



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 132

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33rd Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, March 27, 2014 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

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NAME CONSTITUENCY PORTFOLIO

Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Education; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Community Services; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation; Yukon Lottery Commission Government House Leader
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Yukon Energy Corporation; Yukon Development Corporation
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Environment; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Highways and Public Works
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Justice; Tourism and Culture

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Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Vuntut Gwitchin
Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

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New Democratic Party

Elizabeth Hanson	Leader of the Official Opposition Whitehorse Centre
Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, March 27, 2014 — 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 global day of epilepsy awareness

Mr. Elias: I rise in the House in recognition of the global day of epilepsy awareness. March 26 is Purple Day, a day set aside to raise awareness about epilepsy around the world. Purple Day, the brainchild of the Epilepsy Association of Nova Scotia and the Anita Kaufmann Foundation was launched in 2009. Both organizations encourage people to wear purple on this date to foster conversations about epilepsy.

According to the Purple Day website, one in 26 people will have epilepsy at one point in their lifetime. At least one in 10 people will have a seizure. Around the world, 65 million people live with epilepsy — 300,000 of whom are in Canada. We have no specific numbers for Yukon, but we estimate around 230 Yukoners live with epilepsy.

Epilepsy is not a disease and it is not contagious. It is a disorder that is characterized by brief, sudden changes in how the brain works — in other words, seizures. In about half of all cases, we do not know what causes epilepsy. The remaining cases are caused most commonly by brain tumours, strokes, head trauma, injury, infection or systemic illness in the mother before she gives birth or brain injury to the infant. According to Epilepsy Canada, seizures can be triggered by stress, poor nutrition, mis-medication, flickering lights, skipping meals, lack of sleep, high emotions or even heat and/or humidity.

No one has found a cure yet, although research is ongoing. The best form of treatment to date is drugs, but these can have serious side effects.

While the Department of Health and Social Services provides support to children with epilepsy through its family supports for children with disabilities program, there hasn't been much available at the local level for adults with epilepsy.

A local group is trying to change that. A week ago, Fawn Fritzen announced the formation of a new Yukon support group to support families living with epilepsy. The group is in its infancy, just reaching out now to families that have members with epilepsy as well as to other support groups in the Yukon to learn from. I'd like to take this opportunity to wish them every success.

In recognition of National Social Work Month

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise in recognition of March as National Social Work Month in Canada. I'd like to ask my colleagues to join me in honouring social workers across Canada and, more importantly, here in the Yukon. This year the national theme, "Social Workers Promoting Equity for a Stronger Canada", reflects the growing concern about social, economic and health inequities across this country. Consequently, it's fitting to have National Social Work Month dedicated to educating the public and how it is essential to improve relationships within families, make social contact systems more effective and to build stronger communities. It is through the Yukon *Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy* that we are working toward improving relationships, making social support systems effective and building stronger communities.

Together with the variety of Yukon public interest groups and non-government organizations, we aim to build a society in which all Yukon citizens have fair and equitable opportunities to participate in and to contribute to our culture, social and economic growth. This means building systems, Mr. Speaker, including health care and support systems that are more effective, systems that represent Yukon's marginalized and vulnerable populations, systems in which everyone works together as a team for the benefit of all of our citizens to ensure voices are heard throughout the territory. It also means that health professionals in all areas of health care need to collaborate with one another and improve relationships with individuals and with families.

Social workers play this vital role in improving these relationships. Social workers protect citizens in need, they aim to find solutions that meet unique needs and concerns, and they help us build a stronger healthier and more equitable community.

We are fortunate to have many caring, wonderful social workers in Yukon who are all helping people through difficult times. They support families. They support individuals. They encourage them to build on their strengths and overcome their challenges in order to have a much better quality of life.

Social workers work in hospitals and they work in private clinics. You can find social workers in mental health services and in treatment facilities. They are part of child and family programs, they support early childhood development, and they work with children and adults with disabilities. They work in continuing care facilities. They work in senior services and are present with Yukon outreach initiatives.

Throughout Yukon, social workers are doing their very best to make positive change. They are doing their best to improve social conditions. They are doing their best to improve the quality of life for all of Yukon citizens. It is evident that social work is a profession concerned with helping people and improving the well-being of our communities.

In closing, I encourage members in the House, and all community members, to take time and reflect on how they can make a positive difference, and make equitable change for all of our citizens.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Stick: I also rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to pay tribute to social workers. As was mentioned, March is National Social Workers Month across Canada, with the theme being “social workers promoting equity for a stronger Canada”. This theme is meant to reflect the profession’s growing concern at the rising social, economic and health inequities in Canada.

In the Yukon, trained professional social workers belong to the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada, which includes these professionals from Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, and the Yukon. This association has been in existence since 1974, and its membership is comprised of those who have received a degree in social work.

We are fortunate in the Yukon to have a social work program offered at Yukon College. Here we are able to train and educate local people with the hope that they stay and practice their profession in the Yukon, and contribute to our communities.

Social workers are found in every community in the Yukon. They work in government jobs, whether territorially or with First Nations. Social workers are employed by NGOs and others in private practice.

They work with families; they work with children; they work with our seniors and with our elders. They assist and support people to make good life decisions and plans that promote a healthy lifestyle and enhance their community. Social workers advocate for the protection of the public and a guaranteed level of social work professionalism through the development of their own regulations. They’re working on this in all three territories.

They also advocate for improved working conditions and opportunities for northern social workers. So it’s with a debt of gratitude to social workers in all our communities throughout the Yukon and across Canada that we offer our thanks.

In recognition of Nutrition Month

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise once again, this time to pay tribute to Nutrition Month in Canada. March, as probably most of you are now aware, is Nutrition Month in Canada, and this year the dietitians of Canada chose as their theme “Simply Cook and Enjoy!” This theme was chosen as a way to promote connecting with each other while eating better and enjoying ourselves.

The simple joys and benefits of home cooking seem to be getting lost in the rush and busyness of everyday living. By making a point of cooking together, we help transfer critical life skills to the next generation. As well, when we prepare food from scratch, we eat less sodium and sugar and more essential nutrients.

In Yukon, the Department of Health and Social Services community dietitian has been busy promoting the value of preparing foods together. All month long, with the assistance of the local CBC station, she has prepared a weekly recipe that is easy, nutritious and quick to prepare — on air. Now that’s

real pressure, especially when I had the pleasure of judging the muffin contest this morning at the local CBC studio and was apprised of the rudimentary conditions under which our nutritionist has managed to prepare these meals. It was truly a challenge.

Also, last week, with the help of her colleagues at Health Promotion, she organized the very successful snack circus. The dietitians prepared for approximately 100 people attending this snack circus at the Old Fire Hall here in Whitehorse, and 425 showed up. I’ve had nothing but positive comments from that event as well. This one-day event helped children from preschool to grade 6 and their parents to experience a variety of flavours and learn about healthy snack choices in a fun environment.

