well, I'm not sure about the numbers. I can't support it.

Hon. Mr. Kent: It's a pleasure to rise today in support of this budget, the first budget of our government and the third mandate of the Yukon Party here in the Yukon. I'd like to also take this opportunity once again to thank my constituents in Riverdale North for showing confidence in me last fall to sit as their representative in this Legislature. I will highlight a number of things throughout the budget that affect the constituents of Riverdale North and generally the constituents of Whitehorse.

I'll also speak to my portfolios, Education, and responsibility for the Yukon Housing Corporation and some of the budget commitments that we've made for both of those organizations. Before I get started, there were, of course, a number of responses to the budget yesterday and some interesting comments from members in the opposition, and I'd like to just take the time to respond to a couple of those comments.

The Member for Copperbelt South mentioned yesterday that the Highways and Public Works department is responsible for staff housing in rural communities. In fact, the Yukon Housing Corporation has that responsibility and the member will find in this budget an investment of \$1.35 million for staff housing in rural Yukon.

I just wanted to correct the record for the Member for Copperbelt South.

The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin — in his comments and his reply yesterday, speaking about F.H. Collins, said that "...the Yukon Party unveiled a sign put up at the construction fence and hired construction workers to move some earth for a couple of weeks to make people believe that construction was actually imminent and that they were following through with their commitment."

That was, of course, the start of construction and that was part of YACA, our Yukon asset construction agreement, with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation — a \$613,000 contract that they received as part of their land claims final agreement — so just to set that straight for the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin regarding comments around the F.H. Collins project yesterday.

For the Member for Riverdale South, I know that some of her comments, again, focused on the F.H. Collins plans regarding the new timeline on the website. The Minister of Highways and Public Works and I meet regularly with senior officials on this project. It's an incredibly important project, not only for students in my riding, but French immersion students, and students throughout the Yukon who attend that school.

We have talked about a comprehensive communications plan once construction starts.

As most members will know, Madam Deputy Speaker, the new school will be build almost adjacent — incredibly close — to the existing school, so there's going to have be an awful lot of conversations. I have met two times with the school council and once with the building advisory committee and did a tour of the teen parent centre, which is incredibly close as well, just

to let them know that, of course, safety is the number one concern. Communicating with the residents all along the way is also incredibly important. I can assure the Member for Riverdale South and she can assure her constituents that communications, timelines and construction schedules will be something that we take very seriously and will publish as soon as we possibly can.

The Member for Riverdale South also spoke about smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors in Yukon Housing Corporation facilities. Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to inform members of the House today that all Yukon Housing Corporation social and staff housing units are equipped with smoke detectors and the majority of housing units that are heated by fuel also have the carbon monoxide detectors. Work is underway to install carbon monoxide detectors in the remaining buildings. So this is, again, further assurances for all members of the House as far as Yukon Housing Corporation stock goes and what we are doing regarding safety for our tenants.

Finally, just to respond to some of the comments made by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. One of the words I know she prefers to use in the media is “reckless”. I think that by citing one line in the budget as it relates to oil and gas resources — or the royalties part — of \$200,000 and comparing them only to campground permits doesn’t tell the whole story. Madam Deputy Speaker, if you look down that page — page 9-18 in the budget — you will see that leases, permits and royalties from mineral resources are \$30,000; placer mining fees are \$255,000; quartz mining fees and leases are \$2.295 million; and, maps, publications and charts are \$5 million. The total taxes and general revenues for oil and gas are \$3.348 million.

That is an incredible amount that the Yukon government receives. The only other producing mine that is paying royalties to a First Nation — the Selkirk First Nation — is the Capstone mine, the Minto mine. In 2008, it paid \$1.5 million in royalties to the First Nation; 2009, \$5.9 to the First Nation; and 2010, \$3.8 million in royalties to that First Nation.

I think that when we make comments in this Legislative Assembly about certain things or cherry-pick items out of the budget, it does a disservice to not only our constituents, but the people listening and the mining companies that have become significant contributors to the economy, along with tourism, along with the investments in innovation and research and the other pillars that the economy relies on. One other thing, just in response to the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, is what the operating mines contribute. My past work experience has been in the charitable field — most recently with the Yukon Hospital Foundation, and prior to that, with the Canadian Cancer Society.

The mining companies, the service companies and the supply companies are making substantial contributions, not only to those two charities that I worked for, but a number of charitable contributions. One only has to look back at the recent Geoscience Forum where I believe there was \$50,000 or \$60,000 raised for supporting child literacy, as well as supporting the Yukon Mines Legacy Foundation, which built the warm-up shack at the outdoor arena in Ross River. Now, of course, we’re moving ahead in this budget with the construction of a new recreation centre in Ross River.

I’ll now move on to some of the initiatives that I think will be important to my constituents in Riverdale North that we’ve highlighted in this budget. Of course, housing was the number one issue for me and I’m sure for a number of members during the recent election. I did mention earlier in Question Period today what has been done. Just to reiterate that: over the past two years, 127 new housing units were constructed and 350 housing units were upgraded so there’s now a total of 663 affordable social housing units throughout the Yukon to provide independent living housing for low-income Yukoners.

I have had the opportunity over the last couple of months to do an awful lot of travelling throughout the Yukon with both of my ministerial hats on, I guess — Education and Yukon Housing Corporation. I have been in the new facility in Teslin; I have been in the new facility in Watson Lake; and new facilities in Carmacks, Ross River and Dawson City. Of course, in our platform, we committed to a new facility in Mayo. It’s not reflected in this budget, but it’s a commitment of ours, and we intend to do what we said we would do. The mandate, of course, for the Yukon Party government is five years, and we intend to accomplish what we said we would do in our platform during that five-year mandate.

But what we are doing this year with regard to housing is making substantial investments — \$34.984 million in land development for 2012-13 to address land availability and housing needs, which include Whistle Bend, phase 1, scheduled for the fall of 2012 and will provide 93 single-family, eight duplex and nine multi-family lots, plus one commercial and, of course, one school site. Looking forward, Mr. Speaker, is what we intend to do. Planning for schools is part of planning residential developments and that’s why we have set aside the site in Whistle Bend, phase 1, for a school.

We’re also providing \$5 million to expedite the development of phases 3, 4 and 5 of Whistle Bend by starting the detailed engineering and construction for these future phases to ensure that we have additional building lots available in 2014.

Also, we are considering options at this time — and I’m sure the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, as his department has the lead on this, will elaborate — for the release of Lot 262 in Whitehorse to be developed this spring for affordable rental units, as well as the development of more Yukon government land, primarily in downtown Whitehorse.

Two days after we were sworn in to Cabinet was when the RFP went out for land. Obviously, it’s a top priority for this government. We recognize that. The previous Yukon Party government recognized that over the past couple of years with the investments in social and senior housing that I’ve referenced, and we certainly recognize it with significant investments in land development and the provision of affordable rental housing.

We also signed a letter of understanding with Kwanlin Dun First Nation to work together on potential residential land opportunities on Kwanlin Dun settlement lands. We’ll be providing funding for the City of Whitehorse to begin the planning for future land development after Whistle Bend.

Really, very forward looking and wanting to make sure that as the economy grows, as the population grows up here, that we have the opportunities for Yukoners who grow up here and want to return to purchase houses, to buy their own home

or build their own home, as well as the number of workers who are employed in the mines who would like to live here but mentioned to us during the campaign, and have mentioned to us since, that lot availability is an issue for them. That is what we are working on in this budget, and that is what we have committed to, and that is what we are going to do.

Of course, one of the other concerns I have heard since being elected is about the issues with the land titles system, referenced by the bill tabled today by the Minister of Justice. We have hired a land titles inspector and are modernizing the land titles system. It is something that I know a number of us — and perhaps members of the opposition — have heard, so I think it is very, very important that we move forward with that as well.

A couple of other highlights of the budget that I want to reference for my constituents include, of course, plans to develop a centre for northern innovation in mining at Yukon College.

There is a pan-northern workforce strategy that we've talked about developing to focus on immediate industry needs such as the need for skilled workers across the mining and exploration sectors, as well as to build the capacity of northern colleges to respond to the long-term needs such as the establishment of the centre for northern innovation and mining that I just mentioned.

This has been brought up by the Premier with the Prime Minister — the need for additional dollars. We're currently working with the other mine training organizations in Northwest Territories and Nunavut, as well as Yukon College, to ensure that we're able to have a made-in-Yukon solution for our mine training needs and are able to address the needs, not only in Whitehorse, but also needs in communities. I have spoken to the Member for Klondike and there are other communities as well: the Member for Mayo-Tatchun — of course, there is a significant amount of mining activity in his riding — as well as other rural members. So we want to make sure that the strategy that we put together recognizes the need for that type of training, not only to Whitehorse residents, but to people who live in our rural communities as well.

There are a couple of investments that I would like to highlight now. Of course, the Minister of Community Services mentioned the \$1.86 million that we're putting into training for the licensed practical nurses program — an incredibly successful program that is indeed a pleasure to continue with; \$797,000 to provide staff for six additional beds at Whitehorse General Hospital, which is located in my riding; \$2.24 million for a 10-year lease for the Thomson Centre and operation and maintenance of an additional 10 beds at that facility. These are significant investments that are being made — as well, there is a very large project here in Whitehorse during this budget — \$7.3 million for a new emergency response centre that will serve as Whitehorse's primary ambulance station, in addition to the one that is located by the hospital in Riverdale North.

Finally, some of the budget highlights that I wanted to talk about are a \$3-million investment under the Canada strategic infrastructure fund to complete the last phase of the Whitehorse waterfront development project. So we're making significant investments across the board in a number of areas that are very important for people in my riding. I know the Minister of Highways and Public Works will speak to this, but there is a

substantial investment in Whitehorse airport to help residents, as well as our visitor industry, and investment in the water and sewer extension to the south side of the airport to help the businesses that are there and may move down there in the near future.

The Department of Education — I'll switch gears now to talk about the Department of Education — a substantial budget. The total budget there for the department is \$145,815,000, which is a significant expenditure and really a strong signal to the priorities of this government — spending on education, spending on health care and spending on infrastructure development. The single largest component of the capital budget, which is set for this year at \$6.107 million, is the F.H. Collins Secondary School replacement.

I've said this before; I said it prior to Christmas in the sitting: this government is firmly committed to building the F.H. Collins Secondary School and replacing that aging facility. A number of members of this House and indeed, approximately 6,000 graduates, went through those doors over the lifespan of that building.

It has turned out some quality Yukoners and some quality graduates and we should be very proud of what that school has accomplished, but it has come to the end of its life. The updated construction schedule will allow the Yukon government time to review the design and ensure it takes into account all the objectives and input received from the education community since the beginning of the consultation process in 2009. The funding that's identified here reflects the cash-flow requirements of the updated construction schedule, and we don't anticipate any further delays in the project schedule. Of course, as I mentioned, they're working very closely with the Minister of Highways and Public Works to ensure that that school gets done and that students are entering there in the fall of 2015 with the first graduating class in 2016.

Future school planning, again, must take into account growth in the Hamilton Boulevard corridor, as well as anticipated growth in Whistle Bend. There is a request for \$250,000 to begin this planning and that's something that we've requested. It was also a platform commitment of ours with respect to the school in Copper Ridge. I've been working very closely with MLAs, the Premier, Minister of Community Services, Minister of Economic Development, as well as other stakeholders in the area to start that planning process and ensure that we have a school in the Copper Ridge area that meets the needs of the growing population in that Hamilton corridor.

Mr. Speaker, as we move through some of the other commitments in the Department of Education, I know that we will get into more detailed discussions once the department is called for debate during this sitting, but a couple of other highlights include that the Yukon government signed the labour market agreement and the labour market development agreement with the Government of Canada on July 8, 2009. The labour market development agreement gives the Yukon government the authority to provide support services that help eligible Yukoners to upgrade their skills, get on-the-job experience, find a job or become self-employed. The labour market agreement, which is the second of the two, is aimed at helping Yukoners find jobs or obtain better jobs.

Over five years, the labour market agreement has brought almost \$6 million — \$5.896 million — from the Government of Canada to help Yukon create new career opportunities for our citizens. For businesses to prosper, businesses must have staff with the necessary skills. The government is extremely proud to be part of the solution to the skilled labour shortage, which is going to be addressed, of course, through training of Yukoners, through immigration and also through recruitment and retention of other Canadians — those who are currently travelling up here to do shift work in our resource sector and, of course, the seasonal workers who come up every summer for the tourism industry. We need to find ways to attract them to the Yukon and to the opportunities that exist outside the busy season for the tourism industry as well as bringing their families up here — the people who are working in the resource sector.

Yukon College is something that we are extremely proud of in the Department of Education, and \$18.176 million is requested in this budget to support Yukon College for their base operational funding. The increase here supports their request for one-time funding for IT and security upgrades and additional ongoing funding of \$175,000 to address the day-to-day funding pressures and the collective agreement impact. Mr. Speaker, \$474,000 will be provided to Yukon College to continue the operation of the School of Visual Arts in Dawson City.

I had an opportunity to visit that facility on my recent tour of a number of Yukon communities and was extremely impressed by what they're accomplishing there. I should take this opportunity to thank all of the people who are working for Yukon College and the Department of Education at all of the facilities we have throughout the Yukon and, of course, no exception is Dawson City, where they are very, very passionate and very organized about what they envision for their community. Again, hats off to the people of the Klondike for that passion and vision they show.

I spoke about the investments we're making in the licensed practical nurse program and again, something that I've highlighted for constituents — the Minister of Economic Development and I last week were able to go up to the Yukon College research centre to announce \$5 million in funding over the next five years. It's a tremendous investment that we're making, and I couldn't be more proud of that as we work to diversify the economy and have Yukoners come up with solutions that work here in the Yukon, when it comes to cold climate innovation, and the pure research that is being done.

I know we'll speak tomorrow on private members' day about this, so I will save some of the details for then.

We're continuing to work hard to implement our New Horizons project, our five-year strategic plan, and a number of initiatives the department has identified there. What we need to do is really ensure student needs and priorities are met, and we want to do that through that New Horizons project and work hard to ensure that student success is the paramount concern for public schools.

