

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, December 11, 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 Frostbite Music Festival

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to give tribute to the Frostbite Music Festival as Yukoners get ready to celebrate its 35th festival in February 2013.

In 1979, organizers of the very first Frostbite Music Festival had the creative idea of bringing musicians up to Yukon in the dead of winter. Now, 35 years later, Frostbite can lay claim to having brought some of the most exciting acts to stages north of 60. In Frostbite's own words: "From Parachute Club to Ani DiFranco, Skinny Puppy to the Rheostatics, Frostbite knows that the music has to be piping hot to sear through the darkest depths of winter."

Frostbite has brought together musicians, collaboration and inspiration, which has led to lasting relationships and the forging of our very own flourishing music scene. Frostbite has established itself as a not-to-be-missed event on the winter social calendar of many Yukoners, as both audience members and volunteers.

Every February, Frostbite signals us together to dance, jam, enjoy and celebrate music and to appreciate the talent of local and visiting musicians. Young artists have benefited from Frostbite's vision of developing Yukon's emerging voices. Young people feature prominently in events such as the annual battle of the bands. Noted for their exuberance, these events have spawned some incredible careers. Over the years, Frostbite's eclectic musicians have delighted audiences in equally eclectic venues, including clubs, hotels, woodshops, airport hangars, the Yukon Arts Centre and Yukon College. One of its most unique venues was the Ice Palace in Whitehorse's original recreation centre, now the Yukon Transportation Museum.

The Government of Yukon recognizes the important role festivals such as Frostbite play in Yukon communities. Since 2005, we have provided \$270,000 in operating and project funding to this much-loved festival. Today I want to congratulate the Frostbite Music Festival organizers, volunteers, musicians and audiences and the community at large for 35 years of fantastic music. We all appreciate the artistic excellence, good times and vitality your hard work brings to the long Yukon winter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of Dr. Peyman Shoshtari

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, it's a real pleasure today to rise in the House to pay tribute to an individual who, as recently as noon today, came to see me to inform me that as a result of a motion in this Legislature, or some changes to regulations in this Legislature, supported by all members of the Legislature, there was an extension in the ability for international doctors to work an additional two years in the Yukon.

It's my pleasure to inform all members that Dr. Peyman Shoshtari just received word this morning that he passed his Canadian equivalency medical exams and that, as he put it, now he's "actually a doctor in the Yukon Territory."

He doesn't feel that he's any smarter than he was two hours ago when he received the information, but now he is legitimately a doctor. Dr. Shoshtari has been a valued member of the Yukon medical community for the past number of years while studying and practising under a limited licence as a foreign-trained doctor. As he said at noon today, he feels 10 years younger than he did this morning at 8:00 a.m. I wanted to make sure that I thank all members of the Legislature, too, for their support in changing the regulation. It's obvious that already we have had results. So I appreciate it all, and congratulations to Dr. Shoshtari from all of us.

Applause

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Hanson: I ask the House to join me in welcoming Gus Van Harten to the Legislative gallery and to Yukon. Mr. Van Harten is a social professor at Osgoode Hall Law School and is in Whitehorse for a public forum on the *Canada-China Foreign Investment Protection and Promotion Agreement* at the Frank Slim Building tonight. I believe he will also be meeting with the CYFN leadership, municipal politicians, labour, business and representatives from the Department of Economic Development.

I also understand that he had his first dog sledding experience earlier today, and I hope that the warm weather that seems to have accompanied him will stay awhile, so please join me in welcoming him.

Applause

Ms. Stick: I would like to ask the House to join me in welcoming members of the Yukon Childcare Association, including Kate Swales. I also would like to introduce one of my constituents, Donna Swales. Please welcome them.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure and privilege to welcome two new Yukon residents to the gallery. They have recently moved to the Yukon from India as part of the nominee program. Please join me in welcoming Shodhana Chinna and Rozlin Brar.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the annual report of the Yukon Housing Corporation for the year ended March 31, 2012.

Speaker: Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

PETITIONS

Petition No. 10

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, to the Yukon Legislative Assembly, this petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT WHEREAS the Yukon is now one of the only regions in North America that remains uncontaminated by genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, in seeds, crops or animals; and

WHEREAS it is very likely that genetically modified crops, once planted, would cause irreversible harm to our natural ecosystems and sustainable farms; and genetically modified animals could cause unknown harm to the people eating the meat;

WHEREAS there is currently no legislation preventing the planting of genetically modified crops in the Yukon or the importation of genetically modified animals;

THEREFORE we the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Yukon to put in place a territory-wide ban on the planting of any genetically modified seed or the importation of any genetically modified animals in the Yukon.

Speaker: Are there any other petitions for presentation?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to meet with the Yukon Childcare Association, as requested, as soon as possible.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Tredger: I would like to introduce the president of the Yukon Teachers Association, Katherine Mackwood, and an employee of the Yukon Teachers Association, Doug Rody.

Applause

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Before proceeding to Question Period, the Chair will rule on a point of order raised yesterday by the Government House Leader.

Yesterday, during second reading debate on Bill No. 49, *Act to Amend the Oil and Gas Act, 2012*, the Leader of the Of-

ficial Opposition said, "There are some Yukon politicians still involved who are very against the whole process of Yukon land claims. Some of them have gone on to bigger and better things, but the historic record will show that they never wanted Yukon land claims. They did not think that Yukon Indians should be accorded that right. That attitude seems to still be prevalent within the Yukon Party."

The Government House Leader then rose on a point of order and said, "Mr. Speaker, you have ruled before that members are supposed to treat each other as honourable and not to suggest that someone has a bias against a group of people. To suggest that the type of attitude the member described, which is offensive and racist, was present today would certainly seem to be clearly contrary to 19(g). I think she should retract and apologize to this House and to past members of the Legislative Assembly."

The Official Opposition House Leader then intervened on the point of order and said, "My colleague is expressing opinions based on knowledge that she is aware of, and I would suggest that this is a dispute between members."

The Leader of the Official Opposition then said, "The member opposite implied that I used the word 'racist'. I did not."

In raising the point of order, the Government House Leader made reference to Standing Order 19(g) which says, "A member shall be called to order by the Speaker if that member...imputes false or unavowed motives to another member."

In reviewing the statement made by the Leader of the Official Opposition the Chair does not find that she attributed a motive, false or otherwise, to any member. Further, the Chair agrees that the Leader of the Official Opposition did not use the word "racist", nor does the Chair feel her comments implied racism on the part of any current or former member of this House. To find otherwise would be to assert that it is racist for anyone to oppose First Nations land claims or aboriginal rights. These are political issues about which people are free to disagree.

In the Chair's view, what occurred yesterday afternoon is another example of something that has occurred with some frequency during this Legislative Assembly. To quote from a ruling I gave on May 9, 2012: "It is common for members, during the course of debate and during Question Period, to offer their interpretation of the positions or policies of parties other than their own. These characterizations, which tend to be unflattering, frequently give rise to points of order.

"Procedurally speaking, characterizing a party's policies or positions in an unflattering manner is not the same as attributing a false or unavowed motive to another member."

I went on to say, "Determining the true nature of a party's policy or position on an issue is a matter for members to resolve through the process of debate, questions and responses. It is not a matter of procedure on which the Speaker can rule."

All that being said, the Chair would also like to reiterate a point he made in ruling on a point of order on October 31 of this year. At that time the Chair urged members to "...reflect upon statements they make in the House. While these statements may not be out of order, members should consider

whether they contribute to raising the rhetorical temperature in the House.”

Members have to realize that, as members of this Legislative Assembly, they play a leading role in setting the tone of political discussion in Yukon. During this sitting there have been accusations from both sides of the House that certain members or parties are dividing or polarizing Yukoners. The Chair believes that all members are honourable and doing their level best for their constituents and Yukoners.

However, members need to ask themselves whether the debate — from both sides of the House — is contributing to division and polarization. For example, members need to ask themselves whether the public interest is being served when they inject into current debates discussions of past political conflicts.

Members of this House, and the general public, have expressed a desire for a higher level of order and decorum in the House. At the same time, members want to be free to express themselves as they wish during proceedings, including when it comes to criticizing their political opponents. I hope members can appreciate the difficult position that this creates for the Chair. This position is made more difficult by the fact that any intervention by the Chair, either on his own or in ruling on a point of order, will necessarily occur after the offending words have been spoken.

The point the Chair wishes to make is that the Chair will do what the Chair can to balance the need for order and decorum with the right of members to express themselves. The Chair looks forward to all members doing the same.

The Chair thanks those members who contributed to resolving the point of order. We will now proceed with Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Affordable housing

Ms. White: I want to read an e-mail I received yesterday from a Yukon senior who is poor, afraid and struggling to keep a roof over her head.

These are her words: “My landlord has sent out a notice socking it to his tenants in my trailer park. He’s upped the rents, effective in March, by \$50 a month — \$600 a year. I’m almost frantic about this. When one jacks the rent, they all do it. Landlords by and large just have money signs in their eyes making it impossible for them to see anything else. Enough is a concept that they do not understand. My pensions will not be able to absorb \$600 a year.”

What does this Yukoner do? What supports will the government provide and what comfort can the government give to this senior?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: That is in fact why the Government of Yukon has gone ahead with the modernization of residential tenancy legislation, which is up for debate and which we have spent some time on the floor of the Legislature debating the very merits of.

As I have referenced before, the new act does place limits on rent increases to one time per year after the first year of ten-

ancy, with three months’ notice. This prevents tenants from having the rent increased multiples times in a year.

When it comes to other provisions, of course, we have acted on a number of other areas — future rent, overholding, abandoned property — again, speaking to a new dispute resolution mechanism as well, all of which all tenants can subscribe to and landlords can adhere to as well.

So we look forward to certainly bringing this act to fruition and getting on with the regulations and proclaiming the act in its entirety.

Ms. White: Those words sound very hollow and offer very little hope. I’m going to continue with the e-mail.

I quote: “I’m afraid of what is going to happen to me. The only thing I have left to give up is \$39 a month that I pay the Yukon government to keep extended health benefits. If my rent goes up, I will have to use that money just to have a roof. If all the seniors who currently have extended health benefits and have to give it up, the cost to the Yukon government would be enormous. As I have said before, I only have basic cable, no cellphone, and I don’t have any perks like voicemail on my phone. My car is 13 years old. I don’t smoke or drink.”

I will ask the question the senior raised in her e-mail directly: What can she give up to raise an extra \$600 a year?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Other options exist for seniors who are in search of housing here in the Yukon. Through the Yukon Housing Corporation, the Yukon government has constructed 113 affordable housing units for seniors and elders in the territory, including new construction here in Whitehorse at Waterfront Place, construction in the communities of Haines Junction, Watson Lake, Faro, Teslin and, as recently as five years ago, the 48 suites that were constructed at the athletes village residence in Whitehorse. All members know the planning is underway for a new 34-unit facility to be built on the site of the old Alexander Street Residence, so there are options this government is putting forward, not only through the work done by the Minister of Community Services with respect to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, but also the work done by the Housing Corporation and the good work done by the board of directors there in addressing seniors’ housing needs throughout the territory.

Ms. White: Yukon Housing Corporation can only assist if a citizen qualifies. Again, I will continue with my e-mail — I quote: “My options? I can put my animals to sleep and apply for seniors housing again, though I would sit on the porch and freeze to death with them before I’d put them down or give them to strangers. I’ve already been refused Yukon Housing because I am” — and I quote — “‘safe’ where I am and others are needier. I may have to face the humiliation of going to the food bank. I am right on the edge. I have too much for welfare and not enough to live and stay warm. Thank God for the pioneer grant. I have worked and lived in the Yukon since 1965. I have never received public funds through welfare or EI or any other way, and I don’t deserve to be in the line at the food bank.”

If government claims to care and be compassionate, why are Yukoners like this falling through the cracks?

Hon. Mr. Graham: It's one of the reasons we have a number of programs in place for seniors in the territory and the member opposite did mention one, which is the pioneer utility grant. The pioneer utility grant is also indexed; that was something that this government brought in some time ago. We also have the Yukon seniors income supplement, which is geared to the guaranteed income supplement from the Government of Canada. We are currently looking at making changes to that because we are aware that some seniors in the Yukon lost about \$25 a month during the last increase in the GIS, so we are looking forward to repairing the damage there. We also have the Yukon supplementary allowance, which the Member for Riverdale South and I just had a conversation about the other day.

Unfortunately it is only for people who qualify for social assistance, but we have a number of these programs available and we're constantly reviewing those programs to ensure that they meet the needs of Yukon senior citizens.

Question re: Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy

Ms. Stick: Mr. Speaker, the public have this government's *Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy*. We've been waiting a long time for this. The report says that poverty is one of the most obvious factors contributing to social exclusion, but it offers no real solutions in this report to reduce poverty. What we do have is a reiteration of initiatives already begun which have not yet reduced our poverty numbers. I do not see new solutions and I do not see clear timelines and goals to measure the success.

Will the Minister of Health and Social Services tell the House what new solutions and initiatives this government will use to reduce poverty and how he will measure those successes?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I didn't bring a copy of the *Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy* with me today or I would have gone through the large number of initiatives that have begun in the last couple of years. This is a strategy that has been three years in the making, Mr. Speaker.

What we announced yesterday and what was produced was the actual poverty reduction and social inclusion strategy itself. If the member opposite had time to read the strategy, she would have noticed in there that what we're saying now is we will get together with the community advisory committee in whatever form that takes along with the deputy minister advisory committee that will be formed within the government to strategize and determine what we will do over the next few years. In simple terms, I guess, this is a strategy about how the government will move forward in the future and how government departments will work together to improve the lot of people who are experiencing poverty in the territory.

Ms. Stick: What I heard was that this is a strategy for a strategy.

Statistics show that 2,484 adults and children are living in poverty with under \$30,000 a year in the Yukon. We all know that is not enough to care for a family. Rental housing alone can easily use up half of that income. The report recognizes

that adequate and affordable housing is of major importance in the reduction of poverty and for securing employment.

One of the three main goals of this strategy is to reduce inequities. Yet, the new *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* does not exclude rental price gouging or eviction without cause. Within the social inclusion lens, is the minister prepared to recommend to his colleagues that the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* be amended to reduce these inequities?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I've never been accused of being the sharpest knife in the drawer, but it has taken me almost this long to understand how the game is played here in Question Period. By the time I answer all the inaccuracies in the little speech that leads up to the question, I don't have time to answer the question itself. Then, of course, I'm accused of not being responsive in Question Period.

All I can say is the *Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy* was three years in the making. It included a great deal of public consultation. It also set some base guidelines. The department of statistics, along with the three reports that were produced during the three years, have set some basic guidelines for how we will measure the poverty reduction strategy over the next two to three years. That's what we're doing. We're making steps in this area, and we will continue to do so.

Ms. Stick: I would have thought that, after three years, we would have a strategy with goals that are clear and measurable — otherwise, how do you manage when you don't measure?

Another goal of the strategy is to improve access to government services. The report recognizes the families receiving social assistance report they have challenges in this area and that inadequate income is a major issue. There are many innovative fiscal solutions out there that have been proven to reduce poverty: raise the minimum wage, implement a living-wage policy, raise social assistance rates, stop the clawback of child tax benefit supplements, or pilot a guaranteed income. These are all initiatives that should be considered and should have been in there.

Will the Minister of Health and Social Services commit to immediately raising the rates of social assistance to help reduce poverty and guaranteed incomes for people?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Once again the preamble sounded to me like an election platform for the New Democratic Party. What this social inclusion and poverty reduction strategy is, as we said yesterday — and at the press conference yesterday, the community advisory committee chair also said that it was a good start.

It's an excellent place to begin and it clearly outlines where we will go from here. As I said originally, it has a clear baseline where this whole process starts based on the reports, based on the statistics that were produced by the department here in the government and we will be able to measure what progress we make over the next few years.