Anyone who has gone through grocery shopping recently in Whitehorse — or in the last month — has seen the colourful signs throughout the stores encouraging shoppers to consider the sodium content of the food they buy. As well, the department has recently produced a number of print products. One is titled *Simply Cook and Enjoy*, and provides a number of recipes on index cards for simple, nutritious recipes along with easy planning tips.

I didn’t want to imply that going to the grocery store should be like going into battle and preparing yourself to avoid all foods with sodium, because that’s not really what it’s about. If we have a list of the ingredients we need, we can avoid impulse buys that may not be as nutritiously valuable as we would like.

Dietitians encourage the use of fresh foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, milk products, dried legumes and unseasoned meats, fish and poultry. If fresh is not available, frozen foods are good as long as they are still low in sodium.

Another document that the department has produced is the family food traditions booklet, which provides tips and advice on how to pass on family food traditions to our children.

Last year, the Department of Health and Social Services partnered with the First Nations Health Programs and the Yukon Hospital Corporation to create a beautiful poster featuring traditional foods. This year, the department has created a colouring book based on this poster to teach our children how food from the land is a safe and healthy way to nourish ourselves.

I was recently reminded of this when my niece and her husband from Inuvik came to Whitehorse and their five-year-old daughter informed me that she had brought with her, from Inuvik, a couple of rabbits that she had harvested, skinned and cleaned herself so that grandma could cook them for supper. To me, it was an eye-opening experience to understand that these children, at five years of age in Inuvik, are still learning and actually experiencing the traditional way of life.

Mr. Speaker, it is safe to say that healthy nutrition is one of the safest and best ways to strengthen our families, physically, mentally and spiritually.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Silver: I would like all members to join me in welcoming in the gallery today structural engineer and Ross River footbridge champion, Mr. Robert Wills.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Graham: I have for tabling answers to a variety of questions asked of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board in Committee of the Whole in the Legislative Assembly on November 26, 2013. I apologize for not presenting these replies on the first day of the sitting, but I have them here today.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 70: *Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Kent: I move that Bill No. 70, entitled *Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that Bill No. 70, entitled *Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 70 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

Bill No. 69: *Act to Amend the Fatal Accidents Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I move that Bill No. 69, entitled *Act to Amend the Fatal Accidents Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 69, entitled *Act to Amend the Fatal Accidents Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 69 agreed to

Bill No. 103: *An Act to Respect Voters and Stop Floor Crossing* — Introduction and First Reading

Ms. White: I move that a bill, entitled *An Act to Respect Voters and Stop Floor Crossing*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that a bill, entitled *An Act to Respect*

Voters and Stop Floor Crossing, be introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 103 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced? Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to balance Yukoners' access to clean, affordable and reliable energy with the need for conservation and efficiency by:

(1) continuing to promote initiatives outlined in the energy strategy for Yukon, including the good energy program; and

(2) extending the interim electrical rebate until March 31, 2015.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use the 2014-15 budget to allocate an additional \$590,000 to the overseas tourism marketing budget on an ongoing basis in order to build upon the enhanced overseas marketing support from the Government of Canada that has enabled Yukon to increase its market share in key European markets, which has contributed to the 33-percent increase in overseas tourism visitation as part of the tourism industry's contribution to now over \$250 million to Yukon's annual private sector revenues.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to live up to a commitment it made to publish ministerial travel and expenses on-line.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to take the new U.S. ambassador to Canada, Mr. Bruce Heyman, up on his offer and invite him to visit the Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make a strategic commitment to tourism marketing by investing \$2.5 million per year for the next two years, 2014-15 and 2015-16, for the creation of an effective domestic marketing campaign and that, subject to the successful outcome of this investment, the Government of Yukon increase its core marketing budget by \$2.5 million for subsequent budget years.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to direct that a regulation be made pursuant to section 8(1)(g) of the *Health Care Insurance Plan Act* in order to include international students residing in Yukon with valid study permits issued by federal authority as persons entitled to insured health services.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Continuing care facilities

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, in his budget speech on Tuesday, the Premier announced a 300-bed continuing care facility. The question is simple: does the Premier really believe that Yukoners who need continuing care want to live in a 300-bed facility?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I realize the member opposite would not have us build a sufficient number of seniors facilities to handle the onslaught of seniors who require continuing care; however, we feel it's our responsibility to plan for the future and we believe that we are doing so by planning this facility.

The fact that it is a 300-bed facility seems to bear some significance to the member opposite in that it will be an ugly five- or six-storey building perched on a rocky promenade somewhere in the hinterland. That's not our intent. This is why it is considered a residence for these folks. It's considered to be their home. All one has to do is take a look at what we've built at the Thomson Centre or Copper Ridge Place and see the facilities that we think our seniors deserve and want.

We'll continue to plan these facilities, we will include seniors in the planning of these facilities, and we think that, yes, people will want to live in this facility.

Ms. Hanson: The minister confuses "sufficient" with "appropriate". There is certainly a need for more continuing care beds in Yukon, but if this government was more in touch with Yukoners, they would understand that a 300-bed facility is not adapted to Yukon. Three hundred beds plus staff members means that this facility alone will be larger than many Yukon communities.

We know the Yukon Party's way of making health care decisions. They build the facility, and only after — if the Auditor General tells them to — they might do a needs assessment and consult the community. It makes Yukoners cynical when the government pretends to consult after it has already made its mind up.

How did the Premier, who announced this, determine that the best way to meet the continuing care needs of all Yukoners is to build a 300-bed facility in Whitehorse, and with whom did they consult?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I think it's very interesting that the member opposite believes there has been no needs assessment. I have in my hand here, Mr. Speaker, part of the

needs assessment that we did, and part of the needs assessment included not only the folks who are currently residing in Macaulay Lodge and Thomson Centre — two facilities that have a life period between seven and 10 to 15 years; we need to replace those facilities — but we also did projections on population. We have an aging population here in the territory. We have a huge number of people currently on home care that will in the future require some kind of continuing care. So we did a very careful assessment of the future needs for this continuing care facility.

We then also took a look at some of the other things that may relieve some pressure, because we found that actually there is a need for more than 300 beds in the next 20 to 25 years. We looked at a mix of non-government, profit, non-profit and private operations that may have a chance to establish a foothold here in the Yukon.

We would like to see seniors in this territory have a choice. We want to make sure that seniors live where they want to live. We believe that we're doing this by following the process that we have followed.

Ms. Hanson: I look forward to the minister tabling that report, because that assessment was, in fact, on-line and taken off-line when a member of the public inquired about it, he was told it was a clerical error, or administrative error, to put it on-line — so much for transparency. Most people learn from their mistakes, but it appears the Yukon Party does not. This government has clearly not learned anything from the Auditor General's scathing report about how they went about building the hospitals.

The NDP hears a lot of health care stories. We have never heard any seniors nor any Yukoners with complex care needs say they hope to spend years of their lives in a big 300-bed facility in Whitehorse — a facility that when staffed would have a larger population than many Yukon communities.