I should note that the paraprofessional staff members are remedial tutors, and educational assistants in the schools have increased from just over 106 FTEs in 2002-03 to almost 160 FTEs, as at April 1, 2011. One of the things we've recently done that will be reflected is that 22 of those positions were

term positions that were renewed every year. We've put those into the base, so we have added those 22 positions to the base, which is a substantial commitment by our government, something that we did within the first couple of months of taking office. So those additional 22 positions are now no longer year-to-year. They're reflected in the base.

Something else I should speak about is the Individual Learning Centre that was launched in February 2005. I know the former Minister of Education, the late Hon. John Edzerza — my understanding from colleagues that served in this House with him at that time is that he was a key driver behind that project. It certainly continues to be a success story in providing the flexibility required by some students so they can continue to engage in their lifelong journey of learning. Our data is demonstrating that more students are staying in school than in the past because of this Individual Learning Centre. So we're proud of that.

Something that has come out of our recent staffing allocation committee meetings — the staffing allocation formula — the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, and the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, of course, will be very interested in this. Both of those communities have schools that, I believe, go to grade 9 — so grades 10, 11 and 12 are held here in Whitehorse — and we have allocated one FTE per community to focus on ILCs — individual learning initiatives in those communities.

I am hoping that that helps to assist those students who come to Whitehorse and for one reason or another aren't able to find success here in a larger community, being from smaller communities like Teslin and Old Crow. I am extremely pleased that the staffing allocation committee identified those two positions and I am hopeful that it helps increase student success in both of those communities.

Now I would speak for a little bit about some of the First Nation programs that the department is involved in. There is \$575,000 in this budget to support Council of Yukon First Nations in their delivery of education support services. We continue to have a very good working relationship with Council of Yukon First Nations. There are recent media reports that the chiefs of the First Nations have signed off on a memorandum of understanding. There is still a Government of Canada process and a Government of Yukon process that needs to be completed, but we are encouraged by that. I am looking forward to sitting down with the Grand Chief at a date very, very soon, so that I can talk to her about some of the challenges that are facing First Nations when we are talking about the delivery of education.

I know there has been a number of initiatives that have taken place, including an initiative in the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin's riding as far as experiential learning and we're really pleased with the results and the outcomes of that initiative. Although the teacher who was working for the department is no longer there — she is no longer in Old Crow; I believe she moved to Saskatchewan — we've contracted her to help us develop a curriculum to deliver that type of programming elsewhere in the Yukon, so we're very pleased with that.

Of course, there is the Wood Street Centre, the CHAOS program that is taking place there — the acronym stands for community, heritage, arts, outdoor and skills program — elders in the schools and of course First Nation language and protect-

ing that First Nation language. I was fortunate enough to speak to the First Nation language teachers from across the territory. They started a three-day conference here in Whitehorse today. The commitment that they show — I've had the opportunity to visit a number of classrooms throughout my travels over the past couple months where it is being offered, and the engagement by the students is really something to be seen and it's a real testament to those teachers. Again, I'd like to thank them while they're in town here over the next three days for the work that they do in helping to educate young Yukoners.

I'm going to just use my remaining time to speak briefly about Yukon Housing Corporation and take this opportunity to welcome the new chair of the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors — Madame Claire Derome has taken on the chair of Yukon Housing Corporation — and also to welcome JoAnne Fairlie as the other new member of the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors. But, of course, with new appointments come some members of the board who are no longer there, including, of course, our Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Rudy Couture. I'd like to thank him for his tireless work and commitment to the corporation, as well as Shelley Hassard, a community member from Teslin who is no longer on the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors. We're certainly very excited about the work that the Housing Corporation has done.

I should also commend the president and the staff. I know that it's exciting when the stimulus dollars came in and we sit here and talk about the 650 social units — the number that were upgraded, the new ones that were built — but it couldn't have been done without the hard work and dedication of the staff at the Yukon Housing Corporation, the capital building group. I know that they worked tirelessly to get that done and I'd like to thank them for their efforts, and all the efforts going forward in maintaining the new stock of social and staff housing units.

The Housing Corporation offers a number of different programs, through loans and rental upgrades and energy efficiency programs, which assist Yukoners, whether they own their own home or are trying to build their own home, and of course there is the loan program we offer and the subsidized housing through social housing, and also providing staff housing for Yukon government employees who reside outside of Whitehorse. I'll reiterate that in this budget there is a \$1.35-million commitment for staff housing throughout the communities. We're very pleased with that and recognize the pressures that are happening in rural Yukon with the increased recruitment of Yukon government employees and what we need to do for those communities.

We also have a rent supplement agreement in place, 37 of which exist today. So there's \$200,000 in this budget for that. I mentioned the rental rehabilitation program, the rental suite program and again, staff housing is something that I also talked about, as well as \$6 million for the mortgage financing program that is contained in this budget.

As you can see the Yukon Housing Corporation has, over the past few years, undergone a tremendous influx of capital dollars, thanks to federal stimulus, as well as funds contributed by the Yukon government. So while we aren't seeing those levels of funding in this budget, we're seeing substantial investment in housing. We're seeing investment in the housing

continuum, whether it's by the Minister of Health and Social Services, who I'm sure will speak to some of the emergency shelters and the type of housing that's required for them; the social and seniors housing from the Housing Corporation; the lot development of Community Services — the substantial investment of \$35 million in this budget to assist with that; and again, working with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources as well as his responsibilities for land throughout the territory.

This is something that has very much been a collaborative effort by members on this side of the House. It is something that I have certainly enjoyed working on with my colleagues on this side of the House, but a key difference for me this time from the last time I was here was the work and camaraderie and cooperation and collaboration with members on the opposite side of the House. I have enjoyed very much working with the Member for Klondike and the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. I am looking forward to the seniors housing tour in Whitehorse with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, as well as working with the Member for Riverdale South on issues that affect Riverdale as a whole.

I think it has been a tremendous difference that I have seen from the last time I was here 10 years ago, and I look forward to maintaining that type of good working relationship. I know someone said it yesterday — I believe it was the Minister of Community Services — that we are all here to support our constituents and work as hard as we can to ensure that their needs are met. We are MLAs first and I don't think we can ever forget that.

Ministerial portfolios are added efforts and added work for us, but again, we do have to remember that we are here because of our constituents and we are members of the Legislature because of those constituents, and it is their best interests that we are here to represent.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I commend this budget to the Legislative Assembly and I will be supporting it.

It certainly sets out solid plans for meeting the needs that were identified for me on the doorsteps, such as housing, education, health care and investments in infrastructure. Those are the things that people in Riverdale North sent me here to accomplish. I believe this budget accomplishes it and I look forward to voting for it once we get through the debate on the departments. Thank you very much.

Mr. Barr: It is my honour to stand here as Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes and respond to this budget speech.

I would first like to thank my constituents in the riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes for the honour to be able to represent them in this House. It is something I take very seriously. I guess it is from my heart. When I see the people there over the years, living out there for the last 25 years, getting to know elders, people from all walks of life and from around the territory, whether they are living in Marsh Lake — I remember the days when the Lakeview Marina was open and people would gather there. We would have a great time.

There was a little library that was in Tagish. We would go for coffeehouses there and speak with some of the folks who now aren't there any more — they have passed on — and in Carcross at the community club and at Mount Lorne and the

community club there with the dog races. As time goes on, how things have moved on and yet, I am looking at how things still need to move forward in many different areas. I would like to touch on some of that as I speak today.

I would like to acknowledge the good things, but also look at what needs to be done, not only in the Southern Lakes, but as I see with this budget, all over the territory. Travelling all over the territory — I did that as a musician. I played in every community in the territory, with many people and for many different occasions, from new year parties to potlatches to gatherings, GAs and music festivals. Over the years, I have seen the Yukon as a community. To me, although I live in Carcross, the whole Yukon is a community. I go to Dawson City and there is family there.

There are people with whom I used to sit around the campfire and eat salmon right out of the river with. We'd stay up all night and couldn't wait to eat the salmon in the morning. You don't get to do that. I never got to do that other places I've lived. So we really do have a wonderful place here in the Yukon.

This is a record budget, but spending a record amount doesn't prove one is good at financial management and planning. I have some concerns about the budget that I'll get into in more depth during departmental debate. At first I was wondering why the government was cutting operation and maintenance budgets in the areas of Community Services, Economic Development, Education, Environment, and Tourism and Culture. In some ways, cuts to Environment, Community Services and Economic Development make sense, given the way in his Budget Address the Premier presented prosperity in the Yukon as based on the extractive resource sector and the Yukon Party's stewardship of this sector. In his speech, the Premier says, "So goes mining, so goes Yukon." I guess my first introduction of what I was saying was that, "So goes Yukon, so goes mining," although being up in Dawson and knowing that the placer mining is very important, so is tourism very important. So is being able to eat that salmon right out of the water.

When I see what my colleague from Old Crow was saying — just passing this information on about the salmon that is being contaminated. With what we're doing here, with the extraction, with the mining, with the oil and gas that's coming here and focusing on that, I'm thinking that I want my grandchildren to be able to have those same experiences, that is all-encompassing of my idea of the Yukon and a way of life — First Nation subsistence living. When I look at this budget, with such a free rein on staking and the claims that are going on, especially in my riding of Southern Lakes and all over the Yukon — record highs. Without the land use planning — this government's response to the Peel plan shows how little they care about land use planning, in my opinion. This is very unfortunate, given that land use planning was a key piece of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and final agreements. Land use planning was one of the conditions for certainty of land that all Yukoners have benefited from.

Now this government is turning its back on this land use plan. I've been to oil and gas meetings in Tagish, Carcross, Mount Lorne, Marsh Lake, and last night, I went to Carcross.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Barr: Sorry, Carmacks — thank you. I heard one common thread through all of those meetings: no fracturing. People do not want hydraulic fracturing of any kind. I recall hearing here in the House that we will say that there is no shallow fracturing. Well, what I'm hearing from Yukoners is they don't want any fracturing at all — anywhere. It has been proven that there are degrees that cannot be proven safe when we do this kind of thing. So we cannot play with water. Water is the only thing that we have in this territory — when I say, "the only thing that we have," is that we have to have it. If we don't have good water to drink, what do we have after that? Is it worth — knowing what we know about hydraulic fracturing — that leaves that up to "ifs."

I heard at the Carmacks meeting last night — "ifs". There are too many "ifs" in all this. The predominant other focus around that, with all the Southern Lakes and up to Carmacks, is without land use planning, you're just dictating what the area is going to be used for — resource extraction, whether it's oil and gas or quartz mining — that kind of thing.

When I think of Carcross, for example, if we take that approach and allow this just to be our focus, then the local economic development agency's, or LEDA, study that speaks to tourism in the Yukon — the Southern Lakes is the most valued area in the Yukon, according to the LEDA study, and the area that will be able to have the biggest return on the dollar and to develop it as a tourism area. If we continue with the oil and gas in this area, what does that do to the tourism potential in that area?

That's just one of the tourism places, and I hear Jimmy Johnny from Mayo speak of not only the tourism potential, the wilderness tourism outfits, but the sacredness of the lands and that it's a way of life that they depend on, that they want to pass on. Haven't we done enough with the residential school experience to try to eliminate a way of life and a culture and a language? We just started to get back on our feet with acknowledging that that was an experience so many struggle with today. When I heard my colleagues speak of a strategic addictions strategy — yes, because of the intergenerational impacts that this has caused. When I think of Jimmy Johnny speaking about going up to the Peel and being able to — there are sacred burial grounds up there, there are all kinds of things that people who come up from Outside — they don't know about that. They don't care about that; they don't think about that. I didn't think about that when I first came up here. Why would they? Because they didn't live here long enough to appreciate what we have here.

When I think of burial grounds — and you're going to allow people to just go up and around there. There are burial grounds in Tagish. There's a little picket fence right by the bridge. People leave that there. If you ever go to Tagish, you'll see. There's a sacred burial site right there. The road went past it. People know enough that they respect that space. Why can we not continue to do that as collective colleagues in this House? And so, with this budget — and the lack of that land use planning — I see children coming to these meetings — and their concern. They come to this House and they've been sitting in here. I feel that moving forward as a group — we're not thinking of our seven generations to come.

I would like to say regarding this budget that the lack of a housing strategy is a real thing. It's not there. At Christmas-

time, there was a fellow who I know has a difficult time in his life.

That's what I used to do; I used to do a lot of that — helping out people out in the street — and I continue to do so in my spare time. He basically lives at the Salvation Army — he's one of them — but on this particular night, when it was 40 below over the holidays, he and another fellow were coming out — because they really didn't have a place over the holidays — to my place out there. I said, "Where did you stay last night?" He says, "Well, I couldn't get into the Salvation Army last night. I got there too late." I said, "So where did you stay?"

"Well, there were four of us. We stayed at an abandoned house. We keep a bunch of blankets downtown in this abandoned house so that if we can't get into those places that are offered, that we all just —"

I said, "You stayed in an abandoned house with some blankets and four of you cuddle up together?"

This is an everyday experience; this is a common experience for people who are thrown mats at the Salvation Army. When we hold on to this \$13 million that we should be using for affordable housing or social housing — how can you sit there and say, "Well, we're going to plan."

I mean, how can we do this, knowing that there are people out there who don't have a place to sleep at night? There are young adults; that's deplorable. There has to be a vision that takes care of people in the Yukon and not a fly-in/fly-out economy. Those guys and those business interests that are coming in and out of here, they don't think about the people who we see every day, some of us, who aren't eating. We have an all-time record high use of the food bank. Where is the vision in that? If we are moving forward collectively as bringing everyone forward in this Yukon, this is not just for the upper elite. This is all of us.

Some of us don't get it very well sometimes. There will always be those people who don't get it very well in our society. We are responsible, just as we are for the little bird that flies into our window pane. We'll go outside and say, "Oh." How many of us did that when we were kids, would take the time to be so considerate of something like that, to put out extra food and feeders from our houses?

We're not taking the time to ensure that our own people in our own communities have a place — housing is a right. It's a right. I see my member opposite kind of shaking his head. Well, I do believe that, under the United Nations, housing is a right. We signed that agreement. And so, therefore, it's our duty to provide housing to everybody.