As for some of the options mentioned by the member opposite, we're not trying to just give away money to people who are experiencing these problems. What we're trying to do is make the system better so that these people are able to stand on their own two feet because if we start providing huge numbers

of dollars to them on a monthly basis, what we will do is encourage more dependency and that's what we're trying to get away from. What we're trying to do is encourage people to stand on their own two feet by providing training, by providing all of the other things that we do.

Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I could go on like this for hours. I'll sit down now though.

Question re: Whistle Bend development

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for the Minister of Community Services about the Whistle Bend subdivision. Normally, when a subdivision is complete it is turned over to the City of Whitehorse. In the case of Whistle Bend, that has yet to happen. Can the minister confirm the new Whistle Bend subdivision has not yet been turned over to the city and can she help explain why?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: The Government of Yukon is very much committed to adhering to our commitments under the land development protocol agreement that was struck back in 2004, which provides the authority for the Yukon government to go in and develop the subdivision. As the member opposite is fully aware, we have been able to let a number of lots in the first phase — over 111 lots — and we are also working to adhere to our commitments with respect to phase 2 of the development. This is in addition to all of the other residential lots that we are proceeding with throughout the territory, to the tune of over \$35 million in support of lot development in every community.

Mr. Silver: For a number of years the Yukon government has been behind the eight ball when it comes to lot development. There was demand and no supply. A decision was made to rush the development of Whistle Bend subdivision; when things are rushed, problems do occur. The infrastructure for Whistle Bend is a good example. The City of Whitehorse has not accepted the infrastructure for Whistle Bend because they are not satisfied with it. It is my understanding that they are asking for repairs to be made before they actually will accept it.

Will the minister confirm that the city has not accepted the infrastructure and can she table any correspondence to the city on this issue?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Again, we're adhering to our obligations pursuant to the land development protocol with the City of Whitehorse — something that was struck back in 2004, which provides the city the authority to provide the design and the planning protocols with the Yukon government left to develop the subdivision.

Contrary to what the member opposite may believe, the Yukon government is very serious about developing residential lots and commercial and industrial lots and agriculture properties throughout the territory. That is in fact why the Yukon government for the first time in many years actually has lots available over the counter. Phase 1 lots were approved and went through by way of a lottery process earlier this fall and we're very pleased to see many of those lots going out the door to many homebuilders and homeowners. Again, there are lots available over the counter as there are in many other communities.

Mr. Silver: I'm not talking about lots available for the market. I'm talking about Whistle Bend subdivision. It's bad enough that the Government of Yukon rushed into this project, but to make matters worse, it is also in court with the main contractor on this project. So far the minister has delivered expensive lots that aren't selling that well, infrastructure that the city won't assume responsibility for because they believe that there is a problem with it and a lawsuit with the Yukon contractor.

On top of all this, the government is now withholding money from the contractor for work he completed. He is owed \$3.5 million. That's a lot of money for a small Yukon company that may not survive. They have bills to pay. What is the minister doing to resolve this dispute which is over and above the court case that I have already mentioned?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I believe that I have tried to state for the member opposite — for the MLA for Klondike — a number of times on this very issue that this is a matter that is before the courts.

As I have articulated a number of times, Community Services undertakes some hundred million dollar plus in community infrastructure projects, many of which certainly are underway, some of which are completed and ongoing. We do our utmost to ensure that these projects come on time and on budget, and I applaud the work of the Department of Community Services and the many officials who ensure that we have residential lots, that we have drinking water and that we certainly treat waste water and so forth.

We're very much committed to delivering lots on time and on budget, and Whistle Bend is by far the single largest subdivision project in the territory.

We look forward to proceeding with phase 2 delivery of lots next fall, building on the 100 plus lots that were delivered earlier this year. We look forward to working with the City of Whitehorse in tandem with our protocol that spells out our respective authorities.

Question re: Childcare grants

Ms. Stick: I have for tabling a copy of a petition signed by over 215 people that the Yukon Childcare Association presented to the Minister of Health and Social Services this past summer. The petition calls for a full review of the direct operating grant and issues related to childcare. It is signed by parents and childcare workers alike.

According to the association, the minister did not respond. On October 5 of this year, childcare workers in Whitehorse and Dawson took to the streets in protest — again with the support of many parents. Again the minister did not respond. On November 23 of this year, the association wrote an open letter to the minister to correct inaccuracies in his response to questions the NDP raised in the Legislature. Yet again, he did not respond. Will the minister stop ignoring these requests and agree to meet with the Yukon Childcare Association?

Hon. Mr. Graham: One thing I'm very sure of is that any time somebody wants to meet with me, I meet with them. I have a completely open-door policy. If there is an hour left in the day at any time, I'll meet with anybody who wishes to meet with me. I know the department I sent the information to has responded to the Yukon Childcare Association, answering

some of their requests. A review of those requests is currently underway and should be available soon, but there are other considerations with some of the requests of the Yukon Childcare Association. The requests they have made will take some time to answer.

Ms. Stick: The importance of learning in the first few years of life can't be overstated. The impacts last a lifetime. In its open letter to the minister, the Yukon Childcare Association explained how the Child Development Centre, early childhood educators and childcare workers all need to be well-coordinated if the best interests of our children are to be met.

We are all too familiar with the barriers created by silos in government. Collaboration is a much more effective approach. The Yukon Childcare Association is comprised of front-line workers from around the territory. These people provide the immediate circle of care for our youngsters.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to including the expertise and front-line experience of the Yukon Childcare Association in all planning and programming that targets young children and their caregivers?

Hon. Mr. Graham: In collaboration with the Department of Education and external stakeholders, we are developing a framework, I guess we could call it, for early childhood development. We have recently seconded a member of the Education department to work with the Department of Health and Social Services childcare unit. The departments have agreed to develop an early childhood development framework that will encompass preschool programs, pre-kindergarten programs, family and early childhood programs, childcare, early intervention programming and other related issues.

The departments will work very closely together, but they will also work with the community as a whole, because we realize there is a great deal of expertise out there that we should be taking advantage of, so we will be working, not only with the Childcare Association, but other groups in the city that are interested in preschool development.

Question re: COR certification

Ms. Moorcroft: Last week we welcomed the witnesses from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board to the Legislative Assembly and they spoke in very clear terms about worker safety. When the Yukon government committed to the COR safety certification program in 2008, the plan was to phase it in so that by 2010 all companies bidding on government contracts would require this certificate of recognition. Last week the chair of the board had this to say about COR "...we strongly believe in the COR program... because we believe that it reduces injuries, reduces disabilities..."

Why then is the Minister of Highways and Public Works allowing companies to continue to bid on government contracts without being COR-certified?

Hon. Mr. Graham: At the present time, there are 72 Yukon workplaces that have been COR-certified, and 51 additional small employers that have SECOR. In addition to those, at the present time, there are about six or seven with an owner/operator certificate of proficiency from the Northern Safety Network Yukon. Unfortunately, what has happened is that in the smaller communities around the territory, we haven't

either pushed hard enough through the Northern Safety Network to provide training or some of that training just hasn't been available at the right time for many of the small owner/operators in communities around the territory. Therefore, we collectively have taken the decision that we will leave the \$100,000 exemption in place for the current time. We review it on an annual basis, but at the present time we've decided to leave the \$100,000 exemption in place.

Ms. Moorcroft: Well, the minister has again suggested that the problem in the uptake stems from difficulties of companies in rural Yukon to achieve the COR certification, especially small or owner/operator businesses. What has the minister done to get buy-in from rural Yukon? Exemptions to basic workplace safety programs are not the way forward. Finding solutions that increase workplace safety is the way forward.

Here's what the director of corporate services for the board said in this House: "...the claims cost for non-COR companies are double the claims cost of COR companies. So does it have an effect? Absolutely. Does it pay? Absolutely."

Will the minister find a real COR solution for rural Yukon and for smaller or owner/operator businesses so that all workplaces are safer and the claims cost decline, or is his solution to just keep extending the exemptions to workplace safety?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I'll answer the question despite the inaccuracies with which the member opposite started.

At the present time, the occupational safety rules still apply to these small operators in the communities. When we talked with the folks from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, they were talking about larger employers. That was who the original COR certification was intended for, and that's where the greatest savings have taken place.

Obviously, the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board has decreased premiums every year for the last two years. We heard here last week that they envision a further decrease in 2013. So something's working.

The fact that some smaller employers in rural communities aren't COR-certified at this time is a concern to us, as it is a concern to the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. We're working on it. Every month, we have additional small contractors COR-certified, and we'll continue to pursue that until we have them all.

Question re: Substitute teachers' right to unionize

Mr. Tredger: A right guaranteed by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is being denied to more than 100 workers in the Department of Education. The right is that of free association. The affected workers are teachers on call commonly known as "substitute teachers" who play a critical role in the education of our children. Every day, they perform demanding and essential roles in our schools. Without them, the education of Yukon students would suffer. These teachers are not defined as employees under the *Education Labour Relations Act* or the *Public Service Act* — this despite the fact that many of them work nearly full-time. The result is a violation of their right to free association.

Will the government introduce amendments to relevant acts in 2013 to stop denying substitute teachers their rights and start treating them fairly?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I thank the member opposite for the question. I know he is a former president of the Yukon Teachers Association, so this is something that is obviously very important to him. I did receive a letter. I don't have a copy of the original letter nor my response to the current president of the Yukon Teachers Association with me here today, but just to give an update, I did refer the matter to Department of Education officials. Of course I will also have to involve my colleague, the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, in these types of deliberations as those two acts referenced by the member opposite are the responsibility of the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission.

I know in referring this matter to department officials, we do have a process when it comes to amending any legislation here in the territory, and of course it involves the work of officials as well.

That's where the process is right now, and that's where I intend to get further answers from my officials.

Mr. Tredger: I'm afraid the minister's response makes the issue into something it is not. This is not an administrative matter for deliberation within the government. Instead, the violation of basic rights is a matter of the highest order that will require political leadership in this Legislature if a solution is to be found outside the courts.

The right of workers to form or join a union and have the benefit of free collective bargaining has been upheld by numerous decision of the Supreme Court of Canada. This is not a matter for idle pondering, Mr. Speaker. It is a matter that demands political action.

Will the minister acknowledge the seriousness of this unfair treatment of substitute teachers and act now to end this violation of basic Canadian rights?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in the previous answer, there are processes that we have to follow when we are making any amendments to legislation. We have the legislative oversight committee, as well as the Cabinet Committee on Legislation. Those procedures need to be followed.

As mentioned earlier, this legislation is the responsibility of the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. I did receive a letter from the president of the Yukon Teachers Association and I have referred the matter to officials for further deliberation and comment before I can make an informed decision or give an informed answer on the floor of the Legislature here.

Mr. Tredger: The Yukon Teachers Association wrote to the government on this topic and received the same brush-off. I have for tabling letters from the YTA to the Minister of Education, dated October 9 and December 4, 2012, and a letter from the minister to the YTA, dated November 13, 2012.

In his letter the minister said this is a matter that "requires much consideration". Again, the comments of the minister suggest that he doesn't understand the seriousness of this issue. The violation of basic *Charter* rights is not an administrative

matter for the government to ponder. It is a political matter for the minister to address. Will this government end the violation of substitute teachers' rights during the Yukon Legislative Assembly's next sitting?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I did reference the letters that the member opposite has just tabled in a previous answer. Again, there's a process that we do follow as government when it comes to introducing new legislation. We have a number of acts that are on our legislative timetable and, when it comes to determining amendments to new acts, there's a process we do have to follow. I mentioned the legislative oversight committee. I can't think of one piece of legislation since I've returned to this House in the last year that hasn't undergone the scrutiny of officials, not only at the Department of Education, but this will also require the scrutiny of officials within the Public Service Commission and the Department of Justice. That's what we intend to do.

I'm not meaning to be dismissive or disrespectful of the Yukon Teachers Association or the letter that I received from the president. I just think that, in order to ensure that we have strong legislation coming to the floor of this House for consideration, we need to follow the process that's in place.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of government private members' business

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I rise pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7) to identify the items standing in the name of government private members to be called on Wednesday, December 12, 2012. In the interest of expediting debate on the budget and legislation, the government will only be calling one motion. It is Motion No. 337, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 7, *Second Appropriation Act, 2012-13*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 7: Second Appropriation Act, 2012-13 — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation in Bill No. 7, *Second Appropriation Act, 2012-13*.

Yukon Housing Corporation

Hon. Mr. Kent: It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce the 2012-13 supplementary budget for the Yukon Housing Corporation. Before I begin, I'd like to welcome two officials to the floor of the Legislature here with me today — Ms. Pamela Hine, who is the new president of the Yukon Housing Corporation, and Mr. Mark Davey, the director of finance for the Housing Corporation. I should also take this opportunity to thank the board of directors of the Yukon Housing Corporation, led by Claire Derome, who is the chair and has served in that role since February of 2012.

It is a pleasure to speak to this supplementary budget, mainly to give members of the House an idea of some of the many important additions to both the capital and O&M budgets, which will assist Yukoners in addressing their specific housing needs.

As members opposite are aware, the government continues to implement the housing strategy that we put before Yukoners during last year's territorial election. The spring session adjourned on May 10. This is an opportunity to bring a number of matters to the attention of the members opposite so that we can make everyone aware of our ongoing successes and the implementation of a made-in-Yukon housing strategy.

So, starting on June 8, my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, announced the launch of a public survey to help shape a modernized *Landlord and Tenant Act*. In the short time from June until this House started sitting on October 25, we were able to table the modernized *Landlord and Tenant Act*, and we're very pleased that members opposite concluded that it is 110-percent better than the previous one. We're proud of the accomplishments of the Minister of Community Services, as well as her officials, who really worked diligently to bring forward the new act. It's clear that the government's goal was to develop effective new residential tenancy law that incorporates best practices in Canada, balances, of course, the interests of landlords and tenants and promotes a healthy private rental market.

On June 18 the contract was awarded to provide land, construction and design for a new 10-unit, second-stage housing facility for women and children. It was awarded to Narrow Gauge Contracting, or NGC Builders, and the facility that will be known as Betty's Haven will provide 10 second-stage housing units of supportive, secure and affordable housing for 12 to 18 months for women and their children who are fleeing abuse.

The Yukon government has committed a total of \$4.5 million toward the completion of Betty's Haven and construction is, of course, underway. Anyone who travels down Fourth Avenue in Whitehorse will see one of the large buildings on the High Country Inn side of the street. That's where this will be located.

On June 25, the Housing Corporation officially opened six affordable housing units here in Whitehorse. These units feature two bedrooms that are designed for small families. The units are located in the Whitehorse subdivision of Takhini, just off Range Road. Also, work on 14 new affordable housing units in Carmacks and Ross River is now complete. Final occupancy permits are anticipated prior to the end of October.

Since 2009, the Housing Corporation has been planning, building, upgrading and populating our housing units. Of course, none of this would be possible without Canada's assistance. With that assistance, we have built 139 new units and retrofitted over 350 existing units.

Later on during the day I referred to earlier, I directed the Housing Corporation to investigate the development of a new Yukon home ownership program to assist working Yukoners in lower and middle income brackets to buy a home. This type of homeownership program can help bridge the affordability gap that sometimes prevents working people from moving out of the rental market and into home ownership. Of course, it would also help stimulate the economy through new home construction, and as more Yukoners become able to purchase entry-level homes, it will free up more rental housing for others.

Staff members of the Yukon Housing Corporation have undertaken research and this complements the work of a consultant who was hired to help define program options. The consultant updated the board of directors in October of 2012, and options for review and consideration were presented to the board. The board has approved the plan, and hopefully I get a chance to update members of the House on the framework of this initiative. There is still some work to be done with CMHC, and perhaps when we get into further debate of Yukon Housing Corporation, I'll be able to give some of the details of the framework for this new program to members of the House.

August 13, of course, was an extremely important day, not only for me as the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, but also as the Member for Riverdale North, which is where the Thomson Centre is located. Residents on that day began to occupy the 10 new units at the Thomson Centre. Of course, this is the responsibility of the Minister of Health and Social Services and at the time he acknowledged that these additional 10 continuing care beds will greatly benefit the residents, their families and the overall health care system. The occupants of the 10 additional beds are coming from the community, other care facilities and the Whitehorse General Hospital.