Will the Premier confirm how and when Yukon citizens will have a say in how to best meet the continuing care needs of Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This government is very proud of the accomplishments it has been able to achieve as a result of our focus on health care. We will talk about home care, because we've made a huge investment in home care, helping to keep people in their homes longer. The level of care that we have provided through home care has been recognized across this country for its excellence.

We've hired a full-time person to do recruiting for doctors. We have a number of new doctors here in our community today in the Yukon. We've gone forward with licensing nurse practitioners. We're going to be putting a nurse practitioner in a referred care clinic. Also, a nurse practitioner will be working with continuing care. We're going to continue to work to see that licensed nurse practitioners are folded into our entire collaborative care.

We are also working with opportunities to see where we can find assisted living here in the territory, whether that's driven by the government or through the private sector.

We are also investing heavily in this budget to move forward with the Salvation Army to provide a new homeless

shelter, plus transitional housing. We are also involved in the Sarah Steele Building. This government is concerned about the welfare of seniors and it will remain a priority for us.

Question re: F.H. Collins Secondary School reconstruction

Ms. Hanson: The school planned as the replacement for F.H. Collins is overpriced, it's overdue and it's too small. During the budget speech, the Premier said, "Right-sizing this project has resulted in a price tag \$17 million less than the original bid."

Well, the school is undersized and the government did not save \$17 million. Tuesday's budget showed Yukoners that the total anticipated cost of the F.H. Collins replacement is over \$51 million, and this is for a smaller school that does not address the community's needs.

Why is the government continuing to hide the true cost of the F.H. Collins replacement?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: All I can say is this is more of the NDP math. We heard in last fall's session how we weren't going to build this to building code, how it was only going to be for 450 students, on and on and on went the rhetorical rant from the NDP. The math is very simple.

We will compare apples to apples. The lowest bid price of the initial tender is \$17 million higher than the accepted bid in the second tender. Mr. Speaker, that is a reality — a savings of \$17 million to the Yukon taxpayers — \$17 million that we can then use to provide other programs and other services or continue to invest in our record-breaking capital budget that we presented just this week.

Ms. Hanson: I believe the Premier is now suggesting that he does not stand by the Government of Yukon multi-year capital plan project listing that he tabled in this Legislative Assembly on Tuesday, which says \$51 million. This is more than the original design — a design that was big enough, a design that would have had a local company build it, a design that the students, parents and teachers wanted, and most importantly, a design that could have been built on time.

This government has mismanaged this project from day one. Does the government really believe that building a smaller school with fewer amenities at a price tag of \$51 million is good enough for Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I will have to refer to NDP math. The reality of the situation that we have is that we had a tender on the original — the lowest bid on the original tender was \$17 million higher than the accepted bid in the second tender. That alone — comparing constructing costs to construction costs — says that we saved \$17 million for Yukon taxpayers, plain and simple. I know they would like to make it sound different, but that's the reality. Through the diligence that we have done, we have saved Yukoners \$17 million. I know that Yukoners are proud of that fact.

Ms. Hanson: Not only can the NDP do math, they can read. Look at page 2 of the Government of Yukon multi-year capital plan project listing and it says clearly "F.H. Collins Secondary School Replacement, \$51 million".

Yukoners are seeing through this government's empty words on the F.H. Collins replacement. This government has stood in this House year after year making promises about savings that do not exist and timelines that have not been met. Now we are being given a product that does not meet the needs of the students and teachers and that will be built by an Outside company with a \$50-million price tag total.

After the Whitehorse Correctional Centre cost overrun, the Dawson City and Watson Lake hospital fiascos, and now the F.H. Collins boondoggle, will the Premier explain why the true cost of the F.H. Collins replacement is over \$51 million?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I just want to say that this government is pleased to be moving forward, unlike the members opposite, on the F.H. Collins replacement project, which is an affordable design for a modern facility. It's also going to meet LEED certification standards and energy efficiency standards.

We're confident that this could be a world-class facility and meet the current long-term needs of our school. Working with our school council's building advisory committee and the Department of Education, today, Mr. Speaker — today — one of the local businesses, Clark Builders, is out there looking for local workers. It has a solid reputation — a solid company working with our communities on major projects. Over the next several months, Clark Builders will be working with local contractors to identify what they can do to participate, and they're doing that right now.

We're looking forward to Yukon residents going to work. I know the members opposite don't believe in being fiscally responsible with Yukon taxpayers' dollars, but we on this side do.

Question re: First Nations/government relations

Mr. Silver: Since coming to office in 2002, the Yukon Party government has taken a hands-off approach to working with unsigned Yukon First Nations. The federal Conservatives have followed suit and have made no attempt to either (a) reach a final agreement under the UFA, or (b) work out an alternative arrangement that would bring more certainty to both unsigned First Nations and the public, who also use the land for a variety of purposes, including resource development. Successive Yukon Party governments have been unwilling or unable to bridge the gap. The result is legal uncertainty, expensive court battles and a confused resource sector.

In January, White River offered to sit down to negotiate. They have asked for years, and I quote, for a "true process to resolve issues with Government to create certainty for all. To date, there has been no serious commitment to this from YG and the economy will continue to falter as a result with terrible uncertainty for investment."

Have these negotiations started?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: For the record, we'll state that this is the 33rd Legislative Assembly that I've in fact been the Premier of since 2011, and many or most of the members of this caucus have been here.

We worked very well moving forward to work with First Nations.

I have to say that there is no mandate for the federal government to negotiate on a land claims and self-government agreement with the three unsettled First Nations, nor is there an interest by those three First Nations.

I have spoken to the chiefs on this on many occasions. Certainly, if there was a willingness by the First Nations to enter into such a negotiation, we would, of course, support that and as well advocate to the Government of Canada.

We continue to work to ensure that benefits are shared with the First Nations when there is any sort of work within their traditional territory, whether it's resource-based or if it's through forestry or through oil and gas or mining. We'll continue toward creating economic agreements to ensure that the citizens of those communities and of those First Nations directly benefit from that type of resource industry. Of course, we continue to talk about consultations with those First Nations and will continue to do so.

Mr. Silver: The latest Fraser Institute rankings, which saw the Yukon dropping out of the top 10, cited land claims uncertainty as one of the major issues for investors. Now, I am not a big fan of the Fraser Institute, but we all know that the Yukon Party holds this conservative think-tank in very high regard.

Land claims uncertainty is an area the government can play a role in improving. Instead, it keeps going to court with the First Nations and creating more uncertainty.

In January, White River issued a public statement asking this government — not the federal government, this government — to come to the table. The Government of Yukon's response was basically, "Not right now, we're too busy." White River was told to stand in line and to wait until the government had first consulted and completed that consultation with Ross River.