I won't take up much more time. I'm a little passionate about this and I'd like to get, as I said, to more specifics in the budget debate. There are some positives in the expenditures in this nearly \$1.2-million budget. We have some problems. We don't see this budget reflecting what the public has said are their priorities — take the housing crisis, as I've said. The public said: fix it. But what's in the budget? A big cut to the Yukon Housing Corporation budget.

This isn't a visionary budget. Sure, it spends a lot of money; there is the economic diversification. In the Premier's Budget Address, he didn't seem interested in diversification. It was all the eggs in an extractive resource basket. Well, we've been down this path before and it takes vision to avoid the boom-bust cycle.

How are we lessening our dependence on federal transfers and generating more revenues in the House? This budget provides little of a blueprint to achieve this.

The Premier was talking in the media about his projected \$80-million surplus. I just can't believe that this is credible. For too long, we have seen projected surpluses turning to deficits and forecasts being downgraded. Thank you for your time.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, good afternoon. I am going to take a little different tack than perhaps some members have done here today. I am going to begin by telling you a little bit about what I've learned since the election about the Department of Health and Social Services and the people working in the department, and about the non-governmental organizations that work with it and are funded by the department.

In the short time that I have worked with the people who deliver services in the Department of Health and Social Services, I have found them for the most part to be dedicated, competent individuals who seem to be able to perform very, very difficult tasks and deal with some of the most, I will say, interesting folks that I've ever met with a smile on their faces and cheerful comments to everyone. I have noticed this in both the Thomson Centre and Copper Ridge Place as I have visited these areas.

There are exceptions, of course, as there are in every walk of life, but it has been my observation that our health care workers do an absolutely wonderful job of dealing with some extremely difficult folks, often under some very trying circumstances. I am very proud of them and the job that they do on our behalf.

It has also been a great pleasure of mine to meet with many of the non-governmental organizations that provide a huge range of services for our citizens, and that advocate on behalf of those less fortunate individuals in our society. I listen carefully to every group and organization that comes to visit. I am currently in the process of setting up follow-up meetings for some of these groups to review our progress on priority issues. A couple of examples are as follows: first, we had to deal with an issue at Copper Ridge early on in this mandate. As a result, we set up a family group of advisors that meet with the folks at Copper Ridge and, in fact, we have another meeting set up for next Tuesday, March 27, just to follow up with some of the issues and complaints.

I haven't met with those people on my own, but the department makes sure that they meet with them, and they are setting up now a quarterly meeting. I recently met with Autism Yukon and some other groups that deal with children with disabilities. They made a number of observations and a number of recommendations at that meeting, one of which was that we set up a parents advisory group that would liaise with the department on an ongoing basis, not only about autism, but about a number of other difficulties that children deal with. Our department that provides family supports to children with disabilities would be able to liaise with this group. We are in the process of determining how we can do this, what the terms of reference will be and what their mandate will be. I have invited that group back in a month to talk about where we are. What we are trying to do is kind of an ongoing report card of how we are dealing with these non-governmental organizations, because without them, the Department of Health and Social Ser-

vices would not be in the position it is in now of dealing with issues in the territory, and the Yukon would be a poorer place.

So, once again, to those non-governmental organizations that are advocating and providing services, I give them my congratulations. They're providing an absolutely wonderful service.

I became the Minister of Health and Social Services last November and, to date, it has been a tremendous learning curve for me. The breadth, complexity and sheer volume of health and social issues that cross my desk on a daily basis is incredible. I'm growing familiar with many of these issues through presentations by Health and Social Services managers and by meeting with virtually every group and individual who requests a meeting, but I still have a lot to learn.

One of the most difficult issues that face a society in times such as these, with an expanding economy and a great economic boom going on, is the fact that some of society's most vulnerable people are often not able to participate in that boom and they're either ignored or marginalized. The fact that this government is taking action on a number of health and social issues with respect to these people and have a plan to deal with others in the very near future is a measure of our government's commitment to these less fortunate people — these less fortunate members of our society.

I'll just give you a few quick examples that are in the current budget. I wasn't going to talk about the budget, but I'll give you these as examples. We're expanding the funding to Bridges Café — Challenge — to help them provide training and work for people with whom Challenge deals. We are working very hard on additional low-cost housing. Unfortunately, I was unable to get a proposal forward and have it approved by my caucus to be included in this budget, but I'll follow up on that later because it deals also with review board customers. We're also providing an additional \$561,000 to NGOs, non-government organizations, that deal with the department. We are in the process of developing a number of planning initiatives and I'll expand on that later. The medically supported detox centre will be coming along and there are also dollars in the budget for planning a new Sarah Steele Building, with a comprehensive addictions strategy with that new building. I guess when I heard the opposition say — in one statement, I heard the leader say: poor project management where we see costs go up; and the Member for Copperbelt South asked: where's the planning? I have to agree in some cases. We've seen perhaps in the past that maybe things haven't been done quite as well as they should. Projects are delayed or run over cost. So what we're trying to do now — at least in my department, and I see it throughout the whole government — is make sure that the planning is done — appropriate planning is done, appropriate consultation is completed — before the job begins. Unfortunately, when we do that, we also then get criticism for not going ahead with projects, and it's difficult to deal with sometimes, I know, but planning is taking place; consultation is taking place; and it's very important that be done before we actually get involved in this.

In the case of Health and Social Services, I'll take responsibility personally for some delays in getting the social inclusion strategy — I know that was mentioned by members opposite — and the poverty reduction strategy and the wellness initiative in place for this session. I explained last week to the

Anti-Poverty Coalition that it's my responsibility as minister to direct the preparation and presentation of these draft policies to government for approval to proceed to the next stage of additional public consultation and eventual adoption.

Unfortunately, I haven't done a great job of these, as well as a couple of other department initiatives, in terms of presenting the plans and having them approved by my Cabinet. I hope I will do a much better job in the next little while and we'll be able to implement these policies.

I have to digress a little bit — the Member for Riverdale South will understand this — when at times I felt, in the last little while, like I was back in city council, where I lost a lot of votes. Well, in fact, I hold the record for losing the most votes — 6:1 in a concession that — ever. But looking back, I appreciated it, because the rest of my colleagues were saying, "This one isn't quite right. You have to go back and do your planning. You have to go back and do the work on the process or the strategy or the policy so that it incorporates all of the government departments and makes sure that all considerations are carefully undertaken." So the constructive criticism that I received, I've taken back to the department and we have managed, I think, to work out these policies and these strategies, and hopefully we'll see them come forward to Cabinet in the next little while and have them approved. So we're working hard on the social inclusion and poverty reduction. We are working hard on the child and family wellness initiative. But we also had to make sure that they were all well-coordinated because we also have, in other departments, an active living strategy that is dovetailing with these policies. An aging-well strategy — as many of you know, we started work on this as well. How these initiatives fit together in the best interests of all Yukoners was really important. So they have been delayed, and I accept the responsibility for that. I am happy to see progress is being made, though, and we hope to be able to report back in the next little while as to where these various policies have taken us.

My department has also delayed taking over the building at 207 Alexander. I think last session we said that we would be using that building for review board customers as well as hard-to-house people. During the discussions and the planning of that initiative, new ideas came up and new possibilities came up, and we feel that we now have a program in place that will give us an opportunity to not only provide additional spaces for hard-to-house folks, but we will be able to deal effectively with more review board customers, and these people won't have to be sent Outside, away from their friends and family and supports.

We will be able to keep as many review board customers here as we possibly can and that, I hope, will be able to come forward in the next few weeks.

Speaking of planning, we're also working with the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association to finalize the regulations establishing the practical nurse profession as a regulated profession in the Yukon. Those consultations haven't been completed yet, but we hope they will be progressing again very soon and we will have something to report back, perhaps not this session, but in the very near future.

There were a couple of other things that were stated by members opposite — members opposite talked about "eco-

conomic equality,” “wealth redistribution” and “fly-in/fly-out” economy.

As I was considering the comments, I thought back to an old saying that a fellow said to me some years ago — and he wasn’t even a miner — but he said, “You know, unless there’s some wealth being generated in the territory, unless there’s money being made in the territory, it’s really tough to redistribute money if nothing is being made.” Before we can talk about wealth redistribution and economic equality we have to realize that the Yukon has to actually produce something, as well, or generate wealth in some way. Those are the things that we’re trying to do.

When you talk about the fly-in/fly-out economy, I too had some real criticisms about this. I’ll be perfectly honest with you. I advocated a number of different scenarios to deal with this and then I spoke with some local businessmen at one time. In fact, I was buying something at the store and they were out of a number of items and I said, “Well, how can you possibly be out of this item now? It’s not that time of the year.” They said, “We just had a plane load of people fly in who were heading up to —” — I don’t even remember where they were heading to — and she said, “They stopped in here and bought everything I had in that line before they went to work.” I said, “Oh, does that happen very often?” and she said, “Just about every two weeks we have new customers come in.”

So it was a revelation to me that this was actually happening in the city, because I didn’t think so. So there are some benefits. I’m not saying that there are huge benefits, but there are benefits being realized in the city from these fly-in/fly-out folks. There were a couple of other things that the last speaker talked about that — perhaps he’s just having difficulty reading the budget, because he made a statement — or someone made a statement about how the Economic Development budget decreased \$2 million. That’s not right. There is a decrease, but it’s only \$36,000. So when we go through the budget, I hope we can correct that. But the other statement that the member opposite just made was that the Community Services budget decreased as well. You know, I look at the budget and see that it didn’t decrease, so the statement about how we don’t get it very well is, you know, a dual-edged sword, because I think we did do fairly well.

I also guess that when members opposite decided to vote against the budget — before we even got into the final — or discussion on line-by-line items — it’s interesting to see what they’re voting against before we have even had a chance to discuss it in any further detail.

They are voting against a medically supervised detox centre. They are voting against a new seniors residence in Dawson City. They are voting against 10 new beds in the Thomson Centre. They are voting against an additional six beds in Whitehorse General Hospital. They are voting against an additional \$561,000, as I said, in additional funding for NGOs. They are voting against a \$100,000 contribution over the next five years to the Rick Hansen Foundation, which in turn generates a lot more money here in the territory to support and assist people with spinal injuries. They are voting against another nurse in the Mayo nursing station to handle the increased activity in that area, and they are voting against six new positions in the home care program, and these are only the things that are in the Health and Social Services department. All of these things

are very important to our department, so I hope you reconsider at least perhaps — you know, recognize the fact that there are good things in this budget. We have a philosophical difference maybe in some cases, but there are some things here that are very, very good.

The Minister of Community Services has kind of warned me off this topic, but I have to talk about lots and housing, especially as it relates to the City of Whitehorse. I spent 12 years in municipal politics and I know what we deal with every time the municipality tries to deal with lots and housing and housing alternatives in the city. The municipalities — every municipality in the territory — are exactly the same. We have tried over the years, since the City of Whitehorse took over the planning responsibility for lots in the city, to plan a housing development in Riverdale, right next to the Member for Riverdale South’s house — or right across the street from her home. It was violently opposed — you were there.

We tried to do a development in what is known now as the Porter Creek D area — violently opposed by members opposite, even during the last election. Even as long ago as six years, it was opposed. We tried to do additional developments in a number of other areas throughout the City of Whitehorse. Each and every one — even the ones that we went ahead with successfully — were opposed by residents, who said, “Not in my backyard — we like the idea that housing should go ahead, but not in my backyard.”

As a consequence, the Whistle Bend area was developed far in advance of where it was anticipated. If Porter Creek D, which is near the centre of the City of Whitehorse, if Riverdale, which is, again, fairly close to Whitehorse, and if a number of other projects such as these would have gone ahead, we wouldn’t have the housing crisis we have now. The unfortunate part is that, when you develop an area like Whistle Bend, it’s far away from the centre of the City of Whitehorse. It then requires all of those other supports, those other in-ground facilities, that cost a lot of money to produce. So then you only have two options.

One option is you subsidize the new reservoirs that are built, the new sewage lagoons or whatever has to be built — the underground pump stations and sewage pump stations and all of those huge capital items that must be put in place in order to have these lots — you either have to subsidize those, or you subsidize the individual lots, because you can’t expect the current residents of any municipality in this territory to subsidize, through their taxes or through development cost charges, the development of new lots. You just can’t do it.

It’s a huge problem. It’s something that we’re probably not going to resolve here, mostly because the City of Whitehorse has the lead on planning. The Community Services department is doing everything they can to support the city. Unfortunately, the city still has to go through their processes and that means, every time they propose development in another area, it will be opposed by some people. Even with the housing shortage and the lot shortage we have now, people oppose it.

It’s a complex situation. Like I said, we’re not going to resolve it here today, but I just wanted you to know that it’s nowhere near as simple as some people like to think.

I guess that I’ll leave the rest of my comments until such time as we get into line-by-line debate on the various depart-

ments, but I look forward to talking with the members opposite and I hope that I'm able to answer all of your questions.

Mr. Silver: I would like to start off with a thank you to the ministers and to the MLAs who have put actions in front of their words. It is easy for us to say that we support the notion of working together. It is more difficult, however, to accumulate tasks that prove this notion.

Some of us are here to play politics and some of us are here to truly do what is best for our constituents. I salute those of you who understand this bigger picture.

I would also like to once again thank the people of Yukon, and the people of Dawson City specifically, for bestowing upon me the honour to represent their community in the Legislative Assembly. The Klondike is the heart and the soul of the Yukon. It is an internationally recognized spirit that represents a living link to the very tangible history of this great land, a true mosaic of cultures and of experiences.

The people of the Klondike are a model of tolerance, understanding and the community spirit. The people of my town have taught me to put in more than I could ever get out and that is the attitude that I would bring to this Legislative Assembly. Government has many roles it must play in the services it must provide. The most important of these is maintaining the public trust. Citizens must believe in their government — that it is competent, that it is responsive and that it will operate in accordance with the duties of its citizens.

This brings me to the Dawson Regional Planning Commission. The commission has important work to do and I wish them the best in their endeavours. I also urge the government members to remember that their actions must create confidence in government processes and must assure people that when they give their time, their input and their good faith to government consultation processes, the government will listen and act on that input.

The public confidence has been severely damaged for the government's disregard for the public's input in the Peel planning process. I do not know if the faith can be recovered for the Dawson planning initiatives. In any regard, the final plan must reflect residents' priorities and concerns, so my encouragement is two-fold. I encourage residents to make their views known and to take part in the planning process and I encourage the government to faithfully reflect what Yukoners want in this land planning process.