August 15 was a day where we were able to — in partnership with Canada — announce two new vital housing projects. The first of these is the provision of just over \$3 million so that Options for Independence could build 14 new housing units in Whitehorse for clients living with fetal alcohol syndrome or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. The Premier noted that the

Canada-Yukon affordable housing agreement, which is the funding vehicle from Canada that we used to supply a subsidy of \$75,000 per unit to that project. Again, the Premier referenced at that time that that fund helps to meet the needs of Yukoners and delivers on our commitments to making housing a priority. This project will, of course, go a long way to help house some of the most vulnerable and often homeless members of our community. It's an important step along the way, as we move forward on our strategy.

Also that day, we announced a new 34-unit seniors building at the previous location of the Alexander Street apartments. Again, the Premier commented that seniors are Yukon's fastest growing population group, which is projected to almost double by 2021.

The Yukon government is moving to address the housing needs of seniors and make it easier for them to live at home as their health and mobility levels change. Our communities are enhanced by the presence, knowledge and experience of our seniors. By investing in housing that is appropriate for them, we are helping to retain that richness in our communities, and we are delivering on the commitments we have made as part of our housing plan.

On August 24, we responded to the homeowners affected by the Upper Liard flood. I know a number of my colleagues visited Upper Liard during the flood, when the people of Watson Lake and the owners of Rancheria Lodge responded so favourably to assist those motorists and travellers who were stranded. I visited the flood area after the waters had subsided somewhat with the MLA for Watson Lake. I had the opportunity to tour a number of properties in the Upper Liard area. It was certainly a very emotional time for the homeowners seeing their belongings and the damage done by the floodwaters, not only to their personal property, but also some of their most treasured belongings, such as family photos and keepsakes.

As a government, we're very hopeful that the relief assistance package will help the residents re-establish themselves and continue on with their lives and will prevent future devastation by flooding on this location.

Five days later, on August 29, the oil-fired appliances working group submitted an action plan and recommendations to the Yukon government at my direction and the direction of the Minister of Community Services. The group was tasked with developing an action plan to enhance safety with respect to oil-fired heating systems throughout the territory. What we did at that time was to launch a community engagement process. I know I travelled to a number of Yukon communities, as did the Minister of Community Services, accompanied by a number of our colleagues who represent rural ridings — again, the MLA for Watson Lake; the MLA for Kluane; who is also the Minister of Highways and Public Works; and the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin accompanied us on different aspects of the tour, and it was certainly a great opportunity to engage Yukoners, First Nation governments, municipal governments, landlords, tenants, individual homeowners and a number of people from the industry.

We were pleased to again receive the outcomes of that public consultation coupled with accepting many of the rec-

ommendations that were put forward by the working group. We feel that we have a plan moving forward when it comes to public awareness, the education and training aspects, and of course some of the legislative and regulatory aspects that we look forward to bringing forward to the floor of this House in the near future.

Something that happened later in September was the lottery for the 100 new residential lots in the Whistle Bend subdivision. Duplex lots started at \$76,000 and were sold in pairs. Single family lots started at \$104,000 and multi-family lots started at \$180,000. We had uptake on a number of the lots, especially the duplex lots, by the private builders. The lots themselves were being offered at the cost of development, which was valued at approximately 6.5 percent below the market value.

So we do have lots now in the Whitehorse area and in many of the communities available for over-the-counter sales. I know there are plans for additional lots in Whistle Bend to come out next fall. I think we're getting back to the point where we have a solid inventory of lots for residents, especially in the Whitehorse market, so when we see the new developments that are anticipated in the coming years in the mining industry, for instance — with the next one perhaps being the Eagle Gold project in Mayo — we're able to respond to residents.

A lot needs to be said about the minister responsible for Community Services and the work she has done in allocating a near-record land development budget of more than \$34.8 million to carry out the land development activities in the Yukon in this budget.

On September 28 I was very happy to announce, along with my colleague, the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, that what had started as a local pilot project featuring direct programming and services for tenants of the Whitehorse affordable family housing complex located just off Nisutlin Drive in Riverdale has now been extended.

We are taking an interactive approach on this family housing project to create a positive environment for families in need. The position that looks after that will be cost-shared between the Women's Directorate and the Yukon Housing Corporation. That on-site program coordinator will not only take care of aspects of tenant relations for the Yukon Housing Corporation but also support single-parent families, providing that support that is critical to the success of this innovative housing initiative.

This project contributes to a safe and healthy environment for families while promoting independent living through a variety of programs that are offered.

We certainly have a lot of things to be proud of since the rise of the House in the spring session when it comes to addressing the housing needs of Yukoners. What is not mentioned here is the youth shelter work that has been undertaken by the Minister of Health and Social Services. I know he continues to work closely with the Salvation Army on expanding the homeless shelter — another commitment that was made in our housing plan that was put forward in our platform in the October 2011 election.

Just to summarize, there are a number of new buildings under construction in Whitehorse and work undertaken over the past year in rural Yukon. We have targeted those in the greatest need of housing and we have responded. Land is readily available in Whitehorse for single detached duplexes and multi-residential buildings. Those affected by the flooding of the Upper Liard River have been offered compensation so that they can re-establish their lives and, of course, the list goes on and on.

While all of these initiatives were unfolding, the staff of the Yukon Housing Corporation continued to offer a multitude of programs and services so that Yukoners can address their housing needs. From social and seniors housing to home ownership options, staff housing and home repair initiatives, the Housing Corporation is actively providing solutions for Yukoners. The corporation has approved almost \$7 million in home ownership funding and just over \$2 million in home repair and flood initiatives funding. This supplementary budget supports the ongoing implementation of our plan by giving support for relevant and effective programs and services.

There are funds to complete affordable housing projects funded under Canada's economic action plan, \$859,000 of which is identified for seven different projects; revotes for many of the corporation's lending programs, including the home repair program, the 2009 Yukon flood relief program; home repair enhancement program; mortgage financing; home completion; owner-builds; rental rehab and the rental suite program.

Funds have been identified and committed for new housing projects, such as the Options for Independence, which I mentioned. New funding in the amount of \$200,000 is included in this budget to upgrade housing in Watson Lake to support the housing needs of medical practitioners. There is \$920,000 in new funding for the 34-unit seniors apartment we are constructing here in Whitehorse on the site of the old Alexander Street project, and an additional \$3.64 million of new funding for the 2012 Yukon flood relief program. There are a number of new funds in this budget, amounting to \$125,000 to support the strategic planning process, which the corporation has undertaken. Hopefully, I get an opportunity to speak about the engagement process that was undertaken by the president and the board and the consultant in the community. I should also take the time to thank the former president of the Yukon Housing Corporation, Ron MacMillan, for his years of service, and I certainly would like to wish him well in his new position as Deputy Minister of Justice here in the Yukon Territory.

Madam Chair, there are a number of ideas that have come forward through the protocol agreement and the letter of expectations that I've put forward. I would certainly like to address those briefly, when I have an opportunity to speak again, and also speak to the new strategic goals and the draft strategic plan, which has been accepted by the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors for the years 2013-18. I think it's a very exciting document, with some changes, and I know we received some very positive feedback from the NGOs we met with, as well as some of the private sector individuals we met with, such as the lending community and realtors and people like that. So I'm very excited to speak about that and

like that. So I'm very excited to speak about that and other initiatives as we move our way through debate here this afternoon on the Yukon Housing Corporation.

With that, I'd welcome questions from members opposite.

Ms. White: I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the officials for their excellent briefing. It was really great — thank you — and especially to congratulate Ms. Hine on her new appointment. I'm sure her extensive background in housing will be an asset to the corporation. That's very exciting.

I'm just going to get right into questions. During the October 2011 election campaign, the Yukon Party government promised a seniors complex in Mayo. There doesn't appear to be any funds allocated in the supplementary budget, nor are there funds allocated in the multi-year capital plan in the main estimates. What is the plan for the seniors complex in Mayo? When will work commence on a seniors complex and when can we expect it to be done?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Just to quickly answer the member opposite's question with respect to the Mayo seniors complex, we did provide some funding for the community of Mayo to do some remediation of a site of their choosing, which is something they felt was the best location for the seniors housing complex. For those familiar with the community, I believe it's on the site of the old Mayo Motors lot, which is along the main street there. Forgive me, but I can't recall the name of that street.

Also underway right now are the community consultations to determine the size of the building the Yukon Housing Corporation is working on with the mayor and council and chief and council. We certainly are excited to determine what is needed in Mayo as far as a seniors complex goes. As I mentioned earlier today in Question Period, there have been a number of projects built in rural Yukon and we recognized that Mayo was in need of a seniors housing complex and that is why we included it as a commitment in our platform. We fully intend to deliver on that commitment during our mandate. Again, site prep is underway and community consultations are underway, obviously to be followed by design and construction in the not-too-distant future.

Madam Chair, I am just going to beg the indulgence of the member opposite and quickly outline a couple of things for members of the House. The first is contained in a document that is on our website — the protocol agreement and letter of expectations for 2012-13. Of course the protocol agreement is something that is required to have between me, as minister, and the board of directors each year, but something we have added this year is a letter of expectations.

It's embedded in the document on page 3 and just some of the highlights — one of them is to further define goals and strategies to address the market affordability gap with particular focus on evaluating options to redesign the loans program to support new programming to assist working Yukoners to enter the home ownership market or stay in their homes longer — some of that will hopefully come out in debate this afternoon when we get a chance to speak about the attainable ownership — assess options to address the shortage of rental accommodation for low- to moderate-income households; assess options to

maximize the availability of subsidized accommodation for individuals and families in greatest need; address the policy gaps identified by the Auditor General in the report to the Yukon Legislative Assembly in February 2010; increase the supply of — this is something I know is important to the Member for Takhini-Kopper King and other members who I travelled around the Yukon with in the last year looking at the different housing developments throughout the territory. So again, this instruction from me to the board is to increase the supply of accessible social housing by developing a comprehensive plan to address mobility challenges in the corporation's housing units to ensure a supply of units that are free from structural barriers. I have been in a number of units where there are challenges for seniors to get in and out of the bathtubs. We certainly recognize that from the community of Teslin to Watson Lake, to the athletes village here in Whitehorse and some of the other facilities that we have.

In speaking with the chair and president last week, I know they are putting together an advisory committee that will be made up of a number of representatives from different NGOs throughout the community and seniors organizations that will help us, not only when we're designing new buildings to ensure that some of the units are free from structural barriers, but also with existing facilities and coming up with plans to make sure that we can make them more accessible to those who are living in them and need them. I'm very excited about that opportunity.

Just quickly to our strategic goals. There are five strategic goals that are really the backbone of the strategic plan for 2013 to 2018. The first one is to facilitate access to more attainable and sustainable home ownership in the Yukon. The second one is to support initiatives to increase the availability and affordability of rental accommodation in the Yukon. Of course, both of these were spelled out in the letter of expectations.

I know members opposite — of course, the Member for Klondike — have asked me about this on occasion as well. We're very excited to develop strategic partnerships with Yukon government departments, other governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in pursuit of collaborative initiatives to enhance the full range of choice along the housing continuum in the Yukon.

The final two goals that are outlined in the strategic plan are to continually improve the corporation's organizational effectiveness and accountability framework, to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of the corporation's established and newly created or enhanced programs. Numbers 4 and 5 are internal goals for staff and officials in the department. The fifth and final one is to ensure adequate human resources planning and capacity to support the strategic goals and operational plans of the corporation.

One of the other things that members will notice when they look at this document — and this strategic plan document, 2013-18, in its raw form is located on the Housing Corporation website. We certainly will do some design work and at some point table the polished copy in the Legislative Assembly, but it is on the website.

Members will notice a difference in the mission and vision statement and those types of things from the document that I tabled earlier, which is the 2011-12 annual report. There have been some changes made there that were well-received by the stakeholders that we engaged during the process. Again, I think there are some very exciting things obviously happening when it comes to the strategic plan and the protocol agreement. I think the foundation — a very strong and solid foundation — has been in place to help guide the Housing Corporation for the next five years. I look forward to working with the board of directors as we begin to implement the strategic plan over that time frame, of course, starting with some of the programs we've talked about, such as the attainable home ownership program and another exciting one that hopefully I get an opportunity to answer for the member opposite.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for the beginning of your response and the answer to the question. Have other communities been identified as needing or wanting senior facilities within their communities?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I don't believe that we have identified any other communities beyond Mayo and of course the needs in Whitehorse. Whitehorse seems to be the area where most of the demand is for seniors and social housing. Of course in rural Yukon the demand is higher on the staff housing side of things. So we haven't identified any other communities yet as far as potential areas to invest in seniors housing in the Yukon.

Ms. White: Thank you for the answer.

Nearly a year ago, five Yukoners were killed by carbon monoxide poisoning due to improperly installed and serviced oil-fired heating appliances. The minister responsible for Yukon Housing has mentioned a bit about the committee that was struck. How is the composition of the working group determined? Why did the Government of Yukon choose to ignore the working group's recommendation and refuse to require people who serviced oil-fired appliances to be certified journey-person oil-burner mechanics? What is the plan to address the safety of existing furnaces that have been improperly installed or modified because there are many that have been identified? Are CO₂ detectors currently installed in all Yukon Housing units? If not, when will there be CO₂ detectors in Yukon Housing units?

Hon. Mr. Kent: When the Minister of Community Services and I tasked one of the officials from the Yukon Housing Corporation with forming this group and coming up with an action plan for us to move forward, we outlined what we would like to see as far as the membership of the group goes. We wanted to include Yukon government officials from Community Services and Education, as well as obviously the Chair of the Yukon Housing Corporation. We looked to have representatives from industry, the City of Whitehorse, First Nations and the Association of Yukon Communities.

The chair of the board wasn't able to get anyone from First Nations to sit on it, but we essentially allowed him to choose the membership of the board. There was a strong group of individuals who brought varying backgrounds to the process.

We were certainly very pleased with the report that they were able to come up with and also very pleased, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, with the input that we received from Yukon citizens across the territory. Again, the government is moving forward with a number of regulatory and/or legislative changes, the public awareness aspects and the training initiatives for industry. We've really taken those three initiatives and split them up between the Housing Corporation, which is the lead on the public awareness, the training initiatives for industry are obviously going to be part of what the Department of Education looks at, and then any regulatory and/or legislative changes are being led by the Department of Community Services.

As far as not accepting all of the recommendations, specifically the one with respect to servicing furnaces and the requirement that individuals have a journeyperson ticket to do that servicing, I think that really was based on what we had heard primarily from rural Yukoners. I can speak personally to the communities that I've visited.

Old Crow was the first community I went to, and I heard from a number of individuals there, including a former New Democratic MLA, who said that it's going to take some time to build that capacity that's necessary in that community through training and mentoring to bring it up to a standard where we could ask that the servicing be done by a journeyperson.

The next community I went to was Dawson City. The make-up of the group there was — some homeowners were at the table, but there were a number of industry people there as well — people who do the work in Dawson City. They're very busy, obviously, in their community and unable to travel to surrounding communities that don't have certified journeyperson oil burner mechanics. Most of their work, or all of their work, is primarily done in the Dawson City area.

We heard stories — I know the Minister of Community Services heard stories about long wait times. I heard stories about incredible costs, even before the individuals who come out from Whitehorse — the certified ones — the travel costs that are associated with coming to communities. One person who spoke to us in Destruction Bay mentioned that it was \$16,000 before the van door or the tool box was even opened, as far as the expenses go.

So, again, recognizing some of the capacity challenges that exist primarily in rural Yukon, we wanted to be careful. I guess the focus of this exercise was to ensure that Yukoners are safe in their own homes. That's the primary focus and the primary reason we established the working group in the first place.