Mr. Speaker, why did the government reject a request from White River to start negotiation at the beginning of 2014 and instead tell them to wait their turn?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I think my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, highlighted this fact very simply yesterday in terms of — the Leader of the Liberal Party, the Member for Klondike, in his use of the Fraser Institute and trumpeting their results when he wants it and then downplaying it when in fact it doesn't suit him. This speaks to the position of the Liberal Party on such issues and on such things as important as education or on resource extraction here in the territory.

Mr. Silver: For the record, Mr. Speaker, I don't agree with the Fraser Institute for either of those departments.

There is a price to be paid because of the government's inability to come to some agreement or accommodation with White River First Nation. That is the question.

This price is being paid by resource companies that want to invest in this part of the territory — very simple. White River has requested a ban on staking in their entire traditional territory until this matter is addressed. There is already a staking ban in place in the entire Ross River Dena traditional

territory because of this government's inability to work with the First Nation.

Yet another lawsuit was added to the mix yesterday when this government was sued by the Kaska. So, is White River or is Kaska next? Is the government going to be forced into another huge area being banned from staking because of its inability to work with this First Nation government?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: We'll continue to work with this First Nation and it's also good to know what the position of the Liberal leader is on such issues going forward.

Of course, things are not always as simple as he would like to articulate. For example, the White River traditional territory has a 100-percent overlap with the Kluane First Nation, which does have land claim and self-government final agreements. So it is not as simple as he would like to describe.

We continue to work with the White River First Nation. We'll continue to work with their officials. We're always looking for an opportunity to ensure certainty through an agreement on a consultation protocol. We continue to work with them toward that and we'll also continue to work to create opportunities for the citizens of Beaver Creek and for the White River First Nation to ensure that they will be able to benefit in any development that would occur in the White River traditional territory. As I mentioned, it is a complicated issue when it comes to White River because of the 100-percent overlap.

But we are vigilant. We'll continue to work to ensure that we see benefits of economic growth. Our focus is on expanding our infrastructure and building our private sector economy, which will benefit Yukoners right from one border to the other border — north, south, east and west.

Question re: Whistle-blower legislation

Ms. Moorcroft: The government recently posted an information package outlining the key points of its proposed whistle-blower act. In its 2012 report, the Select Committee on Whistle-Blower Protection recommended that any whistle-blower law specify what types of wrong-doing a whistle-blower can disclose. Two of these are: "an act or omission that creates substantial or specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or to the environment" and "gross mismanagement of public funds or assets".

But the government's proposal for the law says that whistle-blowers will be protected from reprisal only when they blow the whistle on wrongdoing that threatens the life, health or the safety of a person or the environment.

Does this mean that a whistle-blower who discloses the gross mismanagement of public funds or assets will not be protected from reprisals under the government's proposed law?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: It would aid debate in this House greatly if the NDP would clarify which position they support. We've heard three different members from that side articulate three different positions. First of all, the Member for Riverdale South endorsed and signed off on the select committee's report, which provided recommendations to government as to how to craft the law. Then we heard from

the Leader of the Official Opposition speaking an entirely different point of view in the media two weeks ago. Now we hear from the Member for Copperbelt South with yet another position from the NDP on whistle-blowers.

So I think it would aid the members of this House, as well as the media and the public, if they would explain their position and explain which point of view is the correct one and which point of view represents the NDP's line of thinking. The views provided by the member on the select committee, which provided the recommendations which have informed this public document or the other two members, who continue to express different opinions.

Ms. Moorcroft: It's the Yukon Party's proposal that doesn't meet the recommendations found in the select committee's report. Sadly, punitive measures against whistle-blowers can't always be prevented. That's why an effective whistle-blower law has to include a strong process to help protect employees who blow the whistle on wrongdoing.

Unfortunately, the government is proposing that the Ombudsman will only have the authority to recommend a remedy when a whistle-blower is subject to reprisals. The final decision will be up to the employer, who could also be the one engaging in reprisals. The Select Committee on Whistle-blower Protection recommended that the Ombudsman office be given the authority to decide to remedy any reprisals suffered by a whistle-blower.

Why is this government proposing to compromise its own legislation, by ignoring this key recommendation?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, what's being compromised is the NDP's credibility on this issue. They've taken a number of different positions on this, and continued to articulate very different views from different members each time.

What we have done to date, Mr. Speaker, is taken the recommendations of the select committee. They have informed the document that is publicly being currently consulted and we are seeking input from Yukoners on those concepts. We have had some good input already from the Ombudsman, from the unions and from other members of the public and I look forward to reviewing all of that when the consultation concludes and coming up with legislation that will be eventually tabled in this House for debate then. Perhaps by the time that legislation is drafted and tabled in this House, the NDP will have solidified their position and clarified with each of their members, so they don't continue to shoot each other in the foot.

Ms. Moorcroft: The Yukon NDP is asking this Yukon Party government to meet the recommendations that are in the select committee's report. It has been more than a year since the whistle-blower select committee submitted its final report to government in 2012. The government has given the public only a few weeks — until April 16 — to comment on its approach in a number of critical areas covered by its proposed law.

The Yukon Party has been promising whistle-blower legislation for years. After such a long delay, rushing through the consultation period doesn't allow adequate time for public

input. Mr. Speaker, will the minister consider extending the deadline for public consultation on its proposed whistle-blower legislation for one month from April 16 to May 16? I'd like the minister to answer the specific question and not stand up and cast ridiculous allegations against the NDP.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Apparently, Mr. Speaker, the NDP need about a month to figure out their position on this issue. That seems to be what they're asking here today. When the select committee submitted its recommendations, one of the recommendations was that a whistle-blower exhausts all departmental processes before proceeding with the whistle-blower process. That's something that the Member for Riverdale South signed off on and endorsed.

Then two weeks ago, in the media, the Leader of the Official Opposition was very critical of that and said that was an inappropriate process. So once again we see a strong division between the Member for Riverdale South and the Leader of the Official Opposition. So clearly, these members on that side of the House need to get their facts in order and need to get their position straight before they come and try to criticize government proposals for this legislation.

Now we've had an open consultation process. We've heard a number of pieces of input already and I look forward to hearing more about what Yukoners say about this. I encourage the NDP to sort out their position and return when they have a solidified position on behalf of their party.

Question re: Hydroelectric dam project

Mr. Tredger: Last November, the government directed the Yukon Development Corporation to develop a workplan detailing how it will carry out planning for one or more new hydro projects in the Yukon. The workplan is supposed to include a description of the financial, human and other resources the corporation would need to complete the plan and, most importantly, a schedule of planning stages. The corporation was given 90 days to complete the workplan on November 21, 2013.

Will the minister responsible table the workplan during this sitting?

Hon. Mr. Kent: We are excited about the opportunities for this legacy hydro project and all that it will bring to the Yukon in the next number of years, similar to what the hydro developments that are currently in the Yukon have brought. Ninety-five percent of the power used in the Yukon is generated by this renewable resource that's generated by our hydro projects.