In his Budget Address, the Premier declared, "So goes mining, so goes Yukon." I offer another statement — one that reminds us that what happens in the Yukon is only important and valuable inasmuch as it is important and valuable to Yukoners. I would say, hopefully, so goes Yukoners, so should go Yukon.

I am honoured with the faith the residents of Klondike have placed in me, and I will endeavour to represent their interests. Similarly, the interests of rural Yukoners are dear to my heart. We must recall that we are here in this House to make decisions that benefit Yukoners. I am reminded, as well, to represent the specific needs of the Klondike. One of these needs is for local emergency services.

Currently, there is an Emergency Medical Services rural supervisor for south Yukon and one for north Yukon. They are both located just a few blocks away here in Whitehorse at the

Fire Marshal's Office. The location is clearly imperfect and I urge this government to reconsider. I understand the northern EMS supervisor position will be posted for applicants very shortly. Many qualified rural Yukoners wish to apply for these positions, but the offices are in Whitehorse. Rural Yukoners know what rural Yukoners need, and the rural EMS supervisors should have their offices in their own communities if they so choose.

I know of several qualified potential applicants from Dawson, Faro and other communities who would apply for this upcoming position if they could stay with their families in their own communities. They will not apply for a job that deals with rural issues but forces them to move to the urban centre. This was not the intention of devolution. My two cents: Dawson City with its new hospital makes particular sense as a location for the northern supervisor. I would imagine folks in Watson Lake may feel the same about the southern position. Just as it is important to ensure that government services are provided out of the appropriately located offices, it is also important that when government responsibilities are transferred from one office to another, they come with the resources that they need. Within Community Services there is talk of transferring training responsibilities for ground search and rescue to Wildland Fire Management.

I have been advised by local Wildland Fire Management personnel that they are under very tight fiscal constraints and operational restrictions. They cannot be expected to take on additional responsibilities without additional resources. I hope to receive assurance during the Department of Community Services debate that such a transfer will only take place with additional budgeting and staffing, so that the ground search and rescue can continue to provide high-quality levels of these essential services.

I would like to commend the government for its commitment to look into fibre optic technology initiatives with regard to running a line from Carcross to Skagway, connecting with Juneau and Seattle. We are looking forward to more announcements and actions, including their plans to partner with the Canadian Space Agency.

Two and a half years ago, the government released its *Yukon Solid Waste Action Plan*. While Dawson City is mentioned several times in this document, we still lack a plan for the overflow in the Quigley landfill. The landfill will no longer accept waste oil from the mining industry, which means our local miners are being hobbled as they try to do business. The City of Dawson has brought forward several suggestions for addressing this, including using capital funds to upgrade the landfill, implementing monitoring systems through the weigh station, charging for garbage coming in from outside the community, and/or using tags for bags.

The Minister of Community Services recently stated that, "Community partnerships are key to the success of solid waste management." She also said that her government will work in partnership with municipalities to address solid-waste issues. I look forward to hearing more from the minister during the departmental debate about how the government will work with Dawson residents to ensure the landfill continues to meet our needs. It is essential that, like all community projects, residents have the opportunity to assist the government's model and provide their input for local expertise before decisions are made.

Similarly, the territorial government holds the subdivision on the Bear Creek side of Dawson City, as well as the Seventh Avenue lots in the northeast corner of our town. The city needs access to the government's land planners to turn this area into homes for residents. It is my hope that the Yukon government will work cooperatively with the city to do so.

There have been changes in personnel and contracts with respect to the new waste-water treatment facility in Dawson City. This infrastructure is overdue and very important to my constituents. I look forward to a detailed update on its progress in the departmental debate as well.

I was not alone in my disappointment that this year's budget did not include a new rec centre for Dawson City. My constituents could be forgiven for thinking that the sod-turning ceremony during the election might actually result in timely construction. Instead, only \$500,000 has been allocated, which means that, at the very least, 18 months will go by between the minister's sod-turning and actual construction. At the time of the first token shovelful of dirt, the minister told the press that, "It is a piece of infrastructure that has been neglected for many, many years." It appears that it will be effectively neglected for at least another year or two, and that is a disappointment to Klondike.

During the Premier's Budget Address he made a few comments that I would like to reiterate. He said, "Recreation facilities are equally important to rural Yukon communities." The Premier also said, "As you can see, we are serious about meeting our commitments, about doing what we said we were going to do." This last statement really stings, as the Premier ironically chose to quote a famous Dawson bank teller to deliver his message. "As Robert Service said, 'a promise made is a debt unpaid', and we will deliver on our promises. We have the fiscal capacity to fulfill these promises." Well, what message is the Premier really telling the Klondike as he makes the promise during election time but doesn't set aside money to pay up on these debts?

Having reminded the government of its commitments to the residents of Dawson City and surrounding areas, I would like to now turn my attention to issues that affect Yukoners generally and to departmental issues that I look forward to exploring further in those departmental debates. Our community relies on our firefighters to protect their families, lives and homes. Within the Community Services' budget, there is insufficient capacity to fill, develop, implement and administer the fire prevention inspection program, public education program, training program and provide the emergency preparedness awareness component of the emergency preparedness program in the Yukon and we must ensure that Yukoners get to enjoy the benefits of that boom. At the administrative level, this means the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources must be adequately resourced to deal with the high level of industry activity. As an example, the EMR website includes a land and mining viewer that shows all the quartz and placer claims. Other jurisdictions, such as B.C., have similar ones and they are vital tools for prospectors and, as such, must be kept up to date.

A prospector in my constituency planned an outing based on targeted claims that had expired — according to the viewer — but not just by a day or just by two days, but by a whole month. Luckily his partners stopped into the Dawson City min-

ing office first to verify this. They discovered that the claim had been renewed and the office was so swamped with claims that it was backlogged to last May. This created great inconvenience to the miners, as they suggested that the Dawson office should request more funding and resources from the minister. Disappointingly, they were told that such a request had already been made without results.

It seems the Yukon Party is content to bathe in the glory of a mining boom, but it is unprepared to significantly resource the workers in the system. Last summer these miners actually encountered the same problem with the Whitehorse office. The employee there in the office showed them a stack of unprocessed claims two feet high. This problem is caused by a flood of hard rock claims. This is no doubt generating a lot of revenue, so why the staff shortage?

I would suggest that the branch adopt a new policy to benefit Yukon's miners. It should prioritize placer claims and ensure up-to-date information on the viewer. Placer accounts only for a small part of all claims processed, so why not deal with them first? This would help out small business operators, mostly Yukoners, and would help ensure Yukoners enjoy the benefits and not just suffer the inconveniences of a booming resource industry.

More generally, the mining boom will put major stresses on Yukon's infrastructure, from power to social services, and to an already-cramped housing market. A successful mining sector could transform our economy and fiscal outlook.

The government must respond to managing the mining boom to the benefit of Yukoners and get the infrastructure in place to meet these new demands. This must include abundant power and plentiful housing. In return, the government will receive tax revenues to fund programs and serve a population enjoying new training, jobs and business opportunities.

Trade barriers will inhibit this growth. We must invoke policies that will make trade with Asia easier. The three northern territories will be best served by reaching parity among our policies. Locally, we must decrease the cost of living, not merely increase the minimum wage. Otherwise, we will be forced into a labour crisis as we compete for labourers in B.C. and Alberta.

I would like to send accolades for the three-year, \$452,000 cumulative effects baseline study in fish and wildlife water research and Environmental Programs branch, coordinating efforts to acquire information on the cumulative effects of quartz mining exploration on fish populations. It is essential that we have good environmental data so that Yukoners can make informed decisions about industrial activities in their territory.

My colleague and I have already drawn attention to the upcoming market share war in Yukon's air travel market. National airlines have developed a domestic marketing strategy and the collateral damage that will be suffered by Air North, Yukon's airline.

Air North is a valuable member of our community, providing services to ourselves and to our businesses, employing our neighbours, and bringing our distant communities closer together. I urge the Yukon government to recognize the unique and important role that Air North plays in the Yukon through an official policy supporting our local airline. When doing so, I also encourage the government to re-evaluate its numbers

based upon the five-percent discrepancy between its numbers and Air North numbers on percentage of government travel.

Community members in Dawson City and elsewhere have also brought forth concerns about circuit court in rural Yukon. The circuit court is supposed to take place every six weeks in Dawson City, but has seen a pattern of cancellations. As well, when the proceedings do actually occur, they often don't take place in Dawson City. Although residents may take part there, the judges and legal aid counsel phone in from Whitehorse. The technology is unreliable, and the defendants often cannot make out what the lawyers are saying. We are hearing this from Old Crow and from Ross River as well. This is not adequate access to legal counsel. I hope to see a return to having judges and lawyers on-site in the communities with the people who are most affected by their decisions.

I will reserve most of my remaining issues to line item debates within the ministries, but I would like to be on the record for one more issue and that is technologies and trades education. We are facing labour shortages in tech and trades, but we are not adequately preparing our young people to take advantages of these opportunities. There is a great opportunity to designate Dawson City as a training centre, a hub. I have been meeting with community members, educators and industry representatives, and we are all on the same page. Local Yukon College administrators and representatives from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation are eager to get local people trained properly. Robert Service School has the infrastructure and is close to the vicinity of the White Gold district — needed to provide relevant training close to home. They have already worked diligently to develop grassroots curriculum to advance students' academic interests in technology and trades at Robert Service School. By offering apprenticeships tied into our high school system, we can prepare our students for skilled employment in their own home communities. Companies want to hire locally and have already invested significantly in our local workforce. It is time for the territorial government to lend their resources to make this happen. I urge the government to develop a five-year strategic plan that identifies trades jobs needed and capitalizes on the private sector's willingness to provide local training with a guarantee for employment.

We are gaining momentum. Now we need the government's support to get tech and training programming in place on the ground in Dawson City.

In closing, I would like to again thank the constituents of the Klondike for the honour of letting me represent them in the Legislative Assembly. I will endeavour to advocate for my community, for rural Yukoners and for Yukoners in general during this sitting. I look forward to doing so with all of the members present.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the staff of the Legislative Assembly, for this transition period and working with us to get stuff figured out, whether we are trying to figure out how to collect a paycheque and a pension at the same time, or maybe a mileage claim or something like that. I think you guys are doing a wonderful job and that you deserve a round of applause.

Applause

I would like to again thank my constituents from the riding of Kluane — the large, vast riding of Kluane — and I will work hard on constituency issues, but also with the ministerial portfolio, it changes things a little bit and I don't get as much time out there, but my heart is always in Kluane.

I would also like to pay accolades to my mother and my father who are in Mexico right now enjoying the hot weather. When I read the budget that the Premier came out with, there were a lot of things that hit close to home. We ran a family business and we always ran a surplus. We didn't buy things if we couldn't afford them and I'm pretty proud of that. I would like to thank my parents for that vision.

I would also like to thank my wife and my son. I'm away from them quite a bit, Mr. Speaker, with the ministerial portfolio. I do a lot of Skyping and phone calls with my wife and son. My oldest son is off making a life down in Grande Prairie, working in the industry, but my other son — he's 11 years old and they need a lot of attention from their parents, so it's hard sometimes, but we work through that.

Also, the team — our Yukon Party team — the people who work upstairs for us — our aides and our executive assistants — I believe they also deserve a lot of accolades. We work well together up there. I'm very proud of this team and I'm proud because I have had just about every member opposite in my office and had my staff working with them on constituency issues also. So it's not just about the Yukon Party constituents; it's about all Yukoners, Mr. Speaker.

A surplus budget; a billion-dollar budget — you know what they say: "A billion here, a billion there, and pretty soon you are talking big money." I am honoured to be part of this government, one that is tabling another billion-dollar budget for the territory, which I support wholeheartedly. One of my personal ideological beliefs, one that I apply to all of my decisions in my role as Minister of Highways and Public Works, or as the MLA for Kluane, is that government must be fiscally responsible on a very fundamental level, posting surpluses in times of prosperity and very fiscally responsible. Because of that, I applaud this budget and this government for being prudent and safe with the public purse.

I have heard from the Official Opposition that this budget lacks long-term vision — in 2002, a little over \$500 million. Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a billion-dollar budget. In the last few years, without some sort of long-term vision, we probably wouldn't be where we are at today. One issue with long-term vision is that the future holds so many possibilities. You must plan for as many of them as possible. If everyone could pay attention to this next part of my speech, I'll outline one vision of the future that we need to plan for. Not everyone in the world is in the envious position that we are.

Many of the world's economies seem fragile and vulnerable. A lot of larger nations rightfully tried to spend their way out of a recession. Many of these states now have heavy debt levels brought on by a large deficit of previous years. They're struggling now to balance or maintain spending in a fragile recovery while cutting deficits, let alone debt level. Frustrating for those in that situation, the debt levels themselves make cutting deficits harder, as more and more of the public purse has to go to paying interest on those debts. Fortunately, as recoveries take hold, gross domestic product growth should lend a higher

tax revenue for those states and eventually balance can be restored.

As I said earlier, we are lucky. We have no debt, and we are posting surpluses, not deficits. Our economic indicators are positive, as you referred to in your speech, Mr. Premier, so our general revenues should continue to climb in the foreseeable future. That puts us in an enviable position of being able to proactively manage our prosperity and, most importantly, prepare us for risks we don't see yet.

One risk I believe we should pay attention to is the interest rate risk that our constituents face. Canada's Minister of Finance and the Bank of Canada Governor, Mark Carney, have both indicated that interest rates will rise — perhaps not this year, or not even next, but they will rise. Mr. Carney warns that the current, "low-for-long" scenario, where interest rates are low for a long period of time, can build individual's debt levels.

Indeed, Canadians in general have taken on more debt. The housing prices in Whitehorse are very high, which means people are taking out larger and larger mortgages. What happens if the rates climb one, two or three percent? Many people might be facing twice the mortgage interest charges at such a rate. Interestingly, Mr. Carney has indicated time and time again that the Bank of Canada focuses on inflation targeting. They attempt to control inflation using interest rates. When they notice inflation rising, they raise the interest rate, which has proven to help to curb rising inflation. So, essentially, what financial leaders of our country are saying when they indicate higher rates is that inflation is near. Further, Mr. Carney has said that the bank is willing to tolerate near-term levels of inflation with a medium-term course to the inflation target of two percent, so as to avoid hampering the economy too soon.