Again, in the community of Haines Junction we heard from some of the rural landlords about being careful not to "impose undue hardship" — I guess would be the way to describe it — on them as landlords. One of the particular landlords is a former New Democrat candidate in the 2011 election. That's who we were speaking to at that meeting. Again, I think we have to be cognizant of the fact that what works in Whitehorse doesn't necessarily work in rural Yukon, given the smaller population bases and the capacity of the industry. I think what we need to do right now is focus on ways that we can train those individuals, get them the schooling — again, we

heard from industry representatives here in Whitehorse that they wanted to make sure that everybody was properly trained and trained in the manner to be a journeyperson — not some of the courses that are offered on weekends or over a six-day time frame.

They want to make sure that when we're training individuals, they're qualified, and they go through the same type of training as other individuals. I know, even here in Whitehorse, it's sometimes challenging to get your furnace serviced. For my annual service — again, this is a personal note — with the contractor I used — I made a phone call to this individual in August and was informed that they would be able to get to me in November. So, obviously, there is a lag, and I think we really need to look at the capacity issues — primarily what we're seeing in rural Yukon but, again, there is a lag in Whitehorse.

One of the big changes that we have made is that in order to pull a permit to install or modify an oil-fired heating device, you have to be a journeyperson. So that's one of the changes. One of the other things I think the Minister of Community Services spoke about when her department was up for debate is that we plan on being the only jurisdiction in the country that has mandatory carbon monoxide detectors in every home.

Of course, those standards are there for the new builds, but this is for existing homes. I think it will go a long way to ensuring that we accomplish the primary goal, which is the safety of Yukoners in their homes.

I believe the member also asked me about carbon monoxide detectors in Yukon Housing Corporation units. Forgive me if I've missed one of the member opposite's questions. I'll catch it, hopefully, the next time.

All the 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 carbon monoxide detectors. Work is now underway to install CO detectors in the few remaining buildings. It's expected to be complete by the end of the fiscal year.

Regular inspections of the corporation's housing assets are conducted to maintain a safe living environment for the tenants. Technical staff also check that fire extinguishers are in very conspicuous locations and ready for use, fire alarms systems are functional and that evacuation plans are clearly posted in multi-unit buildings.

Of course, some of our buildings are heated using electricity and they don't require carbon monoxide detectors, unless they're units — I think I sent a memo to the Leader of the Official Opposition earlier this week with respect to Closeleigh Manor, where those units that are close to the boiler room are equipped with CO detectors. As well, there were some issues I think with fuel exhaust coming in through the fresh air intake. We've moved the fresh air intake, but also installed CO detectors in those units that were affected by that. Work is underway to ensure that every Yukon Housing Corporation unit that is determined to require a carbon monoxide detector has one. We expect that to be complete by the end of the fiscal year.

Ms. White: I will just go back to the one question that was missed. I apologize. I will not put so many questions in one section again. Just speaking of safety: the 2010 report by

Rod Corea found problems with hundreds of furnaces. How will government address the safety of existing furnaces that have been improperly installed or modified? How will they be identified and how will the problems be corrected?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Obviously, the Corea report did identify a number of systems that were inadequately installed or maintained. About 50 percent of the infractions that he identified had to do with fuel tanks as well, so it's not only the heating appliance itself, but there were also some fuel tank violations. That's my recollection, I guess, from speaking to Housing Corporation officials earlier this year. What we have done and will continue to do through the Housing Corporation is work on the public awareness about heating homes safely, properly installing and maintaining the ventilation systems. The Housing Corporation also continues to facilitate those training opportunities for members of the oil-burning heating system industry and the building inspection professionals. I guess a lot of that is done through upgrading and professional development aspects for those who are already red seal. We ensure that our social and staff housing heating systems are properly permitted, installed and maintained and that, again, safety equipment such as the smoke detectors and the CO detectors provide tenants the necessary safety alarms. The corporation's staff continues to participate and contribute to the government-wide initiatives to improve the safety of oil-burning heating systems here in the Yukon.

Again adding to what I mentioned earlier, there is obviously the training that's going to be conducted through the Department of Education and the regulatory and perhaps legislative changes that will come forward from the Department of Community Services. So it's something that we obviously take very seriously. We want to ensure that Yukoners are safe in their own homes and they have the basic skills to identify some of the problems that need to be rectified with their heating systems.

Some of the stories I know the Minister of Community Services and I heard at the meeting we had with industry representatives here in Whitehorse about blocked exhaust systems with brushes and trees, and people leaning stuff up against their homes — we want to make sure that Yukoners have the basic understanding so that they can take care of themselves and identify problems that need to be corrected by a professional.

Ms. White: In response to the elimination of the CBC analog services, my colleague, the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, did some digging and found that the satellite TV provider, Shaw, had a free local satellite program on offer. The minister spoke in this House and said that Yukon Housing was going to refuse Yukon Housing tenants access to this free service on the grounds that doing so would compromise the building envelope and lead to damage.

This seemed really reasonable until we spoke to installers and the company itself, who said that dishes could be installed without damaging the building. They gave the options of on the railing or on a freestanding tripod out on the lawn. We also learned that one satellite could service multiple units at the same time. Shaw has just announced that it's going to extend the free television deal for yet another year. I was hoping that

the minister could commit to finding a solution to allow low-income Yukoners, those who can't afford cable or satellite, to allow them to be able to take advantage of this deal. When he looks at this problem, will he be employing the social inclusion lens to this issue?

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to this issue, my position hasn't changed. It was in consultation, obviously, with the Yukon Housing Corporation and the officials. They did at one time allow satellite dishes to be installed on homes. There was considerable damage done to the assets at that time. It's not only the mounting of the dishes on the homes, but it's also the drilling into the units to connect the wires from the satellite dishes to the various cable units or TVs — wherever they need them.

So again, while I certainly recognize that many of the clients were affected by the CBC cuts to analog service for television signals here in the Yukon, I think as the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation and as officials and the board of directors have mentioned to me, my number one priority has to be to protect the assets we have. We have invested significant dollars in those assets originally, but also in the upgrades.

I think I mentioned that we've upgraded over 350 units with Canada's economic action plan money. We don't want to compromise the energy efficiency of these homes by drilling holes into the side of them or by mounting dishes on the roof. So when it comes to this issue I do have to stand by my original position and respect what I've heard from the Housing Corporation that we don't want to compromise the buildings, especially the energy efficiency of some of the units that we have. My number one priority has to be to maintain the integrity of the assets and maintain the integrity of what we've invested not only Yukon taxpayers' dollars in, but also Canadian taxpayers' dollars through Canada's economic action plan.

Ms. White: It's unfortunate that that is the final response. I was hoping that possibly with the idea that one dish could service multiple units and possibly that the Yukon Housing Corporation could then look at it as their own asset in offering that service because it would be for the long term, that it would have been a possibility.

Just to change the topic, the minister spoke about seniors and their changing mobility. I've brought it up before and I'm going to bring it up again. With those mobility changes in mind and the fact we've toured facilities where seniors can no longer access their bathing facilities, when can we expect to see renovations in units for the people who are most affected? You also spoke to — I'm not sure if the term was "task force", but how it was going to be identified and those problems will be addressed throughout the territory. What kind of timeline are we looking at?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The Housing Corporation is in discussions right now with various NGOs about membership of the committee. We're looking forward to sometime early in the new year establishing the committee and prioritizing those existing units.

Of course for the 34-unit seniors housing complex, the tender for design closed last week. It has not been awarded yet,

but we want to make sure that is also brought in when we speak to the design of the new seniors facility that's going to be located in downtown Whitehorse; that we address the mobility issues and structural barrier issues for seniors. We're looking forward to hearing back from the committee and the recommendations. Of course the successful contractor will work with them on the design.

As I mentioned earlier — I believe it was in the protocol agreement and the shareholders letter of expectations — addressing this is something that I've asked the board to do during this year. So I look forward to hearing back from them, based on advice and support from the committee, on which units are priorities and how many units we need to upgrade in each of the facilities that Yukon Housing owns that are specifically there for seniors or aspects that affect individuals who have mobility issues.

Ms. White: I'm pleased to know that we've learned from our past mistakes and that the 34 new units will be barrier-free. I think it just bears mentioning that there are many more than 34 seniors right now currently living in housing who require barrier-free facilities.

The minister spoke earlier in his opening remarks about support positions that are already currently at the Riverdale housing and that will be at Betty's Haven. He mentioned that one of the roles was programming and another was being a liaison to Yukon Housing Corporation. Knowing the complications within seniors facilities and sometimes the problems that arise there, I was wondering if the minister or the corporation had considered similar positions for seniors complexes in the territory.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Just to correct the member opposite in one of her statements — the function that the individual at the affordable housing complex in Riverdale will carry out on behalf of the Housing Corporation isn't a liaison position. It will be a tenant relations officer. So it will be collecting rent and doing the other aspects that tenant relations officers throughout the system of the Housing Corporation currently undertake.

While there are no immediate plans to have similar positions put into seniors housing units, there are some initial plans to have more frequent meetings with tenant groups and seniors organizations to address their concerns. Again, there are no plans right now to put a program coordinator position into any of our seniors units, but there are plans to meet more regularly. I know the president is going to be participating in a number of different NGO committees that exist throughout the community of Whitehorse in looking at different aspects, not only for seniors, but those all along the housing continuum.

Ms. White: I thank you for the correction. There was a lot of information to absorb when you were speaking.

A tenant relations officer could do something like collect rent. It would seem to me that if we're talking about people who have mobility issues — who have problems getting around and often have questions and concerns — if there was a tenant relations officer assigned specifically to seniors complexes, a lot of the problems the corporation sees repeatedly could be

dealt with by the fact that they would see one person regularly, possibly at their door.

Is there any chance that the corporation would look at the possibility of how that could ease tenant or client relations?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I guess when we look at the new five-year plan, the fifth goal is to ensure adequate human resources planning and capacity to support the strategic goals and operational plans of the corporation. That's one of the goals that describes the desired outcomes that are supportive of the mission and vision and point the way forward for the Housing Corporation. I think many of us have seniors who reside in their ridings, and when it comes to either collecting rent or having opportunities where seniors have to come down to the Housing Corporation to meet, I think we have to be more flexible in that. I've spoken to the chair of the board about incidences — and the former president of the board as well — where we've had some challenges.

I mean, what seems very easy for many of us in the Legislature is not necessarily easy for many of the seniors. Where we can, I think we have to look at ways to accommodate those individuals by perhaps finding time to meet them at their homes or in other places. I think it's probably a lot easier in the communities where the community housing officers are there and able to travel and meet individuals in their home, especially those with mobility issues. It's a little bit more challenging for Whitehorse, but we'll certainly look at ways to accomplish that.

Ms. White: I thank the minister very much for that answer. It's incredibly compassionate and I think it could go a long way to improving tenant/corporation relationships. Also, just because we talked about the hardships of getting down to the building, just to bring it out front right now, the curb leading up to the doors is incredibly high and I sadly know this from personal experience because I was there when an elderly woman broke her leg. Maybe we can address that at the same time.

I thank the minister for pointing out that strategic goal 5 could possibly involve a tenant relations officer for seniors complexes. I think that would be great.

In the Yukon Housing Corporation annual report we were just given, on page 15, under "Seniors Housing Management Fund", it talks about how \$205,000 was spent on the Abbeyfield project in Whitehorse in 2011. I'm wondering what has happened with that. Then we go down further and it says in 2012 a further \$61,000 was spent on the Abbeyfield project. Could the minister fill us in on what's going on with this project and what \$266,000 has purchased so far?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The dollars expended so far on that project are for planning and design. What progress has been made on the facility planning and organization model: the Housing Corporation has deferred the project as staff dedicate their efforts to construct the new 34-suite Whitehorse seniors housing project and to assist the Options for Independence Society with the construction of their 14-suite facility for clients with FASD.

Some other organizations have approached the Housing Corporation on possible partnerships to construct some suppor-

tive housing units for seniors that are based on the Abbeyfield model. Again, the Abbeyfield — I believe it was considered to be — I don't have the actual number of units here, but it was a smaller unit.

Looking at similar models that the organization that we've been speaking with has researched, they have determined that in order to make these buildings self-sufficient, on an O&M basis, you need more units than what we had contemplated. I believe the number was between 10 and 14. The land that was decided to put this on was a small piece of land close to the traffic circle at the *SS Klondike*.

Again, the corporation has refocused efforts on the Alexander Street project and the Options for Independence project, but we haven't lost sight of the opportunities that exist.

Partnering with any number of organizations is one of the new strategic goals, so we're very interested in listening to — actually, it's the Royal Canadian Legion that has approached us and has started the discussions with me. I've obviously passed that on to the corporation to further the discussions. They have looked at models in Vancouver — I think it's the New Chelsea Society, if anyone wants to take a look at the website. There are some fantastic examples of what works in Vancouver and, of course, we need to make sure that we find something that works here and addresses another aspect of the seniors population that is able to live somewhat independently, but also would like the supportive housing options of a common eating area and the other aspects that come with that type of program model.

Ms. White: I'm unclear as to what we got for that \$266,000, but I will move on.

Just prior to Remembrance Day, I raised the issue of veterans disability pensions. The Federal Court of Canada ruled that veterans disability pensions are not to be considered income when determining eligibility for some federal government supports, but for many Yukon programs, including Yukon Housing Corporation and the determination of social housing and rent geared to income, veterans disability pensions are treated as income. I asked the Premier to consider changing that policy — that amounts to clawing back veterans disability pensions when it comes to the supports and services of the Yukon government.

The Premier said: "...yes, this is something we should look at. As we do look at all opportunities and reasonable requests from both sides of this House, in my opinion, this is something that we should also have a look at as well."

Is the minister following this direction? Has the corporation looked at changing housing policies to drop this pension from the calculation of income?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Yes, as the member opposite referenced, the Premier did make a commitment to look at that as an aspect when it comes to what is happening throughout the Yukon government. I don't believe the Housing Corporation has looked specifically at it as of yet but, obviously, as a corporation that is a Crown corporation of the Yukon government, we feel it would obviously apply to us once something is implemented along those lines.

Ms. White: I'll save my questions for the Premier, then, and I'll let that one go for right now.

When we look through the budget and it talks about things like energy audits, how many people have taken advantage of the energy audit this year? I'll ask a couple of questions about the same topic.

So how many people have taken advantage of the energy audit this year? Are we measuring how effective the audits are in terms of reducing home heating fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions? What is the Yukon Housing Corporation's plan to increase energy efficiency in its own units and for homeowners and landlords throughout the territory.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Just to quickly run down the statistics from the Yukon Housing Corporation load programs for the period — I guess what I will use is April, 2012 to October, 2012, and then the second number I will give on each line is the same calendar period April 1 to October 10 but of the previous year, 2011.

When it comes to home repair, this year there were 85 compared to 79; home repair enhancement — this is the number of applications, pardon me, just to clarify — none this year, three last year; energy management — none this year and none last year in that same time; mortgage financing — 33 this year, 38 last year; home completion — two this year, four last year; owner-build — one this year, three last year; rental rehabilitation loans, three this year, four last year; and the rental suite, which I'm assuming is a rental suite improvement program, five applications this year compared to 17 from last year.

When members have the opportunity to look at our strategic plan and the strategic goals, strategic goal number one is to facilitate access to more attainable, suitable and sustainable home ownership opportunities in the Yukon. I believe the word "suitable" has been removed from the final draft that we had, given the difficulties in determining what is "suitable" across the continuum.

This is on page 5 of the engagement piece. You can look at 1.3, which is assess options to provide enhanced assistance to homeowners to have their structural repairs and/or energy-efficiency upgrades carried out in their privately owned homes. One thing the Yukon Housing Corporation, through the board of directors, has recognized is we need to do a lot more to promote the programs we currently offer. We're looking at increasing the public awareness and the marketing side of things on what we offer and getting that message out to Yukoners through a variety of means.

We want to ensure that there is uptake on the programs we offer, whether it be anything from home repair to the energy management or the mortgage financing or even perhaps the new program that is being contemplated with respect to attainable home ownership.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for those responses. In speaking to retrofit and knowing the minister is both the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation and the Minister of Education, has the corporation considered offering training to conduct those energy retrofits, both in Whitehorse and in the communities? In that same vein, has the corporation considered doing trades training within the communities while actually building Yukon Housing Corporation units — having kind of hands-on training within the communities that would

have an end product of a Yukon Housing Corporation home? That's both looking within Whitehorse and within the communities.