With respect to the directive that the member opposite mentioned, of course there was that initial period for the Yukon Development Corporation to respond to me, but there was also an opportunity for me to extend that time. I did extend that time; however, we will have the workplan ready during this sitting and at the appropriate time when it is finalized, I will table it in the House.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer.

The minister said that given the 10 to 15 years needed to complete a major new hydro project, the government would also need smaller scale projects such as wind, solar and

geothermal that could help meet Yukon's energy needs in the interim.

When it comes to diversifying our renewable energy, we have studies, plans, discussions and policies. But after a decade of Yukon Party government, we have very few concrete results. Last October, the government finally announced a small-scale microgeneration policy, but much more needs to be done.

Given that hydro projects take 10 to 15 years to complete, what immediate actions will the government take to develop clean renewable energy?

Hon. Mr. Kent: In the motion that I tabled at the start of the last sitting, we did talk about a clean power future for the Yukon. As I mentioned in my previous response, 95 percent of the power generated in the Yukon is from renewable sources and we are very proud of that. We should all be proud as Yukoners that we are ahead of the national average. It was something that I brought up with the former Minister of Natural Resources Canada when I was in Ottawa in February.

Members will know that we have allocated \$2 million in the budget that is before the house for debate to advance the next generation hydro project. The member opposite is right; we will need incremental projects as well.

One of the examples I think we can point at is the proposed inter-tie between the Yukon and southeast Alaska. If that is deemed viable to go ahead, it will make a number of projects — not only on the Alaskan side of the border, but along that economic corridor — viable for generation. We continue to look at other opportunities. The member referenced the microgeneration policy and the solar opportunities there. We will be going out soon with discussions on an independent power producer policy meeting the requirements and the things we committed to in the energy strategy.

Question re: Rural equipment rental program

Mr. Barr: May Yukoners rely on the rural equipment rental program for their livelihoods. They register their equipment with Highways and Public Works, and when the government needs to complete a project, they hire those who have registered. Due to a change in the program and a confusing deadline, some regular applicants have missed the closing date. We have been told by small business owners that the rural equipment registry program has a firm deadline and no longer accepts applications. People depend on this program and their continued inclusion would be an asset to the Yukon government.

Is there any recourse for individuals who may have inadvertently missed the rural equipment rental program deadline this year?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: This is a subject that I have also been working with some of my constituents on. The public tender for this year's third-party equipment rental standing agreements did close on March 12. The tenders received by the closing date are being reviewed, but the complaint bids are also being entered into a third-party

equipment rental list for use this year. We are working with the proponents one-on-one and contacting them back. Unfortunately, our computer systems were down for on-line the weekend before March 12 and there were a few that missed. We are working with the proponents on this.

Mr. Barr: The rural equipment registry program is an asset to the Yukon government. It provides equipment with hard-working and qualified operators. This year's registry has had two new factors that create a barrier for contract registry: no more late entries, which I'm glad has been looked at, and also a solely on-line application process.

The late-entry program allowed contractors to list equipment they had purchased after the closing deadline for the registry. It now no longer exists. The registry is now fully on-line, which makes access difficult for those who may not have computer literacy skills.

Will the government look at allowing late entries for new equipment purchases and allow for a paper-entry component to maximize the number of small business owners who can participate in the program?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I do agree with the member opposite's first assertion — that third-party equipment be SOA tender processes. It's pivotal for the Yukon. A lot of residents from my riding and some of the rural ridings rely on this to keep their families fed — by being able to be on this third-party rental list.

This year, you'll notice on the budget line that our rural roads upgrade program — one of the great things that came from the Premier's budget and our budget this year — is the fact that we've increased that from \$200,000 to \$500,000. A lot of this work is going to be going to these people on the equipment tender list.

We're trying to modernize, like we were asked to by Yukoners — talking about e-commerce. That's what we're doing in the Department of Highways and Public Works with this third-party list — but we also do accept them at the local offices — they can put them in.

It's a work in progress and I'm looking forward to these people working this summer.

Mr. Barr: I could be misinformed but maybe there aren't local offices in all communities. There have been many changes to the rural equipment registry program over the last few years. Such changes make the program more difficult to access for many small-business owners across the territory. Standardizing the application process and deadlines from year to year would make life easier for small business owners.

Will the minister commit to standardizing the form and registry deadlines from year to year?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I'm going to be briefed again by the department because I've asked the department to look at some of the issues that the member opposite is talking to me about, understanding that sometimes contractors do need to take a holiday and they might not be around for a week or two so they could miss a deadline. We want to make sure that this is standardized and that it comes out at the right time and the same time every year, and that the opportunities for Yukon's small contractors to get their names on the list are there.

I do just want to get back to our budget that the Premier tabled. There's a lot of work out there for Yukoners. I'm looking forward to it. I'm getting a lot of positive feedback from the small contractors about our budget. Some of the line items that the Premier spoke to — I've received emails and thank yous for the good work that we're doing on this side of the House

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 14: *First Appropriation Act, 2014-15* — Second Reading — adjourned debate

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 14, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pasloski; adjourned debate, Ms. Hanson.

Ms. Hanson: As Leader of the Yukon New Democratic Party Official Opposition, it is my pleasure to open the debate on the Yukon's 2014-15 budget.

As the Official Opposition in the Yukon Legislative Assembly, my Yukon NDP colleagues and I welcome the opportunity to fulfill our obligations to all Yukon citizens to hold the government to account for the responsible and effective stewardship of our collective resources, be they our abundant natural resources, our fiscal resources or, our most important resource, the people of this great territory.

But before I begin, I just want to thank the Yukon Party for the cover image on this year's budget material. Last year during budget debate, I said the government can count on the public to be watching them very, very carefully — like the ravens, which are known in many cultures for their ability to remember things for a very long time. The image of a raven is a fitting symbol for the duty we — all of us as members of this Legislative Assembly — have and share as we steward the public purse with a clear eye to detail and the legacy of the decisions made or not made on behalf of this Legislative Assembly.

I want to thank my constituents, also, for placing their trust in me to serve them as the Member for Whitehorse Centre. It is a pleasure to represent this multi-faceted riding in Whitehorse. Whitehorse Centre is a complex riding. It is no secret that I believe Whitehorse Centre represents the heart of Yukon — a vibrant heart and sometimes a struggling or broken heart, but a diverse and resilient one that has seen many changes over the years. Nowhere else in Yukon do we find such a dynamic concentration of the social, commercial, recreational, natural, industrial, arts and culture and residential mix that makes Whitehorse Centre, Yukon, among the many other wonderful ridings that my fellow members of this Legislative Assembly have the privilege to represent.

On behalf of the Yukon NDP Official Opposition, I would also like to thank the hardworking employees of the Yukon government for their dedication and commitment to

developing and delivering the public services Yukon citizens rely upon. As a former public servant, I understand how difficult the work can be at times and I honour those who choose this life path.