This teaches us two things: first, Canada can expect inflation beyond two percent; and second, Canada can expect rising interest rates after that. Applying these lessons to our specific situation in the Yukon, it means our operation and maintenance costs are going to rise in the short term and probably quicker than the two percent we allow for.

This is apparent already in my Highways and Public Works, as the last few years have seen much faster pace on O&M inflation, as fuel is a much higher portion on our O&M budget than of the Canada consumer price index, the CPI. Further, it means all of our constituents have to pay more just to live here. More of their dollars will be going toward basic goods. At this time the statistics will say that GDP is rising because more dollars are being spent on goods than before. This will appear good for us and our public budget, making us feel secure in our recovery, making us feel as if we can spend a little of our surplus, making us feel that we can dip into our communal savings. At that same time, our constituents may be feeling the opposite effect — that even though they're buying the same things they always did, they aren't able to save as much money as they used to.

Once inflation has made public budgets look better and individual budgets look worse, the Bank of Canada may start — we'll see a rise in interest rates to curb the inflation, to wrestle inflation back down to two percent, for the good of individuals. Luckily, that won't concern our territorial budgets. It won't concern our territorial budget too much. We don't have any debt, so we don't have to pay more interest. However, our con-

stituents who have variable mortgages and consumer debt will have to pay more and more interest and in turn, will save less.

At this point, we might see individuals start to vocalize for better pay to make up for shortfalls. The public sector union will probably demand more than a two-percent raise they get every year. Because of that, it's supposed to offset inflation and at that time, inflation will be higher than two percent, despite the Bank of Canada's medium-term goal of a return of two percent. Also, since the government has been posting surpluses, they will argue that we can afford it, so why not? In turn, the private sector will need to raise their salaries to compete with the public sector and to respond to their own employees' concerns. Importantly, the picture will be disconcerting for industry. Inflation has caused rising input costs, such as transportation and energy; also payrolls have increased for the same-size workforce. Lastly, interest rates have risen and caused financing to become less attractive. All of these factors will contribute to less feasible mineral projects in the territory and our pipeline of potential projects may dry up, leading to another localized recession. So, Mr. Speaker, it is important to plan to avert this possibility and to develop a contingency in case it comes to fruition. The latter is addressed by saving; the former is addressed by spending. I'm very proud to support a budget that does both.

Spending strategically — the budget as proposed by the Premier strategically addresses spending so that we can position ourselves to manage the risk of our future while leveraging our current prosperity to move forward together. Pillars — a better quality of life — we have heard it from many of the speeches.

Land availability — the key subject for delivering a better quality of life for a number of reasons. Improving land availability can reduce the cost of housing for Yukoners. With more land available and reducing costs, immigration can continue to improve, ensuring that money earned in the Yukon stays in the Yukon. Creating lots in the communities promotes decentralization, which is important to me and other rural MLAs. I am excited to know that 53 residential lots are being released in my community of Haines Junction this year. They have released some of the lots; there are still lots left. We don't have a housing or a land crisis in Haines Junction as we speak today. It will come. Proactively, Community Services has dealt with this issue.

One of our platform commitments was to modernize legislation related to land titles, to utilize technology and to improve the timelines of transferring land titles. This is an important commitment to me as it is a simple fix to benefit Yukoners conducting property transactions. I am glad that we have appointed a land titles inspector to help us deliver on this commitment.

Another strategic investment made by this budget is in education. By establishing the business training fund, we're partnering with private business to help Yukoners develop skills to be more competitive in the workplace and job market. This is a direct delivery of our commitment to implement the labour market framework for the Yukon. Another important element of this commitment is the recruitment and employment retention strategy, something important to the Department of Highways and Public Works, my department, as the average age of our workforce increases.

Near and dear to my heart is the Yukon Party's commitment to enhance home care for seniors and to allow them to stay in their homes and their home communities as long as possible. As indicated by the Premier's address on Thursday and by the Minister of Health and Social Services just earlier, we're hiring six new employees for home care purposes, planning a replacement for the lodge in Dawson, conducting a feasibility study for a new facility here in Whitehorse and maintaining our position at the Thomson Centre for 10 more years — all little more than \$3.4 million.

Other housing care we're providing is for Betty's Haven, Kaushee's Place additional second-stage housing, and my esteemed colleague, the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, deserves accolades for moving this initiative forward and getting the memorandum of understanding signed with Kaushee's Place to provide this funding and deliver these housing units.

The Department of Highways and Public Works is further contributing to a better quality of life by spending \$15 million under the Shakwak project for the Haines and Alaska Highways, plus an additional \$1 million for the north Alaska Highway. We're also spending \$2 million on reconstruction of the Takhini Hot Springs Road, \$2.6 million on the Atlin Road, \$1 million on resurfacing and safety improvements on secondary roads, and also our rural road upgrade program, again for \$200,000.

Getting back to one of our pillars, the economy, while these road investments do improve the quality of life, many also speak directly to another pillar in our platform — as I said, the economy. The Campbell Highway is receiving over \$8 million for reconstruction and spot repairs. It was built as one of Prime Minister Diefenbaker's roads to resources and it is still used for that purpose today, which I'm proud to say.

On a much smaller scale, we have an access roads program that we fund for \$500,000 a year. This money is used tactically for those remote roads that need spot repairs to improve access to exploration and development properties. Another transportation funding includes building a second jetway at the Whitehorse airport, alongside pavement patching and taxiway improvements. Also of importance is the inclusion of \$7 million over two years for the installation of water and sewer services to the south commercial area, where local airlines have their head offices and hangars. This strategic work will allow our airline industry to grow with a growing mining business, again to capture more of the benefit of the upswing.

Included in the budget are monies dedicated to the Yukon Research Centre and the Cold Climate Innovation Centre. Some of this stuff will hopefully be happening out in my neck of the woods. These bodies could be useful to our strategic management of risk by teaching us how to better understand and cope with the melting permafrost and perhaps teach us how to build more durable roads in the north, reducing overall costs of the road maintenance.

An important part of learning and education is communications and it was just brought up by the Member for Klondike. For that matter, an important part of efficiency is communications. The Yukon College and many of our government departments have offices in the communities. Exploring the use of video-conferencing in our own operation can decrease the reliance on travel and allow more ground-level positions to be

sited near their area of influence. This will also ensure that the communications with management is clear and concise.

As a rural MLA, this is important to me, as I would like to see the jobs that affect the communities in the communities. This could support not just the efficiency of our operations providing better turnaround times in various departments, which provides a better quality of life and more fluid interaction with various industries — improving economic return — but it also improves our environmental stewardship and provides good governance.

This endeavour could address all four of our platform pillars, and to investigate this potential, I am glad that we are dedicated to maintaining and improving our communications network.

An intelligent investment is in our energy infrastructure. By developing capacity for natural gas, we can decrease our reliance on heavier diesel and decrease our costs of energy for our constituents. By increasing our power generation capabilities, we can provide improved feasibility to many of the mining projects in the territory. This directly combats the effects of the higher inflation and interest rates to our economy. At the exact same time, by reducing our need for diesel fuel, we will also be reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

Another pillar, the environment — building our platform pillar of the environment. My constituents will be pleased to see that monies will be allocated for the water strategy, as well as increased spending on solid-waste management. Solid-waste management is a very important subject to my constituents, now that we have accomplished a previous commitment to no open burning. Having \$3.4 million in capital and \$766,000 in O&M in an already robust budget will help community landfills transition to the waste collection centres and will, with the installation of gasification plants, improve our recycling in our communities.

A combined \$27 million through Building Canada for water wells, water systems and waste-water systems for the communities is good news for all rural Yukoners. An important function, a positive environmental stewardship, is not just money but policy as well. Reviewing the resource access roads and their development to ensure environmental sustainability will not only contribute to fulfilling our commitment to the environment, but also our commitment to good governance.

Our other pillar of good governance — of course, planning for the future is good governance. This budget plans for the future. Posting a surplus of \$80 million is purposely saving for a rainy day. The best governance is managing risk and this budget is evidence of the best governance.

In an open, accountable, fiscally responsible government, records management is important. That's why this government is committed honestly, through my department and all the other departments, to the records improvement initiative, which will improve record management practices across government to support management of digital records. We're spending \$1 million on this initiative.

Digital records can help reduce our reliance on paper, and this will also improve our turnaround times on many issues, as information can be moved around faster. Further, technology today is being utilized to make more and more government services available on-line.

As Department of Highways and Public Works houses the government ICT group — information and communications technology. The technology roll-out and corporation support that we provide is something I am keenly aware of. For example, Geomatics Yukon, a unit of the ICT branch, provides the mapping and underlying support for 12 mapping websites, including the Yukon water website referred to in the Premier's Budget Address, as well as YESAB geolocator, tourism and culture historic sites, and the Yukon geographical survey website. You can check these out at www.geomaticsyukon.ca to find a list of the all the government websites they support.

We provide other government-wide support through contracting services desk, providing advice to all departments on procurement strategies and methods. I know that we have just developed a procurement course to teach new employees the best practices and resources at their disposal.

Another area that is funded through Highways and Public Works — even though my esteemed colleague, the minister here, is responsible for French language services — recently the Motor Vehicles branch released on-line registration services in French. Now the entire Community Services website is available in French. After I browsed around a little bit, it seemed to me that we have only three departments and three Crown corporations left require translation, and that's good! The success and drive in doing this translation is indicative of how eager we are to communicate. We want to ensure that communications and collaborations are a constant throughout our mandate. Our platform states that we will continue to work with our Yukon First Nations to ensure they remain full partners in the economic development of the territory for the mutual benefit of all Yukoners. It also commits to maintaining and building our relationships with our many other northern partners as we strive to deliver our platform as efficiently as possible.

Now getting down to the managing of prosperity. This budget addresses many of our platform promises, as you've heard from my esteemed colleagues in their responses and strategically investing in areas that promote growth while prudently avoiding risks to the Yukon. In doing so, this budget successfully manages our prosperity by including the multi-year capital plan project listing we outlined to the public — our taxpayers, the people who voted for us. We will steadily invest in our capital project, making sure that the contract work for the government itself is not cyclical, but steady and reliable. This way we can continue to build infrastructure support for our growing territory and allow private enterprise to develop in an organized way.

Approaching our infrastructure needs in such a systematic way ensures that we won't put the cart before the horse, an infrastructure is built and opportunities will be unlocked. These, in turn, will hopefully come to bear fruit in a steady fashion. Allowing for steady spending and steady savings allows us the luxury of preparing for many different eventualities. The best way to prepare for the future is to prepare for any eventuality — spending strategically to get the best return while still saving up a safety net. This is the only way to prepare for an eventuality.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say: do I support this? Is the riding of Kluane with those picturesque moun-

tains not the best place to live in the Yukon? Yes, it is and yes, I support this budget.

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dun and the Ta'an Kwäch'än and I thank them. Mahk'i'ishon honour to represent the people of Mayo-Tatchun and to work with the MLAs from all parties. I look forward to the next few years and hope we can accomplish much.

I was quite excited, waiting to see my first new budget over \$1 billion. However, on pursuing it, I was left with a sense of, "Is that all there is?" I had a sense of disappointment, but mostly one of lost opportunity. A government is meant to help us take care of one another, while carefully acting as stewards of our environment. Yukon used to be on the cutting edge, a leader in Canada, known for progressive legislation and innovation, rooted to a real awareness of life, in touch with land and the place. We knew who we were and where we were going. We could count on our government to work with and encourage our bureaucracy to take risks and to seek solutions, to be forward-thinking and work with the people of the Yukon, enabling us to move forward, confident in our abilities.

To do so, we need to be mindful of all Yukoners — their needs, their hopes and their aspirations. We need to relay this to our very adept civil service to enable them to do their job and use their skills, experience and creativity to meet our challenges. Yukoners need to be involved and put to work in solving real problems in their lives. Reading the budget, I am left wondering, where is the strategy? Where is the plan? Where are we going and how will we get there?

The biggest concern I have is this government's ad hoc, reactionary and quick-fix approach to government. Yukoners are resourceful. They're independent and innovative. Their ideas, their solutions and their knowledge need to be garnered and followed. Partnerships and consultation must be done in a meaningful way. Their decisions must reflect that process and be acted upon.

Our civil service and the people of Yukon are very capable. They must be given direction and opportunity to use their creativity, ingenuity, resourcefulness and knowledge of our unique circumstances to work together to solve some of our dilemmas. They must be involved, not overridden. In the interest of brevity, I will only touch on a few areas by way of examples and hopefully, have time to discuss more as we debate the budget in detail.

As Yukoners, we recognize our dependence on the federal government. When elected 10 years ago, the Yukon Party promised to diversify our economy. At the time, we received over \$450 million in federal transfer payments — over 80 percent of our budget. Now, we receive over \$900 million — still over 80 percent of our budget. One might say, "Well, what's the problem with that?" Well, when the federal government has a huge debt and continues to run a deficit, they are desperately looking for ways to save money.

While our current agreements with the federal government ensure continued support, as these expire, we are vulnerable. Even a small reduction in a massive federal budget can have huge consequences locally. We are borrowing from someone, we are getting paid by someone, who has no money.

The Yukon Party budget seems to have given up on many options for diversification and have put all our marbles on the extractive, non-renewable, commodity-driven industry. The catch here is, so has the federal government. We have become a nation dependent upon commodities. Even our dollar has become known as a petro-dollar.

Now we have the federal government, the source of 80 percent of our revenue, and a territorial government looking to the same commodities industry for our well-being. Commodities have been on a tear, but they are a notoriously cyclical industry. It is not a question of if the bubble bursts, but when. What happens when that bubble bursts?

We have gambled with our resources and put all our eggs in one basket.