Hon. Mr. Kent: The corporation provided the training and administrative paperwork for third party inspectors needed to implement the energy bylaw. Also, the corporation has been providing training courses and seminars for EnerGuide for house evaluators, energy efficient construction, best practices for, again, oil-fired appliance and oil-tank installations, certified ventilation install and design, HRV balancing, City of Whitehorse energy bylaws verifiers and self-help builders courses.

With respect to those self-help builders courses, I believe that there has been a recent advertisement in the paper offering that program again. As far as delivering more comprehensive training, it would be something that the corporation would work on in cooperation with Advanced Education and Yukon College. I should mention at this time our support for Habitat for Humanity, not only the Yukon Housing Corporation, but also the Department of Community Services when it comes to building new affordable homes for people in need.

Obviously, there has been a lot of work invested by the Yukon Housing Corporation over the past number of years and a lot of assistance given to Habitat for Humanity with its affordable housing projects. We have an operating agreement with Habitat for Humanity to provide the first mortgages for Habitat homes. There has been assistance to Habitat with all three of its housing projects completed in Whitehorse to date. We're also a contributing partner in the fourth project in Ingram, which is nearing completion, and have provided additional land in the Whistle Bend subdivision.

I know something that Habitat Canada is extremely proud of is the first-ever build on First Nation settlement land, which is occurring right now with Champagne and Aishihik First Nations' land out at the Takhini River subdivision on the Alaska Highway just toward Haines Junction.

So I think there are a number of initiatives that we can work when it comes to training and other things with the overall community and really find ways to move forward and not only partner with the community, but partner with other organizations and governments. I think there are some great examples of cooperation between the Housing Corporation and Community Services. Again when it comes to Habitat, Housing, Community Services and Education are all working on the recommendations of the oil-fired appliance working group and moving forward in a constructive manner with that. I think there are tremendous examples across government of interdepartmental cooperation. I think this is another one where we could look for other opportunities to cooperate on providing training for individuals.

Ms. White: The minister has been requested by the Premier in his mandate letter to address the policy gaps identified by the Auditor General in 2010. The Auditor General noted that the corporation has not carried out adequate analysis to determine how well it's meeting the need for social housing in the territory, particularly in Whitehorse. The corporation also needs to do a better job of determining the type and number of

social and staff housing units that are needed in each community.

Has the corporation made progress in determining the need for social housing? In my question today I referenced a senior who is on the brink of — pretty much — disaster, and in her situation her love for her pets is paramount; she has made that very clear. What is the corporation doing to help people like the senior of whom I speak? How many units do we need to address the need for housing currently? What are we still waiting for? What progress is there on the other policy gaps?

Hon. Mr. Kent: There were a number of recommendations by the Auditor General when it came to different aspects of the Yukon Housing Corporation.

I think perhaps rather than going through the 10 or so pages here right now, what I can do is commit to getting some updates to members opposite with respect to the policy gaps and a status update on them. Again, when you look at the letter of expectations that I have as minister with the board of directors and the corporation, in there is to address the policy gaps identified by the Auditor General in the report of the OAG to the Yukon Legislature in February 2010.

Specifically though, I'll just speak to the social housing program evaluation that the member opposite referenced. The recommendation was that the corporation should ensure that the evaluation required under its agreement with CMHC is completed on time. To help assess the effectiveness of its social housing program, recommendations stemming from the evaluation should be considered for implementation to improve the social housing program. The update on that is that work has commenced regarding an update of the appeal bylaw after review and consideration by the Housing Corporation Board of Directors of the analysis contained in the recent social housing program evaluation.

So there is some work, and the performance audit is referenced on page 17 of the report that was tabled earlier today. I'm looking forward, through the board of directors, to identifying those policy gaps and updating that on a regular basis to myself. It's something that's very important and important enough to address in the protocol agreement as part of the shareholders letter of expectations.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for the answer. The report tabled today will be interesting reading when I get a chance to get through it.

So the Yukon Housing Corporation draft strategic plan is an excellent first step. I spoke to many of the people or groups who have been identified as stakeholders. They are very excited and hope that the momentum from this first initial meeting can continue.

So now that the corporation has a diverse number of groups engaged — and they are engaged; they are, like I said, quite excited — what direction has the minister given Yukon Housing Corporation so that the big picture strategy reflects the input of these groups and so that improvements for social housing are seen throughout the territory due to their input?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I would like to take some time to outline for members the mandate mission and vision in the new

strategic plan. Hopefully, that will help to frame some of the conversation here.

So the mandate of the Housing Corporation that exists for the 2013-18 plan is to undertake programs and activities related to the provision of housing in Yukon as set out in the various acts. I won't get into the exact verbiage here, but in carrying out our mandate, we are guided by our mission, vision, strategic goals and values.

"Our Mission — What We Do: We work to resolve existing and emerging housing challenges in Yukon by providing social, senior and staff housing, as well as other programs to assist Yukoners build, purchase, upgrade and repair their homes. We support Yukoners most in need to find and maintain suitable and attainable accommodation and we collaborate with all levels of government, non-profit organizations and other parties to find innovative housing solutions."

The mission statement sets out the role that the Yukon Housing Corporation plays in achieving its vision. It defines the business we are in and the people we serve.

So finally, under Our Vision — Where We Are Going: "...for a healthy, well maintained and attainable housing environment in Yukon that offers a range of housing choices to meet the needs of all Yukoners."

So the vision statement outlines the ideal future state that the Housing Corporation is working to achieve. As mentioned, I think there was some fantastic, initial dialogue with the stakeholders who were engaged on the draft strategic plan, which has led to the final document that is now up on the Housing Corporation's website. I mentioned earlier that the new president of the Housing Corporation has joined some committees, working with various NGOs — has been very engaged with the lenders and realtors and, again, a testament to her background in housing, and her passion for housing she has brought to this position. I think it's tremendous and, again, I'd just really like to take the opportunity to thank the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors for their leadership over the last year in coming up with this new protocol agreement, with the letter of expectations in there, and developing what I think is a tremendous strategic plan that will help us with implementation plans over the next five years, from 2013 to 2018, to address those strategic goals and what we plan to do with each and every one of them.

Ms. White: So the links are clear between safe, affordable housing and the newly released *Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy*.

My question is: What are the key deliverables and contributions of the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation to the delivery of the social inclusion document, and how will those contributions be measured?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Obviously, there are many aspects to the housing continuum, from emergency shelters to transitional housing to supportive housing — social housing, the private market, rental and home ownership. Obviously, the Department of Health and Social Services takes a lead on a number of those.

As I mentioned earlier, there is collaboration with Salvation Army to consolidate, expand and relocate its shelter and

other services to a larger facility. Health and Social Services is working with a local NGO to open up the new youth shelter in Whitehorse, and Health and Social Services and the Housing Corporation are working with the Dawson Shelter Society to expand the women's shelter to provide increased space for programming and more bed capacity for women and children in need in the community of Dawson City.

So again, on the transitional housing side, there is the Betty's Haven project that we mentioned. Supportive housing — Yukon Housing Corporation is participating in the Options for Independence Society and the affordable family housing complex in Riverdale.

When it comes to social and seniors housing — when it comes to this particular issue, Housing has the lead. There is a rent-geared-to-income formula that we use for social and seniors housing — 25 percent of their gross monthly household income for rent and heat is what tenants pay. We've invested significantly over the last number of years in new seniors facilities in Watson Lake, Teslin, Faro, Haines Junction and Whitehorse. Of course, the Turner Street apartments or, I guess, what may or may not be known as the new Korbo Apartments in Dawson City, or the Korbo replacement — again, investments in family six-plexes and other initiatives. There is also work underway on the private market rental and home ownership.

We certainly understand that housing is an important part of the social inclusion strategy that the Minister of Health and Social Services tabled. To that end, I know there is significant work done between the Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services, when it comes to that end of the continuum.

Again, that is speaking to the social and seniors housing, as well as the transitional, the shelters and those other housing projects — and supportive, I guess, is the other one that I missed.

The Minister of Health and Social Services and I have directed our officials and the Board of the Housing Corporation to develop an MOU between our two organizations and finding ways to build those paths forward that not only meet what we're trying to accomplish in our strategic plan, but also meet what the Minister of Health and Social Services is trying to accomplish with his social inclusion strategy.

Again, there is an awful lot of cooperation and work going on interdepartmentally, and I think that will be key in addressing what the member opposite is asking.

Ms. White: In 2010, an evaluation of social housing policies was done. I'm just going to read — "The purpose of the review was to (1) document the implementation experiences of the policies; (2) assess the extent to which each policy is achieving its intentions; and (3) identify possible improvements that would help realize policy goals. The review also assesses the effectiveness of YHC's capital planning process."

On page 3 of that document, we talk about capital planning and the overall conclusion says, "The YHC capital planning process appears to have suffered from the scarcity of capital budgets for housing over the past decade or more. Planning would be enhanced by a more comprehensive housing needs assessment, improved Census data, and use of a rigorous capital planning model." I'm just curious as to what the progress of

the recommendations were, both overall and then under rehabilitation and maintenance of the existing stock.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Obviously, with the global economic turmoil that began in 2008 and led to Canada's economic action plan, we were very fortunate in the Yukon to be able to add significantly, not only to the number of social housing units we have, but also enhancing and improving our existing social housing stock. The Housing Corporation now has a total of 657 social housing units throughout the Yukon. Most of the new housing was completed by last fall in order to utilize the remaining CEAP, or economic action plan funds prior to the March 2012 program expiry, so the corporation purchased a number of mobile homes, and they are being installed in Carmacks.

There are six mobile homes — three in Carmacks and three in Ross River. With those additional units, 133 new Yukon Housing Corporation social housing units were created and a further 10 units were added in special needs housing — specifically, the children's receiving home, eight units for Health and Social Services and two units managed by options for independence.

Again, as I mentioned earlier, over 350 social housing units throughout the Yukon were repaired and upgraded using that economic action plan funding. There were many different aspects to the upgrades that occurred, such as safety features, interior or exterior retrofits, roofing repairs, flooring replacement, furnace and boiler upgrades, siding, trim and air-barrier upgrades, bathroom and kitchen renovations, painting and, in some units, wheelchairs lifts were added. We certainly want to acknowledge the financial contributions from the Government of Canada, which made those social housing improvements possible.

Again, as of February 28, 2012, on the upgrades: Throughout a number of communities including Carcross, Carmacks, Dawson City, Haines Junction, Mayo, Ross River, Teslin, Watson Lake and Whitehorse, there was \$6,540,000 of federal dollars invested and \$860,000 additional Yukon dollars invested — so \$7.4 million over those two years.

Now we're obviously in a situation where the economic action plan dollars are no longer flowing. We also took advantage of some of the northern housing trust dollars, investing \$32 million of the \$50 million that we received, transferring that to First Nations so that they could use that to address their individual housing requirements, as well as an additional \$4.5 million that was transferred to Kaushee's Place for Betty's Haven. That's where some of the northern housing trust money has gone. There is some additional dollars left over, and we've asked the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors to come up with a plan that fits into our strategic plan, especially on the partnership side and leveraging additional investments from others.

Getting back to the member's question, when it comes to what we're doing on the social housing improvements, obviously there was that tremendous influx of dollars — and I should congratulate the capital building branch in the Yukon Housing Corporation for their work.

I know that they were nominated for a Premier's Award of Excellence for what they accomplished in investing those dollars. Those dollars from the federal government were obviously time-sensitive — as mentioned, March 2012. To be able to get the projects out the door in the time frame that they were presented with is something that is very commendable indeed. I think everyone associated with those projects should be very proud of what they accomplished. I am certainly very pleased to acknowledge that here in the House today.

Again, now as we move forward, we are looking at CMHC dollars for the affordable housing initiatives, some of which have been invested in the Alexander Street Residence and the Options for Independence. That is at \$75,000 per unit. So we are going to have to be creative as we move forward on the capital side and look for those strategic partnerships with First Nation governments, NGOs and the private sector when we try to build on what we already have and grow that pot of money to meet the housing needs of Yukoners no matter where they lie on that housing continuum.

Ms. White: In the corporation's draft strategic plan, goal number three is to develop strategic partnerships with Yukon government departments, other governments, non-government organizations and the private sector in pursuit of collaborative initiatives to enhance the full range of choices along the housing continuum. The Northern City Supportive Housing Coalition's "housing first" proposal for the hard-to-house was withdrawn back in August of 2011. I believe with the new strategic goals, possibly the tide is changing. I was wondering if the Housing Corporation has spoken to the coalition at all to advance the important projects. I wanted to know how long the commitment from Canada is to match the \$75,000 per unit for construction of affordable rental accommodation.

Hon. Mr. Kent: There are two years left on the program I referred to. It used to be called "affordable housing initiative", but I think they changed the acronym, but I'm just going to call it the affordable housing initiative, just to keep with what I know. My apologies to CMHC officials who may be listening, but I'm going to stick to that acronym.

When it comes to Northern City's proposal, it's my understanding they have not approached the Housing Corporation to resubmit their proposal at this time. If they were to do so, of course it would be evaluated on its merits and compared to other proposals. The one thing I can certainly let members of the House know is that there is no shortage of proposals that come into the Housing Corporation for consideration. Anything that comes forward from anybody is evaluated on its merits and ranked against other similar proposals that come forward.

Ms. White: Just before I lead into my very last question, I'd like to acknowledge how much I appreciate the interchange between the minister and me with regard to questions and the conscientious effort he is making to answer the questions that I've asked. It makes for a very good, engaging debate, and I appreciate it very much. I thank the officials who are here supporting him in that action, so thank you very much.

During the briefing with the officials, we were told about renovations underway in Dawson City on the 10 units — I

think it's 10 units; correct me if I'm wrong — that will be used for the hospital staff when the Dawson hospital opens. My question: For these 10 units sitting vacant or being renovated, are there currently any citizens on the wait-list for Yukon Housing Corporation units in Dawson City?

Hon. Mr. Kent: When it comes to the staff housing refurbishment in Dawson City, I'm sure we'll hear from the Member for Klondike shortly, who will reaffirm something that I know — that housing options in Dawson City are limited. The Housing Corporation is now working to supplement the staff housing needs in Dawson City. There are 12 units being refurbished for staff housing inventory that should be ready for occupancy in the spring of 2013. The Housing Corporation is extending the serviceable life of its housing units with upgrades to make the units more comfortable and more pleasing to tenants.

One of the things we are looking at is developing a staff housing strategy. The Member for Klondike spoke about this during debate on the Department of Education and I referred it forward to the minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation when he was up. Hopefully, he will be pleased to answer your questions today on that.

When it comes to the wait-list, as I mentioned earlier on the social housing side of things — and this is a vacancy report as of November 30, 2012, just for reference for members opposite. We have 49 seniors in Whitehorse on the wait-list and 30 non-seniors in Whitehorse on the wait-list. There are some small numbers across some of the other communities, but for the vast majority, there are no people on the wait-list for social housing units outside of Whitehorse.

The First Nation housing outside of Whitehorse — they've done some tremendous work. I know the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation was recently recognized for a housing project and identified specifically in a Conference Board of Canada report. I'm also happy to report that staff from the Yukon Housing Corporation were part of the design team that helped to design and build the energy efficient, single detached residences in a new subdivision in Dawson.

When it comes to the staff units, specifically in Dawson, 12 are unallocated — so 12 there and four in Watson Lake. There is no one on the wait-list in any of the other communities — so 16 on the staff housing unit wait-list.

Obviously, we're trying to address that through the work we are doing to refurbish the units in Dawson City. There is the Korbo Apartments site that has been recently remediated. We are still waiting for the final sign-off and final clean bill of health, I understand, on that property. I've been approached by individuals — some from the private sector — who are looking to build some staff housing accommodation and who have been referred to the Yukon Housing Corporation. I anticipate meetings to occur shortly, specifically to Dawson City and taking care of some of the staff housing issues that exist in that community.