As the Official Opposition, it is our job to bring forward constructive criticism of the decisions and direction taken by the Premier and his Cabinet. In doing so, I will also try to offer an alternative vision of how the 2014-15 budget might better meet the needs and priorities of Yukoners. There are a number of key areas that I plan to focus on as a basis for my review and comment on this budget.

The foundation of any economy is relationships — between individuals and groups, among governments and between governments and civil society. The economy is also about jobs and the opportunities that we can and should be creating in Yukon. The quality of life of Yukon citizens is critically linked to issues of affordable, accessible housing and to accessible, appropriate health care. Woven throughout and inextricably linked to a healthy economy is a healthy environment, a resource shared by all.

After carefully reviewing Tuesday's budget address with caucus colleagues, I will say at the outset, the New Democratic Party Official Opposition will not support this Yukon Party budget for 2014-15. Whether we are talking about Yukon jobs and the economy, about the social fabric of our communities or about our environment, we believe this budget does not reflect the needs and aspirations of Yukoners. The Premier was correct in describing the massive amount of money that this budget represents. But what Yukoners have come to understand over the past 11-plus years of Yukon Party government is that having big budgets does not translate into a strategic, effective, well-thought-out approach to envisioning a sustainable and resilient economy — one that benefits all Yukon citizens.

Since last year's budget, my New Democrat caucus colleagues and I have had the opportunity to continue to talk with many Yukoners about the issues that matter most to them. We have continued to travel throughout the Yukon, talking with citizens about their communities, their priorities, their vision for Yukon.

After 11 years, the Yukon Party still does not get the fact that the Yukon has undergone profound and fundamental changes in the past few years. The coming into power of the Yukon Party coincided with the finalization of the last Yukon land claim and self-government agreements to be negotiated under the Umbrella Final Agreement mandate. It also coincided with the coming into effect of the devolution transfer agreement.

Combined, the First Nation final and self-government agreements, along with the devolution transfer agreement, completely transform the relationship between Yukon First Nation people, their governments, and the Yukon government. That transformation represents both challenges and many opportunities.

The challenge is to let go of the old colonial ways of thinking and the old ways of relating. The opportunities include the ability to redesign and rework how government in

Yukon can most effectively work to serve the needs of all First Nation and non-First Nation Yukon citizens to collaborate, cooperate and create a Yukon based on an understanding that the First Nation agreements are about us all.

They are about an ongoing, inter-governmental relationship that will evolve over time. The agreements were not intended as a zero-sum game, where some gain and some lose. They are, to their core, agreements. That word, Mr. Speaker, is very important. They are agreements.

There was no winner-takes-all in the negotiated agreements. Unfortunately, over the past few years, this Yukon Party government appears to have lost its way. It appears to believe that if it says something often enough, loud enough and throws enough money at it, it must be true.

Respectful relationships between governments are not grounded in bellicose statements. A respectful government would honour the devolution transfer agreement and would work with Yukon First Nations to develop modern successor mining legislation, rather than —

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: The Leader of the NDP, in suggesting that members of this side appear to think that repeating a statement often enough means it must be true, seems to me to be in contravention of Standing Order 19(g) by strongly implying that other members of the Legislative Assembly are deliberately uttering a falsehood.

Speaker: Opposition House Leader, on the point of order.

Ms. Stick: I don't follow the member across the way. There was no suggestion of a falsehood there and I believe this would just be a misinterpretation.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: I would like to look at the exact wording of the statement a little bit further. There have been a number of times when similar statements have been made, yet no one has risen on a point of order, so I'm not comfortable at this time giving a ruling. I'll have a look at it and rule when necessary.

Ms. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A respectful government would honour the devolution transfer agreement and work with Yukon First Nations to develop modern successor mining legislation, rather than engage in protracted legal disputes that show no signs of ending. A legislative framework for 21st century mining legislation would go a long way to addressing the certainty necessary to ensure the long-term viability of the resource extraction industries in Yukon and ensure a lasting financial legacy for future generations.

In his speech, the Premier stated that his government is working closely with Yukon First Nations in Canada to determine options for addressing First Nation concerns related to registering land under the *Land Titles Act*. There is a

notable absence in this budget of any financial commitment that would be needed to make that happen. I remind this House that before the last election, the Yukon Party government said it was open to creating opportunities for Yukon First Nations to develop housing subdivisions on settlement lands.

Just before the last election, the government was keen to publicize the fact that it had signed a letter of understanding the Kwanlin Dun First Nation to work cooperatively on paving the way for new housing opportunities in Whitehorse on settlement land. The letter of understanding committed the Yukon government and the Kwanlin Dun First Nation government to developing a framework for the long-term leasing of individual lots that would be affordable, secure, long term and available to all Yukoners.

Providing settlement land for housing benefits First Nations by generating revenue from leases and eliminating the property tax, as property tax has become the responsibility of the lease holder. Kwanlin Dun, as we all know, also receives a portion of the income tax paid by residents on settlement land through a standard provision in the land claim agreements and the negotiated tax-sharing arrangements.

One of the critical issues that has to be addressed is the type of land registry required to satisfy the banks and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation before they'll lend money to build on land that is not owned, but is under a long-term lease.

Providing housing opportunities on leased aboriginal land is new to the Yukon, but has become practice in other jurisdictions because the opportunities and advantages are very clear. The Premier said that the land titles modernization project is now in its second phase and is identifying options for an appropriate computer system and business processes, and that the government aims to table a new *Land Titles Act* in the fall of 2014. It will be critical to know that the issues related to settlement land leases will be resolved and included in the new act the government intends to table this fall.

It's critical, Mr. Speaker. If this government doesn't deliver on this pre-election commitment, this will have serious negative financial consequences for Yukon First Nation governments. The Yukon NDP will be following this government's actions on this issue closely.

On another aspect in the area of relationships, with respect to the *Municipal Act*, the Premier noted that the "Our Towns, Our Future" report addressed important matters, such as municipal funding arrangements, the *Municipal Act* and solid waste. He said the Department of Community Services is conducting a review of the *Municipal Act* in light of the findings of the "Our Towns, Our Future" report and that the department would conduct one more consultation with municipalities in the summer of 2014. The Premier said the government intends to bring in new legislation in the spring of 2015.

As much as the Municipal Act review has been about the financial and operation relationships between the Yukon local governments and the territorial government, it is also fundamentally about the relationship between the citizens of

those municipalities and local governments — the form of government that is closest to us all, whether we live in a small hamlet or the Town of Watson Lake or Whitehorse.

The 1998 *Municipal Act* was seen as leading-edge legislation in granting increased autonomy to local governments. The intent was to ensure that it was balanced, to ensure that the democratic rights of citizens to challenge decisions made by those autonomous entities were put in place in the *Municipal Act* and using the means of referenda.