I haven't even mentioned the environmental consequences of such over-heated, unfettered industrialization. We are sacrificing lifestyle and environment as we rapidly develop our non-renewable resources. Members opposite often say that the NDP is anti-mining. I would remind them that the NDP is not opposed to mining, but we will insist that it be done in a responsible way — a way that improves our lifestyle and is ever mindful of all the users of the land and preserves the integrity of our land for future generations. I'd like to look at our current housing crisis. Ten years ago Yukoners began to become aware that there was something amiss, yet we still have no comprehensive housing strategy, and there is no relief in sight. The government continues to use band-aid solutions. The government has moved from providing basic land and housing opportunities to our citizens to providing increasingly up-scale lots and from providing them at cost to market-driven. This has resulted in a huge jump in the cost of land and a decrease in the number and variety of lots available.

The fact that the Yukon government is the largest landowner and provider of land and controls the pace of land dispersal creates a curious situation and has led to situations like we saw last week, where a lot that was sold by our government for \$110,000 last year was returned and then was put up for sale this year for \$200,000. This is not going to make housing more affordable.

Many of our communities are experiencing the same phenomenon. I ask you: where is our youth shelter? When will we see supportive housing in our communities? How effective have our strategies been for the hard-to-house? When can youth return to the Yukon? When can workers wanting to move here buy a house at a reasonable cost?

I can see another crisis looming. Statistics and all indicators show that the number of seniors in Whitehorse and in the Yukon is one of the fastest growing segments of our population. Are we ready? We need a comprehensive seniors strategy now to avoid a crisis in the future.

We need to ensure there is a coordinated strategy to allow our citizens to age with dignity. As we grow older, our transportation needs change, our need for housing changes, our health care needs change. As I go through my communities, there is increasing concern that seniors and elders will not be able to remain in their communities and live with the dignity and respect they deserve. I commend the ministers opposite for their commitments to the people of Mayo and their promises to work with the —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Member for Takhini-Kopper King, on a point of order.

Ms. White: Can I ask that the members opposite stop having their conversations and sit down, please?

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: We've dealt with this in the past and I'll say it again. There is —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: I would also ask the minister to remain quiet while I'm speaking or I may change my ruling.

There is a need to converse and move around and pass notes; it can be disruptive. I ask people to keep it down and keep it to a minimum.

I anticipate that there is some business coming up that the government is looking to put forward and move on. Sorry it's disruptive. You'll have to get used to it. I am often disturbed, as I'm trying to watch and listen, by all the movement of people going in and out. I've come to get used to it; the member will have to as well. I ask that members keep their voices down to a minimum please. Thank you.

The Member for Mayo-Tatchun has the floor.

Mr. Tredger: I commend the ministers opposite for their commitments to the people of Mayo and their promises to work with the Mayo Village Council, the Na Cho Nyäk Dun and the seniors of Mayo to provide housing for the seniors and elders of Mayo and area. I hope this will become a part of a coordinated strategy that will support the continuum of services to support changing needs. These might range from community-based home care to assisted living to long-term care. Let us hope that the new money provided for planning in the new budget will provide some answers and solutions to complex problems.

I will remind the ministers opposite that meetings and discussions are a great place to start, but we must ensure we move from ideas to plans. This government has become great at ordering reports, but the plans must be taken off the shelves, coordinated and put into action. They must be evaluated, refined and redeployed. Our seniors deserve no less.

I'm looking for similar strategies in education. Numerous reports from the *Education Act* review, the education reform project, to the Auditor General's report have been received, discussed and put on a shelf. It is time to get the solutions off the shelf and into action. The difference will not be made at the department level, but at the classroom level. The size of the Department of Education continues to grow, while the number of teachers working with children in classrooms diminishes. Where a difference is to be made, it will be made at the teacher-student level in the classroom. We need sustainable, measurable and attainable goals, and we need them now. The government talks about the need for skills training and preparing our children for work, yet many of our shops and home-ec rooms are either empty or underused. New schools are built with no industrial art space. They are deemed too expensive, yet research shows that grades 6 to 10 is an appropriate age to introduce applied arts and skills to our students. These could be future workers in the industry, but we need to serve them well. We are losing them now. We hear attendance is a problem, yet

music, art programs and experiential learning programs are being dropped due to staffing reallocation.

Where is the staff going? Over 10 school-based teachers are assigned to the department. These are the very programs being removed that interest our students in school and help us retain them there. Rural student achievement levels remain unacceptably low. Over 50 percent of rural students do not attend school past grade 10. This is a crisis, and it is serious for everyone. Again, there have been many studies and many initiatives. It is time to work in a meaningful way with First Nations and communities to make a difference. This has to be a priority now.

The Premier referred in the budget to 21 out of 28 schools offering First Nation programming. This is a critical area to the First Nations, and it is critical to the retention of their culture, yet I hear over and over that the First Nations are not involved and that the program is not working. We must work with the First Nations — again, in a meaningful way, to evaluate the current programs and bring forth local programs that achieve measurable and attainable goals.

The Energy, Mines and Resources department has allowed their enthusiasm for the extractive industry to shelter weak regulation and oversight, putting at risk our environment, all the while blithely promoting a myth of safety and regulation. Where is our commitment, as responsible stewards of the land, to our future generations? Again, there is a need for long-term strategic planning. We need to proceed post-haste with land use planning. It is not good enough to say land use planning takes too long or is too expensive. We have a legal and moral obligation to get it done. We must move from confrontation and litigation to a stance of cooperation and fairness. Mr. Speaker, it can be done. Just to the south of us, last year the governments of the area created the *Atlin Taku Land Use Plan*. This plan lived up to its obligations, was inclusive, provided certainty to the industry and users of the land, and has the support of all parties. This was done in three years and did not bankrupt anyone.

The temporary rise in the value of commodities has created a boom — more specifically, an exploration boom. The government refers to the resulting challenges and crises as good ones. That is of little consolation to those who are lining up in record numbers at the food bank. It is of little consolation to those who wish to buy a home, but can't afford it. It is of little comfort to the people of Keno who have had their community and lifestyle usurped for the expansion of an international mining company.

It is time to develop strategies and put the necessary finances toward resolving them now, and it is time to demand the extractive industry pay their fair share. It can be done. We can follow the lead of Newfoundland and of Australia. I was pleased to see in the budget baseline environmental studies beginning in the Rakla and White River area. However, these areas are already heavily compromised by exploration. As we have seen from discussions on the proposed Whitehorse Trough oil and gas development, we need more information and data to make informed decisions. Now is the time to get ahead of the curve and ensure that all areas of the Yukon receive the same research, so necessary and important, so that decisions can be made from an informed knowledge base before development takes place.

I implore this government to make land use planning a priority. Get it done, and get it done now. The Premier speaks of development of mines as a certainty, yet his ministers are telling us they cannot proceed with infrastructure until a need is proven. We know that with each new development comes increasing traffic on our roads. Now is the time to prepare. Carmacks has been promised a bypass road for several years, yet despite an obvious need, increasing traffic, and danger, there is no indication of it in the budget. Stewart Crossing remains one of the few communities within inadequate street lighting and traffic warning signs, yet the Klondike Road and Silver Trail are main transportation arteries. We are aware that there are increasing demands on our roads, yet where is the long-term planning? Where is the strategic planning for our citizens? When will we see passing and turning lanes on major haul roads? How long before tourists quit driving the Alaska Highway, like they have quit driving the Silver Road to Keno? How much upgrading will be required so our citizens don't have to ride the speed bumps each spring as heavier traffic, the melting permafrost and frost heaves play out?

Where is the upgrading and attention to emergency response services that will be necessary should there be an accident involving one of the increasing numbers of dangerous goods being transported to our communities, from Watson Lake and Teslin to Whitehorse, Carmacks, Mayo and Dawson? I am pleased to see the work being done to improve our solid-waste management. I hope the government continues to work with local providers to ensure that their unique situations are accommodated. I also hope that the increasing demands of industry are being considered. It is also important for the Yukon government to remain an active partner, providing expertise and finances where necessary and to retain the environmental liability, as local governments do not have the resources to do so.

As the people of Mayo and Tatchun know first-hand, the pace of development continues unfettered. Community resources are being strained to keep up with input and oversight. The Yukon Party has created an economy that is increasingly dependent on a notoriously fickle resource-extraction industry. The Yukon Party has us on a sugar high. I am afraid that when the commodity bubble bursts, we will be left with a sick feeling in our stomach and a lot of "we should have shuddered to think what the future generations will say. Mr. Speaker, I cannot in good conscience support this budget as presented. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It gives me great pleasure to rise here again. This is the tenth time that I have had the opportunity to speak on the main estimates in this Legislative Assembly. I would like to first of all begin by thanking my constituents for the opportunity to serve them over that period of time and for re-electing me for a third term last fall. I look forward to continuing to work with them over the remainder of this current term.

I would like to also begin by thanking my fellow MLAs, caucus members and the Premier, for the work that we've done together since the election last fall. The Premier campaigned in the leadership election and in the general election on a Team Yukon approach and a collaborative approach to working together. I am very pleased that has been something that we do.

In fact, the approach by all members of caucus has been very much focused on engaging and working together and working to address the responsibilities that we have been tasked with on behalf of Yukon citizens. I would like to thank all my fellow caucus members and to thank the Premier for the opportunity to serve as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and as House leader.

I would like to also thank the staff of Department of Energy, Mines and Resources for the assistance that they have provided me and for the work they do. I also, while wanting to be positive in my framing of it, do have to, on behalf of those staff, take offense to some of the characterizations that certain members of the opposition have placed on those staff and the suggestions, particularly that those staff do not care about the environment or are not focused on fulfilling their responsibility as regulators to responsibly regulate the activities that go on, including in the mining industry, including in oil and gas and in the many other areas that fall on to the responsibilities of that department. I want to again emphasize that I have confidence in the staff of Energy, Mines and Resources and think that the overwhelming majority of them are very much dedicated to treating their responsibilities with the utmost seriousness and trying, to the very best of their abilities, to fulfill those responsibilities and reflect the trust that Yukoners have placed on them.

I'd also like to begin my remarks by thanking government employees of other departments, including those I've had the opportunity of serving as minister over the years, but really to thank all the government employees of the Yukon government for the work that they do. It is those employees who are tasked with the responsibility of implementing the budget and most of the decisions that are made by this Legislative Assembly and by the government. I'd like to also thank non-governmental organizations and other partners that work with government in our collective attempt to provide high-quality services to Yukon citizens. I'd like to thank the other governments that we work with — First Nation governments, municipal governments, federal government, and provinces and territories that work together with us in various different ways on various different files, but are very important to our ability to successfully deliver the commitments we've made to Yukon citizens and to provide responsible government to Yukoners and to manage effectively, at the current point in time, and set an effective course for the future.

As a number of members have mentioned, one thing that must be mentioned in this tenth budget presented by Yukon Party governments is that the size of the budget has dramatically increased over time. There has been a significant increase in own-source revenues through the growth of the private sector. There has also been a significant increase in the federal transfer due to work by ministers over three Yukon Party governments and due to the interest of the federal government in working with us. I'd like to pass on my thanks to all involved, both those at the political level and Yukon government departments and federally that have worked on dealing with these to make this happen. A lot of work went into it and a lot of people deserve their share of the credit.

This budget is \$1,150,000,000. It is the fourth budget that has been over a billion dollars. The \$80-million surplus, as the Premier mentioned in introducing this, and as a number of

other members have mentioned, is part of maintaining a prudent financial position, providing us the ability both in this fiscal year and future fiscal years to respond to new and emerging issues, pressures and opportunities as well as maintaining a prudent amount of cash in the bank and net financial resources to deal with the risks that we have, including funding agreements that have end-dates to them and are not extended until and unless such point as we are able to reach an extension to those funding agreements.

A few other areas I would like to touch on — I would like to begin by thanking the minister and staff of Highways and Public Works for their efforts on the inclusion in this year's budget of the first phase of widening and upgrading the Hot Springs Road. That is a high priority for my constituents in that area and is something that I campaigned on supporting. I would like to thank the minister for his work in that area.

I would like to also — in setting the overall context for this budget — remind members of the situation we were in nine years ago today. Nine years ago today — or, slightly over nine years ago, I should say — when we first came to office, the Yukon economy was in decline. There were not a lot of opportunities out there for citizens, whether it be private sector or wherever they were seeking employment.

The Yukon was not in a situation where there was really a lot of hope for tradespeople, for young people entering the workforce, for people leaving school — all of those groups of people and others were looking at a situation where there weren't a lot of job opportunities. Housing prices were in decline and previous governments had created a housing supply by causing people to want to leave the territory because of poor government policies that created a lack of confidence, notably in the mining industry, but also in other sectors of the economy. It should be noted that the mining sector is very important to the Yukon. It is one sector of a diversified economy, but we have to acknowledge but as much as we all want to see the economy diversified and see other sectors grow in size in order to provide for the needs of the Yukon, one must not be blind to the fact that the Yukon economy has never done well when there was not a strong mining sector. So it is a very important part of the overall economic picture.

It must be managed responsibly; it must be managed effectively and we are committed to doing that. We will continue — as a number of my colleagues have mentioned — to focus on developing other areas of the economy and supporting their increased activity, including tourism, agriculture, the knowledge-based sector of the economy and cultural industries — to name but a few.

Another area that is highlighted by one of the motions we have called for debate tomorrow is the commercialization of technology that relates to research and development, particularly as it pertains to cold climate research and innovation, what I would say today, in speaking on this budget, as I said last fall to constituents at the doorstep during the election campaign, is that when you think of where things were a little over nine years ago, it is better to have the challenges associated with a strong economy — and there are challenges associated with it — than to have the problems associated with not having an economy and not having a lot of hope out there for friends, families, communities, children and so on.

When you look at the global context, comparing Yukon to the rest of Canada and Canada compared to the rest of the world, the fact that we have a strong economy right now is a rarity and it is something that we must manage effectively, diligently and prudently. That includes both keeping it a climate that maintains investor confidence and ensuring that we are taking the effective measures through regulations and through steps such as, in some cases — notably in the mining sector — requiring security for activities. We need to ensure that we take such steps to prudently manage our resources, and that's what we're doing.

Now there are a few other areas that I'd like to highlight that are of importance to my constituents, including the continued support for the community well in the Deep Creek area, additional investments in rural roads upgrades and the continuation of the rural domestic water well program, which is something that came forward to me as a request from constituents back in the first term I was elected for and that the government made come to fruition back in 2004. Also in talking about the colleagues with whom I serve — I'd like to note the fact that there are a number of new faces here and I'm very pleased to have their additions to the team.