Mr. Silver: I'd like to thank the officials for being here today. I know you are busy, and it's really appreciated to have your time here today in the Legislative Assembly. It's a great segue from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. I was

just wondering — there is a discrepancy here between what we are hearing from the minister compared to what I'm hearing in the community of Dawson alone. As early as this summer, I know there were at least 16 names on that list for social housing. Some of those names were actually on the list for up to three years.

There has actually been some housing available. I know that there is one house in particular — I forget what street it's on, but it is a Yukon Housing Corporation house. It's blue. I can see it right now. It's right by the hospital. It has been vacant for a few years as well. I can get the actual address for the minister.

Now, without much explanation as to why there are some vacant houses in Dawson, one would understand why certain persons would maybe not check if they're still on that list. However, I do know that there are people who believe they're on a list for social housing in Dawson. I also know that there are two teachers who would love to be on a list for staff housing, who are new to the community. One has picked up a house and is paying a lot more than they would if they were allowed to have the Yukon Housing Corporation price for staff housing. The other one is still couch surfing and is looking for a place as of the beginning of next month, and will still be looking for a new place.

So I was just wondering if the minister can comment as to looking into those discrepancies of numbers. I would absolutely be available to help him collect these names if the minister wishes to incorporate my services there. I'll end with that for now.

Hon. Mr. Kent: As of November 30, in Dawson City there are 98 total units; 70 of them are social housing units, 62 are active and one is vacant. There are seven under repair and on the wait-list in Dawson there is one senior and three social housing individuals, so four total on the social housing side of things. For staff units, there are 28 total staff units; 27 are active. There are none vacant and none under repair. There is one, which is the one I am assuming the member is talking about, that is out of service.

Just to quickly go through the definitions of those various things: "active" of course means occupied and allocated; "vacant" means unoccupied but available for occupancy; "under repair" means in the process of being repaired and not available for occupancy; "out of service" means it is shut down and winterized with no plans for future use; and "under allocation" means ready for occupancy and in the process of being allocated to a specific applicant. There are requests for staff housing when no units are available — that is the definition for "waiting lists" — approved for housing and waiting for an available unit.

Those are the definitions that I outlined. I'll commit to getting corporation officials to follow up with the housing manager in Dawson City to ensure that these numbers I have as of November 30 and have just mentioned are accurate, and then I'll get back to the member opposite on that when it comes to the Dawson City specific questions that he asked. Hopefully, I was able to provide a bit of a breakdown on a snapshot of what

the Yukon Housing Corporation situation is in the community of Dawson City.

Mr. Silver: I appreciate the answer. I do think that there is an issue of people being on that list for a long time and then basically just not checking back in, maybe finding other options. I did speak to a number of people today who believe that they are currently on that list. I'll look forward to talking with the minister and his representatives.

Just a quick question — did we lose a 0.5 position in Dawson for Yukon Housing Corporation? I know that right now currently there is one full-time person at the office and there was another 0.5 position — if you could just comment as to whether we still have that position or not or if it is just not filled.

Hon. Mr. Kent: From what I understand, that position is still there. It's one and then an additional 0.5. I believe the 0.5 was an administrative position. There is the one community housing manager position, but again, if that information is inaccurate, I'll certainly get back to the member opposite and I'll have officials check on that.

I thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King in congratulating me for staying on topic. I'm just going to beg the indulgence of the Member for Klondike and drift a little off topic right now and provide an update. It's something that I didn't get a chance to do off the top but I'll provide an update for members of the House on the attainable home ownership program. Perhaps that will stimulate some additional questions from the member opposite.

The framework for this program has been approved by the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors. There are still some questions with CMHC that need to be resolved, but we anticipate them being done in the next month or so. I will be brief with this. I'll just give a brief program description and how the program works.

The name that the board approved is the "accelerated home buyer program." What it's going to do is assist low- and moderate-income home buyers with the down payment to purchase a primary residence dwelling.

Presently, many people are prevented from entering the housing market because they lack a down payment large enough to qualify for a mortgage from a lending institution. This program is intended to assist households with a total annual income of up to 120 percent of — it's based on Whitehorse's median household income. So where that would be currently is at approximately \$80,000. Individuals have to be eligible for bank financing to qualify for this. Again, it's targeted to individuals who haven't accumulated a sufficient down payment. This is something I heard a lot of in my riding where there are a number of apartment buildings.

When he is in Whitehorse, the member opposite lives in one of those apartment buildings. He may have talked to neighbours who are in a similar situation where people know they can afford the monthly payments, but are having trouble with coming up with that down payment. Assistance will be provided to those individuals in the form of a deferred loan and registered on the title as a second mortgagee. The data will be

revised on the median income on an annual basis, based on the most recent tax-filer income data from Statistics Canada.

Just quickly how the program will work: The applicant will have to provide 2.5 percent of the purchase price and must, again, qualify for a bank mortgage where the total down payment is at least 7.5 percent of the purchase price. The Housing Corporation loan will be a maximum of five percent of the purchase price.

The loan will be subject to a nominal rate of interest for the fixed term of the mortgage, and the loan principal and accumulated interest must be repaid upon the sale of the dwelling or at the end of the first five-year term of the mortgage, whichever is first. Obviously, there may be some instances where that's not possible and we'll deal with that on a case-by-case basis, should there not be enough equity to repay that up-to-five-percent loan. That really gives a quick overview of that attainable home ownership piece, but one of the other aspects — and it's not something that I'd initially envisioned when asking the Housing Corporation Board to look at this, but it's something that is a companion piece to the other program, and that's a home ownership preparedness and education program. That program is directed to renter households that may aspire to own a home but need better financial management training and may have insufficient income.

The program provides participants with information on the financial planning, budgeting and household management skills necessary to achieve successful home ownership. As one of the prerequisites to being eligible for the accelerated home buyer program, prospective owners must complete this education program as well. It's really a financial literacy piece coupled with all those household management skills that new home owners or people who are trying to enter the market will require.

Just quickly for the eligibility for the homebuyer program: applicants may be an individual, a couple or a household comprised of three or more individuals. They must be a Yukon resident. Applicants shall provide valid Yukon health care card or a letter of offer from a Yukon employer. I think that's designed to assist us in our recruitment and retention goals when it comes to attracting people to come to the Yukon to work, whether it be in the public sector or the private sector. They obviously must qualify for the mortgage for the cost of the dwelling from a financial institution and they must provide a minimum deposit of 2.5 percent of the purchase price for the down payment. Those are the aspects that have been considered with this.

I think one of the exciting pieces that has come out of this is a number of options through the homeowner education piece and credit repair piece to expand beyond that to assist people no matter where they are in the continuum in moving through the housing continuum and eventually into the home ownership piece.

I'm really excited with the work that the Yukon Housing Corporation, the board of directors and everyone involved in this have come up with. I look forward to rolling that out and making a more official announcement once CMHC has done their work and approved what we've got here. I certainly

wanted to give Yukoners and members of the House a snapshot of what we're looking at with this and say that it's really the start. It's not going to be the finished product. There are some other opportunities that we're looking at within the home ownership and rental piece that I'll look forward to having the corporation approve and we'll roll out over the coming years. Sorry about the off-topic comments.

Mr. Silver: That wasn't so off topic actually; I just received an e-mail from a constituent on these particulars. I will definitely forward that information to my west Dawson friend — and also the annual report that has been produced and put on my desk here today. It has some excellent information about the home-build and home-buy programs, so thank you for that.

I will go to the question that we asked previously in the House, possibly in the wrong setting, but it comes back to why teachers were taken off the Yukon Housing Corporation list for staff housing.

When I first moved to Dawson, having a place available for me that I didn't have to look for was absolutely essential. I really firmly believe that being taken off of my list of things that I had to accomplish for myself helped for the social buy-in. Having a place really gives you a sense of home and a sense of community right away.

I understand the need for the nurses and doctors to also come into the community and have a place to stay so let's just put it under the term of "professionals" — teachers, doctors or nurses. To me, it's interesting to know that some professionals do have housing available, where others don't.

I was wondering if the minister would like to comment on that. I believe the rate is still a standard \$600 for professionals coming into the communities for Yukon Housing Corporation. That rate hasn't changed in a long time. I also know too that for professionals, it's great to have that available for the first year or maybe two years. I was wondering if the minister would comment on whether or not he believes that is something that should change. I've asked in briefings before what is the mandate for Yukon Housing Corporation. Number one obviously is social housing.

Under that guise, I'm just wondering if there's an appetite for the minister to look into changing the policy for professionals in Yukon Housing Corporation and if he's willing to commit to having a time limit for professionals. Doctors and teachers make a lot of money. They made the newspaper the other day. They were talking six figures for those teachers nowadays after the great work that they did negotiating contracts with the Minister of Education. I know the minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation has an intimate knowledge of that, so I was just wondering if he could comment on that, please.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Again, as the member opposite referenced, staff housing is certainly one of the programs that the Housing Corporation continues to administer on behalf of the Yukon government. One of the interesting figures that I've come across is over the last 10 years our rural Yukon government workforce has grown by 18 percent, from 750 to 890 employees. About 560 of the current count are permanent and term employees. This information was as of March of 2012.

We currently have 153 staff housing units in service, of which 14 are assigned to other organizations, such as the Hospital Corporation and Yukon College, leaving 133 units to allocate among Yukon government staff — again, recognizing that we certainly want to make sure that we can not only recruit, but also retain professionals in our communities. I think housing is a key ingredient that we try to provide to those professionals who are moving outside of Whitehorse and working in our communities. I know from personal experience — when my family moved here in 1973, we lived in Public Works housing that was administered by the federal government. My dad was a federal government employee, so that was obviously a big recruitment piece for him and for us coming north to the Yukon at that time — and us still remaining in the Yukon to this day. All of my siblings and extended family, for the most part, are still here. So it's such a key ingredient.

But, again, to the member's point, there has been increased economic activity; there has been devolution of federal government employees that has led to that employee increase outside of Whitehorse in the communities, and it is time that the Housing Corporation, along with key departments in the Yukon government — I know the member referenced medical professionals and the education professionals we have, but there is also demand from Energy, Mines and Resources, and Highways and Public Works, and the Department of Environment and others.

There are an awful lot of departments at play when it comes to staff housing. The work that is being undertaken is a comprehensive review of the current and future staff housing needs. So I look forward to hearing back from the affected departments and the Housing Corporation on that and coming up with some recommendations for those individuals who do want to stay in the community. Perhaps there are recommendations that will come forward to moving them into their own home ownership pieces. Perhaps even for some of those professionals that are in the income range we've talked about with the accelerated homebuyer program — they are able to use it to purchase their own homes and free up staff housing units.

Where we have trouble all along with the stock we have at the Housing Corporation, I think, is where individuals stall at a certain point in the continuum on the social side.

We're not able to keep up on the staff housing side, either. So I think the best way to look at it is to move individuals through from staff housing to perhaps their own home ownership if they've decided to remain in the community that they've chosen to work in.

Obviously, in some communities that won't be an option because the market is limited for home ownership, but where there are options, such as Dawson City, Watson Lake or many of the other communities across the territory, I'm hopeful that this review of the needs and of the policy will address that. I think that in speaking with the president of the corporation, we can anticipate something coming forward in the 2013 calendar year with respect to that staff housing policy.

Mr. Silver: I really appreciate that answer. I'll be looking forward to the results of this. The minister mentions recruitment and retention. I know that I knew quickly after I

moved here that I was going to be staying in Dawson, and after about a year I knew that I was actually able to afford a mortgage, but at the same time, I really had no motivational factor to push me out of that Yukon Housing Corporation situation — you know, \$600 a month compared to actually getting prepared for a mortgage. It's quite a different amount of money.

I will say too that I actually did get a mortgage and I went through the Yukon Housing Corporation's mortgage build program and I do recommend it for others as well.

I'll switch to availability of lots and solutions to housing problems in Dawson and then I'll give the floor over to anybody else who has some questions. Once again, thank you for the member's team coming here — the officials. I was wondering, now that the old Korbo lots are pretty much reclaimed — and I believe that accounts for four lots — and you add that to the stock that Yukon Housing Corporation also has in town of another four empty lots, that's a total of eight city lots that are owned by Yukon Housing Corporation, I believe, that are vacant. The minister can correct me if I'm wrong. I was wondering if there are long-range plans for these lots and if there is not something that has already been established, is there an appetite for the corporation to sell those lots off to the private sector? I do know that there is interest.

I don't know if the minister can answer this question or not, but in that vein, has any dialogue taken place between the minister responsible for housing and Property Management with regard to plans for the McDonald Lodge building after a new facility is going to be offered for our seniors, which is going to be attached to the new hospital?

I've been told the old McDonald Lodge facility would actually act as an excellent facility for housing for SOVA students and transient workers in the summer. SOVA is ready to go to a second cohort, which would mean 30 students coming in and looking for housing, so this seems to be an excellent opportunity.

There is a rumour — and of course, believe it or not, there are rumours surfacing in Dawson — that McDonald Lodge is going to be demolished as opposed to maybe being used for help within the housing sector. I was just wondering if there have been any conversations the minister has been involved with as far as that goes, and then also back to those eight lots — if they would consider selling these off to the private sector if they don't have a long-range plan.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I thank the member opposite. We've had some fun this session talking to the member opposite about where he's actually from, but I will concede that his home is Dawson City and we're very proud to have him as a Yukoner. I know he has been a strong member of that community for the past 15 years through his teaching and also his involvement with many local community organizations. I will put an end to accusing him of being from "away". I won't speak for others.

When it comes to the lots that the member spoke about — the four lots that comprise the old Korbo Apartments and then I believe there are four additional lots — I know that the Housing Corporation did dispose of some lots prior to my time as minister, but there were some that we did put on the market in the community. I may stand corrected on that, but I believe that

was the case. With the four additional lots and some of the pressures that we've talked about in Dawson City, I think what we want to do first off is determine how we're going to move forward on the Korbo site.

As mentioned, the remediation took place this fall. I think the contaminated soil was hauled to a government facility in west Dawson. I'm not 100-percent sure if we got the all-clear from Environment yet, but I'll check with officials to determine whether we can move. Some further testing may need to be done in the spring, once the ground thaws, to make sure that we got all the contaminants.

When it comes to that site, I think the best move for us going forward is to look at the strategic partnerships, not only with Yukon government departments, but First Nation governments, NGOs and the private sector, in pursuit of collaborative initiatives to enhance the full range of choices along the housing continuum in the Yukon. That speaks to our strategic goal number three. I would like to talk to the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors and give them direction to move on that site.

What we end up with there will determine what our plans are for those four individual lots that the member opposite referenced — I believe there are four of them. Many of them are suitable for building and we may require them to put Yukon Housing stock on, obviously with the different pressures, and of course Dawson City is at the forefront of mine development and mining exploration, so we could see additional pressures there from the private sector as well as additional public sector resources moving in on the staff side.

Just quickly on McDonald Lodge, I know that that is the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Services. I'm not aware of what the future use is for that facility, but I certainly will take it up with my colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, and get back to the member opposite if there are plans determined, or to respond to the rumours that he has heard in his community.

When it comes to possibly using it as a residence, I'd certainly want to speak to Yukon College — student residences are primarily their responsibility — and get a sense for what they need. I know there is a need for them in Whitehorse. One of our campaign commitments was to identify land for a student residence and any additional buildings they may require for the centre for northern innovation in mining.

So I'd like to talk to the college and see exactly what their short- and long-term needs are in Dawson City with respect to the programs that they offer there. I'll commit to the member opposite to talk to these organizations and then get back to him.

Mr. Elias: I'd like to also ask the minister a couple of questions with regard to my home community of Old Crow.

I understand there are six or seven housing units the Yukon Housing Corporation is responsible for in Old Crow. Over the years, there have been some mechanical maintenance problems associated with those units that are, for the most part, used by the teachers who live in Old Crow. I was wondering if the minister can give me an update on whether or not those mechanical maintenance issues have been rectified because they seemed to be going on for quite some time.