We know that the Yukon Party refused to amend the legislation following an appeal court ruling that rendered the referendum provisions inoperative. The *Municipal Act* review must be open to allowing voices of Yukoners to be heard. We will be urging the Yukon government to ensure that there is an additional public consultation on this key aspect of the *Municipal Act* — the democratic provisions, not just the financial aspects of the *Municipal Act*. I attended the one public consultation that occurred — I believe it will be two years ago coming up in June — that was held in Whitehorse. As far as I know, since then there has been no other opportunity for members of the public — not just governments — to get together to talk about this legislation. It's important. It has everything to do with the importance of relationships between and among Yukoners and between Yukoners and all levels of government.

We heard a lot in this Budget Address about government spending. The Premier's Budget Address repeatedly emphasized the record capital spending projected this year. He seems to equate the size of his government's budget with its effectiveness. Unfortunately, that is simply not the case. A report on government spending in Canada done by the C.D. Howe Institute was released just this week. The report gave the Yukon government a failing grade for its ongoing mismanagement of Yukon's finances. The C.D. Howe report says the Yukon is among the worst jurisdictions in Canada for meeting its budgeting targets. The government has dismissed the report's findings — as it has dismissed Auditor General's reports, among others — with the excuse that territorial financing is much more difficult to budget because so much of the revenue comes from federal programs.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP believes that Yukoners deserve better. With significant and steadily rising amounts coming to the territory from the federal government since devolution, the Yukon should, on all indices, be in an enviable position relative to other provinces and territories. With no debt or deficit, the Yukon has an opportunity to do what many provinces across the country can only dream of.

Sadly, more than a decade of Yukon Party governance has repeatedly failed to deliver on that potential. For one, the Yukon Party's inability to work with First Nations and industry is having major consequences for our economy by scaring away potential investors in the mining sector. In February, the government released its economic outlook for 2014. Yukon Party government's growth for 2014 is down a whopping 60 percent, from 8.8 percent to 3.3 percent.

The Premier also talked about funding pressures faced by the Government of Yukon with changes to the Building

Canada plan and the territorial health system sustainability initiative and the changing status of funding from the U.S. government to maintain the north Alaska Highway and the Haines Road.

In the face of these challenges, the Premier has said the government is focused on growing the economy, but with the growth rate for last year at one percent, the government is clearly not succeeding. One of the reasons for this is they have failed to take any serious measures to diversify our economy.

The government's revised economic outlook for 2014 released in February shows that tourism helped to shield Yukon's economy from the negative consequences of the downturn in the mining sector. The tourism industry has seen a steady growth over the past few years but I am very surprised to see little new support — any new creative support — for the industry in the 2014-15 budget. With a billion-dollar budget, government could only come up with an additional \$590,000 for the overseas tourism marketing budget. The \$2 million in CanNor funding does expire this year, and with that, the tourism sector will see a major net reduction in investment even though it has performed well over the last few years.

It's ironic that faced with the rapid falloff in investment and exploration, mining exploration, the Yukon Party is finally, begrudgingly, acknowledged that the tourism sector is an important economic sector, and yet, over the past five years, the budget for the Tourism department has grown by approximately \$3 million, dwarfed by the close to \$30 million increase for EMR over the same time period.

It was surprising to see the government ignore the call from the tourism industry, which earlier this year — I believe it was in January — suggested that Yukon make a strategic investment in the tourism industry by committing \$2.5 million a year for two years for a domestic TV marketing campaign. We acknowledge that we think it's a good idea to continue the funds for an overseas marketing campaign, but it is disappointing to see the Yukon Party ignore its own stats and the data from the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, which demonstrate the untapped potential for the domestic market.

I'm sure many Yukoners have seen some of the television ads produced in recent years by provinces like Newfoundland and Labrador, inviting Canada to come visit. Our neighbours in the Northwest Territories have also been promoting their territory to the rest of Canada with ads that ran during shows like *Arctic Air*. We could and should be doing that, too.

The Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon proposed the TV campaign because, as their January release said, it is a pivotal time for tourism in Yukon and it's the right time to take our industry to the next level and to boost our economy. It is time to build our tourism marketing capacity now. A strategic approach to tourism marketing would have direct and indirect benefits for not only every tourism operator in the Yukon, but for many unrelated businesses. The general rule of thumb is that the return on investment from tourism marketing is 28:1. It is a sound investment, which is why it is so

unfortunate that the Yukon Party has chosen to underinvest in this area.

This is not a recipe for diversifying our economy. If the Yukon government's commitment to diversifying our economy stops at oil and gas, we have a problem. This government is looking through the rear-view mirror. Yukoners need a government that pays attention to where the real opportunities are — in front of us.

There are a number of aspects, as I said in the outset, in terms of what the economy does and what we as legislators need to be thinking about. One of the key areas is how the decisions we take in this Legislative Assembly affect the quality of life of Yukon people and communities. The Yukon government does have responsibilities in many areas that affect the quality of life of all Yukoners and of all communities.

When we look at the area of health care, we've seen that the Yukon Party's approach to health care has resulted in a massive increase in costs. But increased spending has not delivered on any noticeable improvement in health outcomes for Yukon patients and families. We would hope that it would, but all this government has after 12 years are broken promises and no substance. It has no coordinated data-gathering mechanisms and it has not developed systems to utilize the data it does gather to modify or eliminate programs that no longer deliver the intended outcomes.

Yukoners will be paying millions of dollars for years for the Yukon Party's political decision to build acute care hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City. Despite the findings of the 2008-2009 health care review and the follow-up community report called *Taking the Pulse*, this Yukon Party gave direction to the Yukon Hospital Corporation to take over and transform the Watson Lake and Dawson City facilities into acute care hospitals. It was a political decision to ignore what Yukoners said during the extensive health care review process.

It was also a political decision to ignore the need to conduct a proper needs assessment before starting to build. The Yukon Party was not, and has not, been listening to Yukoners.

Yukoners have said that they want to have their babies close to home, but the new expensive hospitals do not allow for that. Yukoners have also said they want to keep their elders close to home too, but the government has just announced plans to warehouse 300 seniors in Whitehorse. Yukoners have said they do not want seniors to see their last days in acute care beds, but the government has no territorial end-of-life strategy.

Despite the fact that costly acute care hospitals are not designed to allow people to die — after all, acute care hospitals are charged with curing people — and despite Yukon Party campaign promises, there are still no palliative care beds in Yukon for those who either do not have the family or community networks necessary to die in dignity in their own homes, or feel more comfortable being in a care facility designed to ease this last life transition.

The territory lacks an integrated system to deal with the huge toll substance abuse exacts on our community. Liquor is the third largest source of revenue for the Yukon government, but the costs of our consumption of alcohol are impossible to calculate, given the extent of the ongoing impact from drinking and driving, from drinking while pregnant and from all the related ongoing health care costs.

This government also promised a mental health strategy a few years ago and has not delivered it. Better late than never, at the Auditor General's urging, the Yukon Party did finally do a needs assessment for what they built as acute care hospitals. I quote from that needs assessment now. The assessment found that the "expanded management of mental health services in home communities is essential".