We have had a significant turnover since the original Yukon Party government of 2002 and with nine new MLAs providing their strengths to that caucus, it's something that has certainly given us new ideas and new strength and energy to proceed forward for this term.

Other areas I would like to talk about include the responsibilities that fall under Energy, Mines and Resources because the responsibilities with which I am tasked as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources are of great importance to my constituents and the Yukon as a whole. These include Energy, Mines and Resources' role in making land available to Yukoners in dealing with our issues around land availability and fulfilling our commitments to Yukoners to make land available to Yukoners as a very important part of dealing with access to housing. To clarify that, or to rephrase that, rather, Mr. Speaker, I point out that housing — while the social housing, the social safety net portion of that approach to housing is important — without available lots, without appropriate lot development, without providing Yukoners opportunity to acquire land — housing prices will naturally rise and that the shortage of available land and the significant recent increase in the Yukon population is what has really led to the spike in housing prices in recent years.

That is something that does not just apply to the very high-end properties. It is also something that very much affects people who are looking for entry-level accommodation. It is a situation of supply and demand. We need to make appropriate supply available to fulfill that demand.

Other areas under Energy, Mines and Resources include: continuing to support the growth of the agricultural sector; managing our energy resources and taking the next steps to plan for the Yukon's needs in these areas; addressing local area planning and land use planning; providing for the success of the forestry sector; fulfilling — although we are not the lead department responsible for supporting the tourism industry — big game outfitting. They do have needs and interests that fall under Energy, Mines and Resources to manage and they are also important sectors of the economy. And, of course, the is-

sue of oil and gas development; placer mining; quartz mining; and mining exploration.

Mining, again, as I noted, has been really a key engine of the Yukon economy since before the Yukon first became a territory. Without the placer mining industry and the Klondike Gold Rush, the Yukon Territory would not have been formed when it was and it's doubtful it would have been formed since that time, in my opinion.

Again, there are a few things I'd like to highlight in that area — in the mining sector, particularly — to provide clarity and to correct what some of the opposition members have said about this area. I would point out that indeed the Yukon's placer mining sector is a sector of the economy that has been important to the Yukon for more than 100 years. It's also a sector that has been in decline in its production over the last two decades. In 1989, more than 165,000 ounces of gold were produced, whereas less than 47,000 ounces were produced in 2011. No public or large corporations are part of the placer industry in the Yukon, and most of the placer operations are small. They are family owned and most have a handful of employees.

Most of the owners — approximately 90 percent — and employees — approximately 68 percent — are Yukon residents and according to the latest study on this, roughly 92 percent of the operating expenses of placer mines are spent in the Yukon and fuel other sectors of the economy, particularly the service and supply sectors.

Again, that is an area that, in contrast to members opposite in the NDP who have suggested we should raise the royalty rates on placer mining, is something that we identified and we are not prepared to do. We think that the sector provides significant benefit to the Yukon and we need to recognize the fact that it has a lot of other costs and a lot of other challenges and provides a lot of economic benefit to Yukon citizens.

With regard to the quartz mining sector, again, we actually modernized the royalty section in 2008. Those royalty regulations were implemented in 2010 and they are based on national royalty approaches and generally put Yukon's royalty rates in the middle of royalty systems across Canada. Yukon's hard-rock royalty is a stepped or incremental royalty that is capped at a maximum of 12 percent of the profit of a mine.

What I would point out to members who have either missed the point or have misconstrued it, in fact the definition of "profit" under the *Quartz Mining Act* is not the same as the definition of "profit" under the *Income Tax Act*. To put that into layman's terms, what I mean by that is that some things that can be written off on an income tax deduction cannot be written off under the *Quartz Mining Act*. It defines what they can write off and what they cannot write off. One of the things that they can write off, in contrast to what the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, the NDP member, has indicated — one of the benefits that they have provided to the mining sector — and Capstone in particular has provided to the community of Pelly Crossing — is through the community economic development expense that can be written off from royalty under the *Quartz Mining Act*. They have put an investment into the community of Pelly Crossing of I believe it is \$1.5 million, if memory serves, into the development of a child care centre. They are allowed to write a portion of that off from their royalty payments, and so that is a benefit that they have provided directly into that com-

munity. That community and economic development expense is a new provision that we put in under myself as minister at the time in the 2008 amendments to the *Quartz Mining Act*.

Another thing I should note is that when the members talk about gaining more benefit from mining and talking about raising royalty rates, I have to point out that royalty rates are not charged on mining exploration, nor are they charged on mining exploration anywhere in the country. The Yukon's recent surge in mining activity has been through a real boom in mining exploration and it is not until the production stage that we, or any Canadian jurisdiction, charge royalties. So at this point in time, until the 2011 year, we expect to see a royalty filing from Alexco Resources that will show a royalty owing, based on their production in 2011. But until that point in time, the Capstone mine has been the only mine operating in the territory that is in full production and has been paying a royalty. They have been paying a royalty to the Selkirk First Nation because that mine is located on class A settlement land, and they have paid \$1.5 million in royalty to the Selkirk First Nation in 2008; \$5.9 million in royalty to the Selkirk First Nation in 2009; and \$3.8 million in 2010. We do not have the 2011 numbers. They're not complete by this point in time.

But again, in that area, the Yukon government collects the royalty, but simply transfers 100 percent of it to the Selkirk First Nation, so that roughly \$10 million in royalty benefit from that mine goes directly to the Selkirk First Nation, which that government can use as they see fit.

Another area that I'd like to touch on briefly is recognizing that the Yukon has also, under the devolution transfer agreement, had a cap on the amount of royalties that we can collect. That was \$3 million for mining and other resources and \$3 million for the oil and gas side. Through the work of the Premier and his success with the Prime Minister of Canada, we have a commitment from the federal government to amend the royalty cap to over \$40 million. It's based on the calculation of the gross expenditure base, but it works out to over \$41 million is the commitment to allow us to keep from resource revenues. But at this point in time, we have not had royalties from mines that would bring us even up to the \$3 million cap. We will see more than that, as we have mines like Alexco and Yukon Zinc coming into production, but it will certainly be some time before we would run into the new cap on the royalty rates.

I hope that's provided some context for the members.

Another thing I'd like to emphasize again is the fact that, despite our differences and despite our ideological differences in terms of how to approach government and manage it, I think most members in this House probably share some degree of common values in wanting to see a healthy economy and a healthy wilderness. One thing that does become frustrating, as we listen to debate from the NDP, is their characterization of the government and certain departments of the government as not caring about the environment and not caring about the Yukon wilderness. The Yukon's natural beauty, the Yukon's wilderness, and its healthy ecosystems are very important to every member of team Yukon, the Yukon Party caucus. They are very important to most Yukoners, and I am focused, and we are focused on taking the responsible steps to ensure that we continue to have natural beauty, wilderness, healthy ecosystems and also a strong, diversified economy that provides employment for our friends, our families, our communities, our

neighbours and sets the Yukon on the right track for generations to come.

A few other areas I would like to move on to is noting that for the members of the NDP, particularly, I would encourage them to be a little more careful with some of the information they bring forward to this House that they present as facts. We've heard at least three members of the NDP stand up and claim that \$2 million has been cut from the Department of Economic Development when, as the minister noted, that is not the case. Members appear to be doing their research on the basis of one incorrect newspaper article. So I would encourage them to look at the budget itself and look at the numbers that are in there. Comparing the mains to mains, the 2011-12 budget and the 2012-13 — there is a reduction of \$36,000 in the Department of Economic Development, not \$2 million, as at least three members of the NDP have indicated.

Another thing I would like to talk about, changing topics — changing veins — is that continued investments in areas like health care are very important to the Yukon and the Yukon's future. I would like to commend the Minister of Health and Social Services for his continued work and continued support for programs, including Yukon's health human resource strategy which has resulted in over 60 Yukoners being trained through the bursary programs under that strategy. I commend the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister of Education for the work they did in the continuation of the licensed practical nurse program at Yukon College. These are all very important to meeting Yukon's human resource needs for the health care sector. Yukon health care is something that will face very significant challenges in the years to come due to, in large part, the demographics of the population and the fact that baby-boomers will be placing more demands on the system. We see a number of baby-boomers who are employed in those professions also retiring, and the growth in costs across the country is a challenge.

Continuing to invest in Yukon's health and human resource capacity, as well as in technology in that area will be very important to providing for our ability to meet the needs of Yukon citizens, both now and for years to come.

I'd also like to commend the Minister of Health and Social Services for the money that's contained in this year's budget for the Sarah Steele building for beginning the capital planning to replace that building. That building, of course, is very important to the Yukon's addictions side of things — to the alcohol and drugs services programs and our ability to serve those clients. It is also a building that is very much in need of replacement and I'm pleased to support that money in this year's budget.

This budget also contains money for 10 beds at the Thomson Centre, six new hospital beds and six new employees for the home care program. Again, all of these are very positive investments in supporting the needs of Yukoners. Also, another area of this budget that I'm pleased to see come to fruition is the investment in second stage housing for Kaushee's Place, and I'd like to commend the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate for her work in this area. I believe the minister for Yukon Housing Corporation also has involvement with that and I'd like to thank everyone who's involved in this area. It certainly is something that is necessary and will improve our ability to help women fleeing violent situations.

A few other areas that I would like to touch on include the investment that expands our support for delivering on the *Yukon Solid Waste Action Plan*. This is the next stage in the work that we have done. I would note that it was we — the Yukon Party — who ended the burning of waste at dumps. This is something that has been important certainly to my constituents in the Deep Creek area and to others around the territory. For quite some time and under previous governments, this practice was going on. The government was itself contributing to burning waste and creating airborne toxins in Yukon communities and that's something that I am very pleased and very proud to have been a part of in ending that and moving to a much more responsible method of waste management.

I would like to address briefly some comments and questions the Member for Klondike raised around the concerns that he had heard from constituents about registration and processing of claims. That is something that I will look into for that member and have the department review what the situation is and expected pressures. The member also mentioned trades training and, as I am sure the member noted in the budget highlights, we do have a commitment to develop a pan-northern work force strategy. That is something that is ongoing right now with the other territories, N.W.T. and Nunavut. It is effectively a joint approach in working with the federal government on the issue of trades training, and working with the Yukon Mine Training Association, Yukon College and comparable bodies in N.W.T. and Nunavut to try to ensure that we are effectively responding to the demand by the mining sector for skilled trades and providing the opportunities for our citizens to become trained in those areas and seizing the opportunities that are provided to them from the mining sector activities.

Another area that I would like to briefly touch on is the investments that are in land development this year. There is \$34.984 million for land development in 2012-13. This again, as I emphasized, is really the heart of what we see as an effective approach to address challenges in terms of housing. It really is, as I emphasized, a matter of supply and demand. The demand for new lots is really central to the increase in housing prices that we've seen recently. The solution to it is to make more land available and provide opportunities for people who want to build houses. That flows right through from that. The most expensive houses and down to entry-level homes — all are affected by a shortage of land, which has contributed to it being very much a seller's market rather than being a balanced market between buyers and sellers.

Part of this will include, as we have committed, working with First Nations, including the letter of understanding signed with the Kwanlin Dun First Nation to work together on potential land opportunities on Kwanlin Dun First Nation settlement land and the announcement that we made the commitment to develop Lot 262 through an innovative approach that we have committed to. We have placed conditions on that property, that it has to be developed for a certain amount of affordable rental units. We'll be making further announcements in the near future about the timing of the release of that land and the conditions on that lot for those who have the interest in it.

In the briefest of time, I will try to wrap up here. There are just a few other areas that I would like to emphasize: the continued investment in transportation infrastructure, including more money for the Shakwak project; for the Campbell High-

way, for culverts on the Klondike Highway, for the North Canal Road, for the Atlin Road; the money that I mentioned already is \$2 million for the Hot Springs Road reconstruction for the first phase of that project; the money that is here for rehabilitation and surfacing of the Silver Trail; more money for the Dempster Highway; more money for the resource access road program; more investments in secondary road improvements; investments in improvement projects for the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, including taxiway improvements, rehabilitation and installation of a second bridge or jetway; investment in extending the water and sewer services to the south commercial area at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport; funding to address the needs of other Yukon airports; money for investment in the Upper Liard bridge; rehabilitation work on bridges including Aishihik River, Jarvis Creek, Stewart River and Haldane Creek.

These are all investments that are important to maintaining our infrastructure in good shape. A few other sectors of the economy I'd like to touch briefly on include the research and innovation that I mentioned. I'm pleased about the recent commitment of \$5 million over five years for the Yukon Research Centre of Excellence and the Yukon Cold Climate Innovation Centre. In the tourism sector, the Yukon's own investment in tourism is supported by \$590,000 from CanNor to continue promoting Yukon to overseas markets and \$800,000 for a joint northern marketing campaign aimed at promoting this industry to travel destinations in southern Canada.

Another area that I want to mention is the investments, which I'll expand on in greater detail in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources in debate during Committee of the Whole — the additional investments we've put into the Client Services and Inspection branch of Energy, Mines and Resources to expand capacity for conducting inspections and ensuring regulatory and environmental compliance. This is on top of a recent increase of 12 percent in the capacity of that branch to take on additional projects and responsibilities.

This year, we've also seen a significant increase that is responsible for the increase in the Energy, Mines and Resources overall budget number for completing remediation, design and planning for assessment of the Faro and Mount Nansen mine reclamation projects. Again, these projects were developed under the federal government watch and really are the example of why we have changed the way we regulate the mining sector, why we have stepped up inspections from what occurred under the federal watch, why we have taken a more active approach to managing and inspecting what is going on on the ground, and why we have put in place a progressive security policy that is aimed at always having sufficient security retained from the mining company to address what we would need to address if that company should happen to cease operations.

Additional investments I am pleased to see include more money for water monitoring equipment to provide better understanding of waterways in the White Gold district to better understand what the baseline data is in that area. I am pleased to see that investment. I am pleased to see the steps that are being taken under the lead of the Minister of Environment to implement our commitment to create a Yukon water strategy that focuses on our access to safe drinking water, increased data collection and information and, as well, through the Depart-

ment of Community Services, upgrading drinking water and waste-water treatment facilities in communities to meet new standards for water quality.