There was also a fuel spill outside one of the units — I think it was about a year and a half ago. There has been some reclamation of that spill. I was just wondering if he can give me an update on that. If the minister has any replacement plans for any of the units in Old Crow — are there any plans to build any affordable or social housing in Old Crow under the auspices of the Yukon Housing Corporation?

I do realize that access to the community of Old Crow for maintenance is an issue. I understand that there is some dialogue going on with the First Nation, in terms of developing a maintenance relationship for those units. So if the minister could give me an update on those issues that are coming from my community, that would be good. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Just referencing when we did receive the \$50 million in northern housing trust money, \$32 million of that was transferred to First Nations. I'm not sure exactly what share was transferred to Vuntut Gwitchin, but — \$3.1 million. I thank the member opposite for giving me that number, that's great. Obviously, some resources were transferred to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

When it comes to the staff housing that is operated by Yukon Housing Corporation in Old Crow, I know there have been some issues with the staff housing, and units have been left in poor condition.

The Housing Corporation doesn't have a housing office in Old Crow. I believe it is run out of the office in Dawson City. There has been technical staff on site at a variety of times over the past number of months, starting September 4. The Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and I arrived in Old Crow on one of the days for our oil-fired appliance consultations, and we were able to do a tour of some of the residences there and take a look at what was happening.

The member opposite is correct: we're looking at coming up with an agreement with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation on maintenance and finding ways to make sure — obviously we want to prevent similar issues in the future so we have begun working on new staff housing procedures with the departments that use our staff housing as well as working with the First Nation on maintenance aspects. I know the Vuntut Gwitchin take care of the majority of the homes in Old Crow. I had the opportunity to meet the capital maintenance manager or director of government services — I'm not sure exactly what his title was. We met him when we were in Old Crow — working with those individuals to make sure that the housing issues and concerns are addressed.

I'll have to get back to the member opposite on the status of the fuel leak outside one of the units that he referred to. I'll get information back to him about that, just to make sure that we're transmitting correct information. Certainly, when it comes to any new builds in Old Crow or looking to address some of the concerns, we'll weigh those opportunities against what the demands and needs are in other Yukon communities. Again, not to be a broken record here, but I think one of the most important strategic goals that the corporation has set for itself is that strategic partnership goal. It does reference working with other governments. I've had a tremendous working relationship with the Vuntut Gwitchin government on other

issues — educational issues, of course, in my role as Minister of Education — but I look forward to developing a further dialogue with chief and council and representatives on housing up there as well, and how we can develop some of these strategic partnerships to meet the needs of the people of Old Crow.

I know that the new president of the Housing Corporation has a strong working relationship with the chief up there, as well, coming from her former capacity as Deputy Minister of Education. We're looking forward to working with Vuntut Gwitchin on a government-to-government basis when it comes to looking at the housing issues in the community.

Chair: Before the member speaks, would members like to take a break?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Thank you. Committee of the Whole will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. We are going to resume general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation.

Ms. Hanson: I just have one area for questions arising from the notes to the financial statements on page 9. I'm curious about the note under 8, seniors housing management fund.

It says here: "The Seniors' Housing Management Fund ... was established under section 9 of the *Housing Corporation Act* to provide for the future housing needs of Yukon's seniors. The Government of Yukon approved the establishment of the Fund in October 2000." It seems like a prudent thing to do. It then goes on to say, "Until 2010, the Fund received Government of Yukon funding through an annual appropriation, an appropriation equal to interest revenue generated by the Corporation's Green Mortgage Program and interest revenue earned on monies held for the Fund. In May 2009, the Government of Yukon directed the Corporation to use the SHMF to make up any shortfall between the economic stimulus funding from Canada and the actual costs for projects benefiting seniors. Where no shortfall exists, SHMF funds are not required to be used and may be used for other projects benefiting seniors, subject to Management Board approval of those projects."

My question is, in a sense, two parts: What was the accrued amount in 2010, and what is the intent of government with respect to this fund? Is it to spend it down until — contrary to the initial intent, which was to provide for future housing needs — or is it the intent just to spend it down until there is nothing there because I see no expenditure in 2011. So if I could have a response with respect to the accrued amount — like, what it was before the change in direction, and then what the long-term intent is with respect to having a seniors housing management fund to provide for future housing needs, as it says here?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The balance at the beginning of the year, where it says "2011", would have been 2010-11, so that's for the 2010-11 fiscal year and then 2011-12. I don't have the figures prior to this, but I can take a look and see if I can get those for members opposite; I don't have them here with me

today. With respect to the dollars that are in the seniors housing management fund right now, a portion of those dollars will be used on the Alexander Street Residence that is going to be constructed in downtown Whitehorse. Just directing members' attention to page 15 of the report itself, there is the seniors housing management fund there in the annual report that was tabled earlier today. It shows the 2009-10 approximate balance of just under \$3.7 million, and subsequent expenditures that have taken it to where it was at just under \$2.775 million.

On two projects in 2011, \$205,000 was spent on the Abbeyfield project in Whitehorse. In 2012, \$721,000 was spent, including \$360,000 for the new seniors building in Watson Lake, \$300,000 for the new seniors building in Whitehorse or what's known as "Waterfront Place", and an additional \$61,000 for the Abbeyfield project. Those dollars came out of the seniors housing management fund.

At this point, we don't know what it's going to be until we get the tenders for the project, but a portion of the money in the seniors housing management fund will be going toward the Alexander Street project in downtown Whitehorse.

Just quickly before I get back to the member opposite, in case she has a follow-up question, I just wanted to respond to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin with respect to the fuel spill. The fuel spill that occurred near the staff housing in Old Crow has been remediated.

I just wanted to give him that update that it has been remediated, and quickly also to apologize to the Leader of the Official Opposition with respect to a memorandum I sent to her on December 10, 2012 regarding issues that she raised with Closeleigh Manor. In my haste to get it down to her, because I know that most of the issues are very important and pressing to her constituents, I made a spelling mistake with her last name. So apologies to her with respect to that member.

Ms. Hanson: It's okay, Swedes are very forgiving people.

I thank the minister for that response. The second part of my question is really the intent. It was established, as it states here, to provide for future housing needs for Yukon seniors. That seems like a prudent thing to do, to have some ability to address that. We have heard numerous times that the transfers from Canada — and we have no guarantees of any significant increases of federal transfers and no major promises so far, even though there have been lots of requests with respect to new stimulus funding. Is it the intent to spend this down to nothing? I guess I'm looking for clarification. If it's being used in little bits and pieces, subject to Management Board approval, is that consistent with what the objective was under section 9 of the *Housing Corporation Act* to provide for the future housing needs of Yukon seniors? I am just asking if the intention is to spend it down to nothing.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I guess just going back, I know the member opposite read this piece into the record, but this fund was established under section 9 of the *Housing Corporation Act* to provide for the future housing needs of Yukon seniors, and that's what we intend to do — identify projects that will benefit Yukon seniors. These dollars have been used in the past by the corporation to augment other investments by the Gov-

ernment of Canada. When it comes to the Alexander Street Residence, we are using some money from the affordable housing initiative at the \$75,000 per unit amount to build that, but we're also using some funds from the senior housing management fund. That amount will be determined once we receive a successful bid on the project and that's when I'll be able to inform members of the House how much is left in this management fund.

Moving forward, the intent is to ensure that we use the fund to provide for the future housing needs of Yukon seniors and to continue to invest in that. Where the fund ends up — it would be great if we could continue to maintain a positive balance with the fund and continue to use it to invest in what seniors need for housing.

Ms. Hanson: My final question then: Is there a threshold below which the Housing Corporation will not let the senior housing management fund fall?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I don't believe that there has been any threshold established, but the board of directors will play a pivotal role in determining the expenditures of this fund, so I will take the matter raised by the member opposite up with the chair of the board and the board of directors. Perhaps I'll get it on the agenda at their next meeting and see if they've made any decision as to a threshold that they would like to maintain as far as this fund goes.

Mr. Tredger: I was pleased to hear the minister talk about the progress on the seniors and elders complex in Mayo. My question for him is, prior to determining what type of structure or complex will be built, will the minister meet with the elders and seniors of Mayo, as well as the Na Cho Nyäk Dun and the Village of Mayo, to determine how best to meet the needs of Mayo senior and elder residents now and in the future?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As I mentioned earlier in the question raised by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, those discussions are currently underway. It won't be me personally who leads those discussions; there are staff who are engaged with members of the community. When it comes to developing new housing projects for seniors, I mentioned earlier that the president of the Housing Corporation is currently developing a committee for membership. I'm hoping that they can establish some guidelines that we can apply to housing projects and mobility issues across the territory. I would expect staff-led engagement and discussions to be held at the community level and in fact those discussions are being held as we speak with respect to what the design of the seniors facility will look like in Mayo and the number of units — any number of those aspects as far as this project goes.

Mr. Tredger: Thank you to the minister for his answer. The seniors, as well as the village and the Na Cho Nyäk Dun Council, have been contemplating and dreaming about a complex for some time now. They have a lot of ideas that will make it a very viable and vibrant place in the Village of Mayo.

Thank you for your commitment to meeting with them.

My next question is related to the increasing activity in the communities and outside of the communities of Mayo and Carmacks. They're finding that there is a housing and lot shortage in both of those communities. What plans are underway? Have there been consultations with the Na Cho Nyäk Dun, with Little Salmon Carmacks, with the village councils of Mayo and Carmacks to provide living accommodation for local workforces who are working in the industry around their communities, but would like to live in the community? Could I have an update on where we're at with that please?

Hon. Mr. Kent: With respect to the Housing Corporation and the mandate for them, it's obviously to provide social housing for individuals on a rent-geared-to-income basis for individuals and seniors on the social housing side, as well as outside of Whitehorse to provide staff housing for Yukon government employees only, not private sector employees. Then of course there are the loan programs and other things that are offered through the Housing Corporation to assist people who are prospective homeowners or who are looking to do upgrades to their existing homes.

Probably the best individual for the member opposite to direct his particular question to would be the Minister of Community Services, as it is she who is responsible for the land and the lot development in Yukon communities. I know she is engaged in discussions with municipal governments, First Nation governments and others on a regular basis, so I'm sure she would have more information for the member opposite.

Mr. Tredger: In Carmacks, there is currently increasing traffic that goes through residential areas. Much of the traffic goes right past a number of Yukon Housing Corporation residences. This is creating a dangerous situation. It's not safe for the residence. It's not a pleasant activity to have going past. There is a solution, and it has been looked at for a number of years. It's a Carmacks bypass that would reroute traffic that's destined for the Casino and Mount Nansen areas through a bypass area. Would the minister undertake on behalf of his clients and residents living in his housing to talk to his colleagues about the Carmacks bypass road and encourage them to complete it as soon as possible?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I think this issue — similar to the previous issue raised by the member opposite — is the primary responsibility of another department. In this case I believe it would probably be Community Services as well as Highways and Public Works that would look at such a project.

I know that when it comes to the Housing Corporation we have a very full mandate and a full agenda that we undertake on the core programs that we're in charge of. I know that Highways and Public Works has yet to come up for debate during this sitting and hopefully the member opposite is able to direct his questions in this respect to the Minister of Highways and Public Works, or even perhaps the Minister of Community Services, with respect to that specific project.

The corporation does focus on social and staff housing and loan programs, and I think that's enough work for the board and the staff to focus on.

Mr. Tredger: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer.

Housing is becoming increasingly energy efficient, and I must commend Yukon Housing Corporation for the efforts they have made on behalf of our environment of the Yukon to ensure that the housing that is built is energy efficient and is up to date and meets all the current standards. However with energy efficiency, maintaining and looking after a house becomes increasingly complex.

I know that in other jurisdictions they've found that many of the residents need training in house maintenance, upkeep and renovation. Many of the houses now have heat-recovery ventilation systems. Many of the rural houses have wood stoves; they are airtight. Mould is an increasing problem. The furnaces and the heating systems are increasingly complex. Other jurisdictions have found that regular delivery of courses in home maintenance has saved them and reduced upkeep costs and maintenance costs and increased the comfort of residents in the house.

Are there any plans for Yukon Housing to begin training courses in Whitehorse as well as in Yukon communities on home maintenance and skills — something as simple as replacing weather stripping, but it may also be running an HRV and the maintenance required there.

It could be furnace maintenance, not repairs but things a homeowner can look for, like when to change the filters to ensure that the water systems are working. All those kinds of things are becoming increasingly complex. When they are not paid attention to, the bills for the maintenance costs and the upkeep costs increase tremendously. It would be of great advantage and cost effective if Yukon Housing Corporation were to undertake something like that and make it available to all Yukoners, both in the communities and in the city.

Hon. Mr. Kent: This gives me a quick opportunity to also give another little shout-out to two of our science fair winners, the "Don't Let It Out!" winner, who talked about energy efficiency — her project was focused on that — and then the project that spoke to radon gas was "Don't Let It In!" The Minister of Economic Development and I had the opportunity to meet with the students prior to the sitting yesterday and go through their projects. I know the Housing Corporation has been involved with the students and looking at their projects. It's tremendous that we have such great young minds and young scientists who are going to represent the Yukon on the national stage in Lethbridge.

Specifically to the member opposite's question — I think I may be repeating myself from an answer I gave the Member for Takhini-Kopper King earlier — the corporation has been providing and there are no plans to not continue providing some of these relevant training courses and seminars to individuals. Some of the examples are the EnerGuide for house evaluators; energy-efficient construction; best practices for oil-fired appliances and oil tank installations; certified ventilation install and design; the HRV balancing; worked with the City of Whitehorse energy bylaw verifiers; self-help builder's courses that I spoke about and I think are currently being advertised.

Also the corporation has partnered with the Yukon Cold Climate Innovation Centre as well as a local company to conduct extensive monitoring on 21 units, ranging from single-

family dwellings to multi-residential buildings. Data will be streamed to a server at the Yukon Research Centre and made available to other agencies. What that information is designed to do is to help us better understand the performance of super-insulated residential buildings, the effects of lifestyle on the building, the accuracy of computer models and much, much more.

One of the other partnerships that the Yukon Housing Corporation is engaged in with other agencies is monitoring several heat recovery ventilation units — the HRV units — in extremely cold climates to gather data on the performance and modes of failure of HRVs in the north. It will help identify ways to improve ventilation systems in our climate for better occupant health, home durability and energy costs.

I will again take this brief opportunity to thank and congratulate staff at the Yukon Housing Corporation who were part of the design team that helped to design and build the energy efficient single detached residences in Dawson City that recently garnered a claim from the Conference Board of Canada in its report of December 2012, which celebrated the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in housing project. Thank you to the Yukon Housing Corporation staff who played a part in that project. They should be proud of themselves, as I am sure the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in are.

Chair: Is there any further debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation?

We're going to proceed line by line.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Gross Expenditures

*Gross Expenditures in the amount of \$245,000 agreed to
Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$245,000 agreed to*

On Capital Expenditures

On Repair and Upgrade

On Home Repair Loans/Programs

Home Repair Loans/Programs in the amount of \$815,000 agreed to

On 2009 Yukon Flood Relief Program

2009 Yukon Flood Relief Program in the amount of \$95,000 agreed to

On 2012 Flood Relief Initiative

Ms. White: Can the minister please remind me; I know I was told at the briefing, but what is the recovery rate from Canada on this amount?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The dollar figure in this line item that the Chair referenced is \$3,460,000 and the recovery from Canada is anticipated to be approximately \$2,160,000. That leaves the balance there and I'll let members do the quick math. That balance is a Yukon government expenditure.

2012 Flood Relief Initiative in the amount of \$3,460,000 agreed to

Ms. White: I'm not sure of the process, but can I move that we approve the supplementary of Yukon Housing Corporation as it stands and clear and carry it as a whole?