In the interest of time, I will wrap up, but in conclusion, one other area I would also like to commend is the \$7.3 million provided for a new emergency response centre that will serve as Whitehorse's primary ambulance station. I would like to thank the Minister of Community Services for her efforts on this project, and for the fact that this centre will significantly improve the ability of Yukon's Emergency Medical Services crew to respond to northern areas of Whitehorse and to areas such as my riding of Lake Laberge that currently have to see the ambulance go through downtown if it is based out of the existing ambulance station. With that, I commend this budget to the House.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Although I do believe everyone has spoken, I will still ask. Are there any other members who wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I'd like to get started by first thanking my constituents in the riding of Mountainview, which consists of McIntyre, Granger, Hillcrest and Valleyview. It certainly is an honour and a privilege, and I humbly represent them and their issues here in the House.

I'd like to sort of just talk a bit about the things that I've heard and where we're moving forward in terms of the budget speech that we've heard to this point. We're talking about the budget mains for 2012-13. Truly, this is a record investment by this government in Yukon and with this record investment there are no tax increases.

I have to say that, listening to what we've heard so far, I am certainly disappointed in the Leader of the New Democratic Party and her caucus. A couple of things that I just pulled out of the leader's response to the throne speech last December — a couple of comments that she made are that a government is wise to listen to the opposition for it is here to improve a government's performance, that the Yukon public can expect the Official Opposition to take strong stands and be ethical and a positive voice in the Legislative Assembly, and the Official Opposition is offering the government suggestions and proposals.

Mr. Speaker, that's what the Leader of the Official Opposition said during the throne speech. What did we hear through these comments in the last two days? We heard negativity and criticism. That's what we heard. I started counting negative words; I lost count; there was no point. Truly, the NDP have offered no plans and offered no solutions. What they came forward with is just purely criticism and a lack of understanding in terms of some of the things that were being discussed. Their assessment of the budget, in my opinion, is — to use a word that they use commonly — "reckless," and I believe, to their own end.

Certainly the NDP have continued the legacy of trying to paint a picture without telling the whole story. That is something that we have heard in the past and obviously will continue to this day.

Just not very long ago, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun asked a very simple question: Where is the plan? Where is the strategy? The plan is the platform; that is the plan. That is what

we were elected on. The strategy is the budget. That is how we will deliver that platform to Yukoners; it is through the budget. I think that that is pretty straightforward.

The Leader of the Official Opposition identified what she termed as some issues — three issues — with the budget. I would like to comment on those. I do believe that this budget does reflect the public interest, quite simply again because we campaigned on this and on what we were going to do. October 11 there was an election and Yukoners re-elected a third-term majority government for the Yukon Party.

This budget truly is a reflection of those priorities, which we put forward in our platform. The vision — again, vision and strategy is the budget. That's what the budget is. It addresses comprehensively many, many issues that affect all Yukoners. Some of those things are housing, land, energy, environment, health, education, infrastructure, tourism — the list goes on and on and on. All of these things we put in the context of addressing the four pillars that we identified and have spoken about, not just through this new government but in previous Yukon Party governments as well.

Financial numbers — the Leader of the NDP thought that they weren't believable. I have to say that when it comes to talking about financial management, I just say kindly that I don't think that we'll take advice from the New Democratic Party on financial management. I mean, this is a party that has a history of fiscal mismanagement — the largest deficit in the history of the Yukon Territory was by the New Democratic Party — a \$64-million deficit back in the 1990s. As a result of that, we did create the *Taxpayer Protection Act* — as a result of that financial mismanagement.

I want to just talk a moment about the budget and just sort of highlight a couple of things about its purposes. I think it serves two purposes: One, it details the proposed expenditures that are required for the public good. Second, it provides the Legislature and the general public with an overview of our fiscal or our financial position. This government is tabling a budget with expenditures at a record level, nearly \$1.16 billion. Not only is this government investing a large amount in the Yukon, but it is doing so in a fiscally responsible manner. Expenditures are not being made at the expense of the future. We are not mortgaging the future. To the contrary, the opposite is occurring. We continue to save for the future. We're making record investments, but we're continuing to save for the future. The government will make these expenditures — this investment in the Yukon — and have a surplus at the end of the year of approximately \$80 million. This is prudent fiscal management.

The preeminent measure of the government's financial strength is net debt. This government does not have any net debt. We have net financial resources. The government is expected, to the end of the fiscal year, to have net financial resources in excess of \$100 million. Now this is our savings account.

There is enough cash and financial assets — which would be our accounts receivable and any investments we have — to pay off all liabilities — liabilities being accounts payable, liabilities for environmental cleanups and environmental liabilities as well. We take all of our assets and we subtract our liabilities, and we still have approximately \$100 million left over. That is called net financial resources.

While most provinces and territories only have net debt — meaning they owe more than they are capable of paying — this isn't the case in the Yukon. In Canada, only Alberta and Yukon are in this enviable financial position. Yukoners should be very proud. This forward-looking, healthy financial position provides Yukoners not only with security, but with the flexibility to be responsive to future challenges. Strong financial leadership has provided us with this enviable financial position. This enviable financial position has allowed us to present this budget for the 2012-13 year that provides much for Yukoners. But there is a surplus, as we said. This surplus gives us the opportunity to either take advantage of new opportunities, if they arise, or to deal with risks.

There are risks out there that we identified. Building Canada — last year for funding is 2014. THSSI — the territorial health system sustainability initiative — we got an extension from the Government of Canada this last August for two more years, ending the end of the 2013-14 year. However, at this point, we still don't have any guarantees that that money will be there.

Shakwak — the Shakwak agreement started 1977 and since 2009, we haven't had a long-term deal. It has been on a year-to-year basis. So there are no guarantees that there is going to be money there either. I think we're investing this year \$15 million in Shakwak ourselves. We've spoken, as well, about the appeal to the Yukon Supreme Court on the French school issue. This, as well, is a risk. Depending upon what happens, we need to be able to have money resources available.

We've also heard from the Minister of Education, talking about schools. Over and above the F.H. Collins school that we're building, we probably have to look at one or maybe two more new schools here in Whitehorse to meet the needs of a growing Yukon population. The emergency room in the hospital — you know, as we have more people living here, there's more pressure, more strain, on our health services and we'll have to look at that as well and see what the investment is. So that's a risk.

Of course, infrastructure — the ongoing challenges that we have with infrastructure. That's energy infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, and communication infrastructure. Really, it is a challenge. When I talked about where the NDP was historically, I just looked back to that record when they left power. We had double-digit unemployment; we had an exodus of thousands of people — thousands — and they were primarily between 25 and 34 years of age. Really, truly our legacy is people to build Yukon's future, and they did not create a job. Really, truly the only legacy that's left of those years — we're reminded of it every month when you get your electrical bill. You still see the legacy of that investment.

Now, the Yukon Party has created an environment for public sector investment here in the Yukon and the result of that is we've had a record population, record number of people eligible to work in the Yukon, record number of people working in the Yukon, unemployment between five and six percent for 2011 — which is among the lowest in Canada — record building permits, record retail sales.

Truly, what we have is a private sector economy that now rivals the public sector economy in terms of input into GDP. We have come a long, long way as the Minister of Energy,

Mines and Resources did state earlier, looking back to 10 years ago.

The other comment I want to make about this is about fudging numbers. I just want to comment that in a budget — a budget truly is an estimate. It is a working, living, breathing document. It certainly lives in a very uncertain world. Mr. Speaker, to be out on projections on a net basis by \$10 million when you have a billion dollars in revenue and a billion dollars in expenses means that you are within a half of one percent. I think no matter where you look, that is a pretty good number.

I wanted to take a couple of minutes to talk about payroll tax that we have heard about from the NDP a few times, thinking that this is something that would be truly great for Yukon. I think we need to talk about that and we need to understand what a payroll tax is. A payroll tax is a tax on work. It is not a tax on income. People who work and make low levels of income either pay no tax or very little bit of tax, but with a payroll tax everybody pays.

You can't say that you fly in and out of here, so you have to pay this extra tax. You can't do that. In fact, of tax on work, the federal government will not administer it because it is a tax on work and not a tax on income. So that would mean that we would have to do that — we would have to put in place the bureaucracy to be able to administer this program.

Let's just use the example: if you have a family that is bringing in a \$100,000 combined income and you apply a \$2,000 payroll tax, that means you're taking \$2,000 out of their pocket — everybody. They don't have that money all year and they can, on their taxes, apply to get it reimbursed in April or May of the next year. So, in the meantime, that's \$2,000, not in their pocket, to go out for dinner or to go to a movie, or to buy some clothes, or to buy a television, or to do anything else. Not only that, I would also like to comment on the impact that this would have on businesses, because businesses would have to collect all this money and send this money to the government as well.

The last comment I want to make on this is with regard to the *Taxpayer Protection Act*. I talked about and that I mentioned earlier that was put in place as a result of a massive deficit created by the New Democratic Party.

Now, because of the *Taxpayer Protection Act*, you couldn't just go ahead and implement a payroll tax without going to the people to have a referendum on such a thing.

So I wanted to just talk briefly about NDP and mining. In the Leader's response to the budget, she said that Yukon New Democrats have a proud history of supporting responsible mining in the Yukon. The NDP has history — has shown us — what they have done is driven that industry out of the territory. You know, I guess maybe that's part of their strategy in terms of their housing and their energy strategy — if we get rid of mining, then we get rid of the economy, there won't be an issue when it comes to energy or to housing, because it will solve that problem.

Well, we're not of that stripe. Modernizing the industry — really, what it's about is restricting that industry, and the consequence of that has always been to see an exodus, and not only of that industry, but of the thousands of jobs that are indirect jobs that would also leave as a result of a decrease in that industry. Royalties — I just think they don't get it.

I guess I'll just put it that way.

When it comes to creating jobs within the mining industry, that's what it is. The first priority that the government has is to create jobs. So that's what we do, because creating jobs creates wealth for this economy. There are both the direct jobs and the indirect jobs. We created the environment to have this kind of economic investment from the private sector that has resulted in people coming here.

We talk about royalties. I think it was actually said before Christmas that when you combine the taxes — corporate taxes — and the royalty rate in the Yukon, mining companies for base metals have the highest rate in the country. Indeed, for quartz mining royalties, when you do a scan of the country, we are in fact sitting in the middle. We don't have the cheapest royalties and we don't have the most expensive royalties. We're sitting in the middle and the opportunity to create jobs and get these projects going is and will be our priority, because allowing these companies to frontload the expenses allows these projects to become feasible and move forward.

If we put up all the roadblocks, then they just say, well, you know, we can't do it. Then, not only do we not get any royalties, but we don't get any jobs. I have to say — and we all know and we have spoken about it here in the House — 600 direct jobs in three mines right now. There are thousands of indirect jobs out there, as well, and that goes not just for quartz mining but also for placer mining. I have described the placer miners truly as the farmers of the north. What we get from all these family businesses is a tremendous amount of jobs and a lot of people paying income taxes. That is where we benefit. It is not just the direct people who are placer mining, but it is the fuel businesses, it is the grocery stores, it is the expeditors, it is the planes and helicopters, tire businesses, lumber shops, vehicles, wholesale and retail—all of that included. These companies that come here and work employ all these people, so they are also reinvesting in our community. We heard examples of the Yukon Gold Mining Alliance in terms of their support in Ross River. It's in the sports; it's supporting and sponsoring hockey teams. It's in arts; it's in music; it's in culture. They become a part of the fabric of who we are today.

The last thing I want to say about royalties is, you know, my disappointment that the New Democratic Party doesn't acknowledge the people of Selkirk First Nation as Yukoners, because they have benefited in the last two years by approximately \$10 million in direct royalties on the category A lands. So to say that Yukoners aren't benefiting from royalties — I'm disappointed that they're not actually looking at and agreeing that the people of the Selkirk First Nation are not actually members of the Yukon and the direct benefit there is to that community.

Now, the next thing I wanted to mention — because I did write it down as you guys were talking — was land-based treatment. The leader said, “token nod” to talking to First Nation leadership. You know — absent, meaningful consultation — not simply a phone call. Well, I take the issue of addiction very seriously. I think I have spoken to the fact that my business in Yukon for 20 years of working downtown dealt with a lot of these people and I understand the consequences of addiction. We've talked about it.

We've talked about the financial impact on health, on social services, on justice. We talked about the impact on the RCMP, emergency rooms, and our jails. We talked about the

occurrence of FASD. We've talked about women's violence, and we talked about kids without parents, essentially, because of addictions. We said that we want to get this right. We understand we need to fix the detox program, and then we need to provide more care after that. One of those ways is through land-based treatment. This is something that was advocated for by our former colleague, Minister Edzerza, and is something that we're committed to looking forward on. This isn't a nod or a token call; this is trying to put together something that could truly be bigger than Yukon, and that everybody could be a part of. I've made those calls. I've talked to them, except for two so far. There are only two that, unfortunately, I haven't been able to talk to. But the support has been overwhelming, in terms of moving forward with working together and having this as part of the Yukon Forum — to be able to see what our next steps would be to create an opportunity, to build something of significance that perhaps could be utilized, not only by Yukon people, but also Canadians from all other parts of Canada to be able to come to a program that would be very unique. So, because I saw you look at the clock, and I look at the time, I guess I will move that — I will just sit down.

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. Pasloski: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Disagree.

Mr. Tredger: Disagree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Disagree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Stick: Disagree.

Mr. Barr: Disagree.

Mr. Elias: Disagree.

Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yea, eight nay.

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

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 6 agreed to

Speaker: As the hour is past 5:30, this House stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

The following documents were filed March 20, 2012:

33-1-7

Whistleblower Protection, Select Committee on: letter (dated March 20, 2012) from Hon. Brad Cathers, Government House Leader, to Jim Tredger, MLA, and Sandy Silver, MLA (Cathers)

33-1-8

Pacific salmon, radiation from the Fukushima reactor in Japan: letter (dated January 17, 2012) from Darius Elias, MLA Vuntut Gwitchin, to the Hon. Keith Ashfield, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Government of Canada, and response (dated February 21, 2012) from Hon. Keith Ashfield, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Government of Canada, to Darius Elias, MLA Vuntut Gwitchin (Elias)