Unanimous consent re deeming all remaining lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried

Chair: Ms. White has requested the unanimous consent of the Committee to deem all remaining lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried, as required. Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$245,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$8,250,000 agreed to

Yukon Housing Corporation agreed to

Chair: Thank you. We're going to move on to the Department of Finance. We'll take a five-minute recess for officials. Thank you.

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. We are going to resume debate on Vote 12, Department of Finance. Ms. Hanson, you have the floor, with 16 minutes, 24 seconds left.

Department of Finance — continued

Ms. Hanson: I have no intention of spending 16 minutes and 24 seconds. I believe that where we left off on December 4, I had asked the Minister of Finance — I had set out a concern that I had with respect to provisions arising out of Bill C-38. Just to remind or refresh the minister's memory, that was the change to the borrowing provisions for the territories, which in fact results in increased federal control over essentially the Yukon. The issue here is that these amendments increase federal control over the territory, not whether the borrowing should be increased. As I said on December 4, I believe that, in the Official Opposition's view, the only body that should be controlling any issue to do with the borrowing of this territory is the Legislative Assembly of this territory and it shouldn't be the federal government that makes these kinds of decisions. It seemed to me and the Official Opposition somewhat ironic that the federal government is essentially violating the fourth pillar of their own northern policy. The northern policy talks about improving and evolving northern governments. In effect what they're doing is unilaterally changing the *Yukon Act* without any public consultation.

So I had closed when we left off asking for the Minister of Finance's thoughts on this important issue and I will leave off there. I only have one other question and then I would like to move to line-by-line if we could.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I think that the question kind of actually comes out of the playbook for the NDP Member for Western Arctic who I think was making similar statements in Ottawa.

The Yukon has always been subject to constraints under the *Yukon Act* as have the other two territories. In fact, the debt has been capped by a federal OIC for decades. The old rules that were in place were very vague and ambiguous. The new rules will provide a greater amount of certainty and clarity so the government and officials tasked with managing the day-to-day affairs really have clear direction. We expect the rules to essentially mirror the Yukon's past practices. We've had three territories and they have had three different interpretations of what constitutes borrowing and what entities in fact should be covered under that borrowing.

So the federal government entertained a technical review about providing clarity in ensuring consistency for all three territories. Beyond the government, this review is important as well for the Auditor General, who has expressed opinions on compliance based on vague rules. How can three territories essentially have the same rules but with three different interpretations regarding compliance? Clarity is probably most important to creditors of the territories. Who wants to lend money to a borrower if there is uncertainty as to the regulatory framework? This is not a fundamental constitutional change, but really a welcome clarification in terms of borrowing. As I have said in the past, the Yukon government continues to have full and complete control over borrowing.

As a result of this technical review, the federal government did increase our borrowing limit as it did for the other two territories. So, what has essentially happened for us is the cap has been adjusted, and I will for the record again say that this was initiated by the federal government. This government — and in fact the previous Premier as well — was on the record saying that we weren't looking for an increase in the borrowing limit, but as a result of their review, the borrowing limit has been increased in the Yukon as it has in the other two territories.

Mrs. Hanson: I guess the minister missed the point I was making. It was not whether the borrowing limits or borrowing should be increased. It's the fundamental issue that would allow the federal control and enable federal Cabinet to determine what constitutes borrowing — the entities or classes of entities which apply to the borrowing limit — and the manner in which borrowing is determined. But if the Premier — the Minister of Finance — is fine with that, that's fine. We'll just have that on the record.

The other issue that I wanted to raise, because it does deal with the intergovernmental leadership role that the Premier leads — and I would imagine this would have been a subject of some discussion at the Council of the Federation — today the Association of Yukon Communities in their newsletter circulated an update on the Canada-EU trade agreement, affectionately known as CETA — the Canada-EU comprehensive economic trade agreement. The reason why they did that is because the FCM says in the AYC's newsletter that media reports about an elite copy of an internal EU briefing note talks about the issues yet to be resolved in negotiations around the Canada-EU comprehensive agreement. It raises some questions, according to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

What they ask for is assurance that the provincial or territorial government has committed to the principles — and these

governments — because these principles have, and the provincial and territorial governments have, a lot of influence over the procurement section of the agreements. In fact the memo that the FCM is referring to states that Canada's willingness to open procurement was highly satisfactory. "Thus the offer fulfills our expectations..." — this is the EU — "...including regarding the expansion of procurement to the sub-central level (provinces and territories) and to Canadian Crown Corporations and already now provides for very considerable added value with regard to the existing situation."

Negotiators, however, still hope to have "all local content requirements for EU operators" removed from Canada's urban sectors, energy projects and have provincial regional development clauses either eliminated "or redrafted" so as not to undermine Canada's provinces' and territories' "market access commitments."

One of the challenges that the FCM had placed with the federal government and why this is important is that they limit these changes and the moving in of the ability of the EU and EU companies would leave municipal, provincial and territorial governments in Canada vulnerable to costly legal action. They limit our ability as communities to be resilient in difficult times. So the FCM is seeking — and I am seeking on behalf of Yukoners — confirmation that this territorial government has reiterated their commitment to the seven principles identified by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities that were agreed to by International Trade Minister Ed Fast. At the Association of Yukon Communities' meetings this spring — I believe that the Premier and a number of other ministers were there — the representative from the FCM spoke positively about the fact that the International Trade Minister had made an unequivocal commitment to respect the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' seven principles.

Madam Chair, I raise this in the context of the Finance debate here because it is an important aspect of ensuring that local businesses, this territorial government and local municipal governments will not be subject to costly legal challenges for implementing local procurement strategies to keep our local economy as robust as we need to keep it.

Thank you, Madam Chair. That will be my last question, and then I'd like to move to line-by-line debate unless there is something generated in response here.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I'm sure that the Leader of the Third Party might be interested in a question as well, so we'll give him an opportunity to do that.

In terms of getting back to the debt for a minute, because of the comment there — I mean, again, I think in one sense there's a good reason for controls on debt. I think that the territorial government actually saw that after the last time the NDP was in government and, in fact, put forward the protection act to prevent what happened when the NDP was in power with a massive collection of debt. Perhaps a ceiling is not a bad thing in some circumstances.

I'm not going to comment on leaked documents and speculation and hypothetical situations from the EU. Certainly, negotiations on free trade agreements, like any negotiation, are a very intense time where both sides are working toward an

agreement. You can't make an agreement through the media and through public accord.

Certainly, the comments have been made based on a leaked document from the EU. I have no clue whether that document is in fact a final position of the EU or where they're going to go with it, because, in fact, it really is a negotiation. So I think it's very difficult to provide comment based on such a situation.

Negotiations are negotiations, and they are a living, breathing dialogue that occurs between the Government of Canada and the EU. I can say that, with this CETA negotiation, not only has Canada been at the table, but the territories and provinces have been at the table with Canada, as well, to represent and express the views from the territorial and provincial levels. Though Canada has the responsibility to sign trade agreements with other nations, in fact the reality is that the provinces and the territories are the ones who have to deliver on those economies.

So having representation at the table is a very good step forward, and I believe that the provinces and territories will encourage the federal government to ensure that we continue to have that relationship with future trade negotiations.

In fact, when it comes to this negotiation, the Department of Economic Development has been the lead for the Yukon government, in terms of providing input to Canada as they move forward with their negotiations. This is a very important deal for Canada and for the EU. I reminisce because we are now 25 years into the NAFTA agreement and, at the time, I clearly remember the debates and some of the fears that were expressed at what was going to happen to Canada by signing this trade agreement with the Americans. I think that the success of that free trade agreement goes without saying at this point in time — 25 years later, millions of jobs created on both sides of the border. Capacity with these jobs for wealth and prosperity has truly been significant, but we have to also recognize that we are a small, developing economy. The Government of Yukon recognizes the need to assist our businesses to grow and also to diversify. That's part of what this government is working on and part of what's happening just by the fact that we have a growing population. Ensuring that Yukon continues to have access to the necessary tools for achieving economic strength and diversification is an important objective for us in these negotiations.

The last comment I would make is that, when it comes to the NDP, they have a perfect record, in that they have opposed every free trade agreement that Canada has ever signed.

Ms. Hanson: You know, it's unfortunate, and it's probably quite telling, that the Premier chooses to attack the record of the NDP, when he is supposedly speaking to his own budget. I guess it's a sign of a tired party and a tired government that's out of good ideas because if they had any, they probably would want to talk about them instead of delivering skewed history lessons that are not grounded in facts.

Since the Premier insists on deflecting the tension away from the matter at hand by attacking the New Democratic Party, I feel compelled to respond. I've endured months of this litany of inaccuracies, Madam Chair. The NDP — the Yukon

New Democratic Party — has a proud record of responsible fiscal management of this territory. This shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone since the NDP provincial and territorial governments have had the best record of any Canadian political party when it comes to balancing the books — better than the Conservatives, and better than the Liberals.

Those guffawing and laughing across the way needn't take my word for it. These are the findings of the federal Department of Finance in its annual fiscal reference tables. Perhaps those are a little too complicated for the members opposite to read, but I refer the members to them. Let's take a closer look if we could at the Yukon situation.

According to the Public Accounts — the Public Accounts, Madam Chair, not the inspired imagination of certain script writers for the Yukon Party — the consolidated, audited, authoritative financial statements for the territory — that's what the Public Accounts are. Yukon New Democratic Party governments left the Yukon government in the black. In fact, the records show that governments of all political stripes have left the territory with accumulated surpluses.

The Premier's claims about previous NDP governments simply don't check out. I think the Premier knows better and he should be ashamed. The Premier is fond of making claims about the state of the books at the end of the Penikett NDP government. My goodness, it's a pretty sad situation when you have to go that far back to look, but you know, that government in fact left the territory with an accumulated surplus of tens of millions of dollars, as did the McDonald NDP government several years later.

You know, the Premier occasionally likes to speak about budget deficits. While attacking the NDP, he conveniently neglects to mention the fact that there were several annual deficits, while the Yukon Conservative and Liberal governments have also run annual deficits. Avoiding a deficit is a good practice, but I think the Minister of Finance — the Premier — knows full well that no political party of any stripe, including his own, has completely avoided them. I use the simple analogy: just as it wouldn't make sense for homeowners to leave a hole in the roof and risk losing the house, it sometimes doesn't make sense for government to put off important investments. I suspect the Premier understands this. It's too bad he puts scoring political points ahead of rational debate on the budget. So, if the Premier wants to give his repetitive, skewed —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Chair's statement

Chair: Order please. I would ask the members not to personalize the debate. Thank you.

Ms. Hanson: If the Minister of Finance wishes to — Madam Chair, I have endured the same sort of allegation repeatedly from this minister opposite.

Chair: Order please. Can you continue your debate? Thank you.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess it's the prerogative of this government to give repetitive, skewed and incorrect versions of Yukon economic history going back 15, 20 or 25 years. That is their prerogative, though in my mind

it's not the best use of our limited time in this Legislative Assembly. In my mind, I believe the Yukon public would rather MLAs try to find solutions to the challenges today.

I've heard this repeatedly. I would suggest to the Premier — the Minister of Finance — he may hold back the hoary tales of what happened when the Ostashek government came into power and there was this great hue and cry about how there was this great debt. You know what in fact happened there? His government chose to purchase a review by Consulting and Audit Canada, seemingly in order to spice up his throne speech.

I read that throne speech; it was kind of spicy. But in fact the Auditor General pointed out that he was wrong and there was not the dire circumstances. In fact, the Yukon Party of the day had made \$400 million in spending promises and found out, you know what? When you're governing, it's a little difficult to do that. You can't do that and be responsible.

If you look at the accumulated surpluses of the Penikett era, of the McDonald era, you will not find the draconian or negative situation this Yukon Party government prefers and likes to refer to. I think if the member opposite was being forthright, he would acknowledge there have been a number of annual deficits during the course of this current Yukon Party regime and in previous ones. It's unfortunate this is the approach this government chooses to take.

The question I have is this: Is the Minister of Finance prepared to accept the fact that the March 31, 1993 audited consolidated statements showed an accumulated surplus? It's a simple question. And will the Premier cease and desist from these rather useless allegations, which move us nowhere forward, when we are talking about the days in 2012 going forward. I'm quite prepared to put this behind me if he is. If not, then perhaps he might want to have a further discussion and debate, where we can actually speak to the audited statements — the Public Accounts, for this territory. I raise this issue in response to a determined attempt by the member opposite to deflect from the matter at hand. I just want to put on the record that the information he has provided does not reflect the accurate statements of the Public Accounts of this territory, and I would believe that he should withdraw them.

Chair's statement

Chair: The Chair would like to caution the members to temper their comments and not personalize the debate.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Unfortunately, we're hearing more from the NDP in the same vein that we hear every day. Unfortunately, the numbers speak for themselves. I'm looking at the record. In fact, the last year of the Penikett government, there was a deficit of \$64 million. After the Penikett government term ended, the Ostashek government implemented the *Taxpayer Protection Act* to ensure that governments would be more responsible with their money than what we saw with the NDP governments.

Borrowing is not new, and deficits and surpluses are not new, either. As I have stood up in this House — and the previous Premier did as well — the true tale of the tape is in net financial resources, and that's something that this government has continued to build upon every year. When you look at a

single year, yes, you can — and this government has had a mild deficit in a year, but has continued to maintain a strong net financial positive position.

As I mentioned, borrowing is not new and this is an example. Members opposite should be very aware that, given the size of this small economy relative to capital projects required, Yukon has had a long history of borrowing and repaying to fund activities. A Yukon Party government has borrowed, and we all know that the NDP certainly did when they were on this side of the House. Between 1987 and 1998, successive NDP governments borrowed in excess of \$100 million. By March of 2009, a Yukon Party government had reduced these debts to under \$51 million. On March 31, 1992, for example, the last Public Accounts under Tony Penikett's NDP government showed that the debts totalled \$88 million: Yukon Housing Corporation, \$25 million; Yukon Development Corporation, \$55 million; Yukon government, \$8 million, totalling \$88 million. The budget for that year ended March 31, 1992, totalled \$334 million. This meant borrowing represented 26 percent of the budget.

Interest rates were in the nine- to 13-percent range, so the servicing costs of the \$88 million would be equivalent to servicing in the range of \$160 million to \$230 million today. In other words, the cost of servicing that debt was likely as large or larger than it would have been to service any borrowings by the Yukon Party government in the past two mandates.

Madam Chair, this government has been very successful in managing the money of the territory — of the taxpayers — and we will continue to do so. As I mentioned, all the governments have had deficits. The NDP clearly had them under both Mr. Penikett and Mr. McDonald. However, since the Yukon Party has been elected, the Public Accounts clearly show that the Yukon Party government has incurred fewer expenses than revenues to the tune of approximately \$183 million. Obviously, superior discipline has its benefits.

I'm interested to know where the NDP find these numbers to make them feel important about the great accomplishments. As we've said in the House too, the NDP record of economy is very clear; we know how they solve the problems of the day such as energy and housing and that's just to clear the territory out and then we don't have those problems when we have people leaving and businesses closing down. Unfortunately, we were in the same sort of situation. This government will continue to work toward being responsible, creating opportunities for all of our citizens and creating prosperity for everyone.

Seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Pasloski that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order. May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 7, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2012-13*, and directed me to report progress on it.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

The following Sessional Paper was tabled December 11, 2012:

33-1-62

Yukon Housing Corporation Annual Report for the year ended March 31, 2012 (Kent)

The following Filed Documents were tabled December 11, 2012:

33-1-37

Child Care Industry (Yukon), non-conforming petition (Stick)

33-1-38

Substitute Teachers, letter re: (dated October 9, 2012) from Katherine Mackwood, President, Yukon Teachers' Association, to Hon. Scott Kent, Minister of Education (Tredger)

33-1-39

Substitute Teachers, letter re: (dated December 4, 2012) from Katherine Mackwood, President, Yukon Teachers' Association, to Hon. Scott Kent, Minister of Education (Tredger)

33-1-40

Substitute Teachers, letter re: (dated November 13, 2012) from Hon. Scott Kent, Minister of Education, to Katherine Mackwood, President, Yukon Teachers' Association (Tredger)