Not listening to Yukoners is costing us all too much. Suicide is ahead of diabetes in causing Yukon deaths, and we still have no mental health strategy.

For years, the Yukon Party resisted collaborative care. Such was the grip of their ideological position that they could not see the evidence from across the country that, in order to have a sustainable health care system, we have to deliver appropriate care in the appropriate place. We have to stop planning the overuse of the most expensive form of care: the emergency department. Now the Yukon Party does know that Yukon must shift to collaborative care if it actually intends to meet Yukoners health care needs in a sustainable way.

Let's pause a moment to consider the word "collaborative". It takes teamwork. It takes including not just a variety of health providers, it takes listening to Yukoners too — patients and families.

When it comes to chronic conditions, it appears the thinking is that all that is needed to prevent chronic conditions is the promotion of well-being. Again, we urge the government to pay attention to root causes of disease. We urge the Yukon Party to pay attention to a report issued last summer by the Canadian Medical Association. The report is called *What Makes Us Sick?* It turns out that poverty can make kids sick their whole lives. Poverty in childhood puts a person at greater risk for diabetes than so-called lifestyle choices and behaviours.

Mr. Speaker, the Budget Address raises more questions than it answers on the state of e-health. When I looked at the Budget Address, I see that the government is now talking about developing an in-house e-health system. So when and why was this decision made to opt out of what I believe — and I'm looking forward to the minister correcting me on this — the Panorama program or the B.C. health system. What is the cost and when will it be completed? This was another of the Auditor General's observations.

The e-health initiative was part of the commitments made by federal, provincial and territorial governments in 2004 — 10 years ago, a ten-year agreement. Funding was provided. How much has been spent and how much has been abandoned by this territorial government? What was achieved? What will the new system do and cost and when will it be in place? These are all questions that Yukoners have a right to know the answers to.

We can't overstate the importance of tackling the root causes of chronic health conditions. If they really want to tackle those root causes of chronic health conditions, the Yukon Party is going to have to work, and really work, on reducing poverty. It is time to set targets and measure progress on reducing poverty — reducing the number of hungry Yukon children.

The Yukon Party does not have a strategy or any kind of plan to eliminate or reduce poverty. I can remember attending the meeting — the grand launch by the Yukon Party four years ago, I believe it was — on a poverty reduction and social inclusion strategy. It seems to have been absorbed into the walls somewhere, because it certainly hasn't produced a product.

In answer to a question from the New Democrats, the minister stated that reducing poverty was not what the strategy was about at all. Instead he said, "it was a strategy to work within departments internally."

The consensus is building across Canadian jurisdictions and professional associations. Poverty has a negative impact on the whole community. It can be fixed by changes to policy and the cost of inaction is greater than the cost of acting. Other jurisdictions have set targets and are meeting them. That is leadership. We encourage the Yukon Party to study and learn from the anti-poverty strategies being applied in the Northwest Territories and in Manitoba — just two examples. To create meaningful change in Manitoba, their government included 21 poverty and inclusion indicators in regulation and committed to annual reporting on progress made. Between 2002 and 2011, the number of Manitobans living in poverty decreased by 5,000 people. That includes 3,000 children. That is meaningful progress.

Research demonstrates that effective early childhood development is the best opportunity to reduce inequities and improve health. Where is this government's support of mothers and their infants in this budget? Early childhood development starts before birth, not once the kids make it into the education system.

Over the last few years, we've had a proliferation of committees focused on the housing continuum. For people inadequately and insecurely housed, we hope the committees set meaningful targets, and we expect the government to measure and report progress.

There is a population in this territory that spends the winter in hotels and the summers sleeping rough. There is a population that couch surfs and house-sits, but does not have a home. There is a population that gets turned away from the Salvation Army shelter.

The Yukon government does not know the number of homeless in Yukon. What is clear, though, is that being insecurely housed makes everything worse. Being homeless makes health issues worse, makes substance abuse issues worse and excludes people from services that require a permanent address to qualify. Too often, the Yukon Party refuses to listen to all Yukoners, but quality of life should apply to all Yukoners, and those most vulnerable and most in need of support should not be left behind.

The Premier said that the Yukon Housing Corporation is investing \$1.675 million to upgrade social housing properties in 2014-15. We welcome these belated investments in the refurbishment, amendments or fixing of these social housing units. Four of the six social housing properties are in my riding.

I am pleased to hear that the government responded positively after more than a year of letters and questions in the House on behalf of constituents about unsafe, inappropriate design features in these buildings that were supposedly designed for people who either had physical disabilities or were elderly. I will certainly have a number of questions for the minister on these initiatives.

I know my constituents will be keen to have assurances on the scope and quality of the work to be done. In addition, these related issues have been repeatedly raised in this House by my colleague, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, and I expect that she will continue to focus on these housing issues.

The Premier also announced that \$12 million is being provided in the budget to construct a new 48-unit seniors building in Whitehorse at a location not identified. The tender for its construction will be issued in the near future. What is unclear is whether this facility will be social housing or market housing.

As in health care, there is evidence that increased spending is not delivering improved results for Yukon students, especially in rural Yukon. Increased spending has not improved the rate of high-school attendance, or the number of students dropping out. The question is: Why the disconnect? When will this government stop the merry-go-round and focus on the real needs of Yukon students and their families?

I mentioned earlier that liquor sales represent the third-largest own-source revenue for this government. It takes real blinders for the Premier to say that Yukon is taking a leadership role with respect to fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. The Premier's leadership is confined to after people with a permanent brain injury are already involved in the justice system, Mr. Speaker. Responding way downstream is not leadership. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is a preventable, permanent brain injury. Leadership on FASD would be developing and implementing a strategy to reduce its occurrence and also set targets and measure progress toward completely eliminating this lifelong disability.

This government appears to have pinned its hopes on the notion that diversifying our resource economy means investing in oil and gas. Many Yukoners are under the impression that there is no oil and gas industry in the Yukon. They know that the Kotaneelee field has not produced in years and they are possibly aware of the 3D seismic activity going on in the Eagle Plains area.

Most Yukoners believe that there is, and will be, no substantive activity with respect to oil and gas in Yukon until, at a minimum, the Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly on the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing has completed its work and reported to the Legislative Assembly. Those same Yukoners would no doubt be surprised

to know that within Energy, Mines and Resources there is a 12-person directorate with a mandate to manage and regulate the oil and gas sector in Yukon for the benefit of all Yukon residents. Curious — it will be interesting to hear what they do when there is no oil and gas. The minister will be able to explain it — I have no doubt.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier claims that his government practices open and cooperative governance. As a gesture of such cooperation, will the government be sharing the results of technical reviews of proposed amendments to the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* with this House?

The importance of transparency in the process of amending the amendments to the act is paramount for the Official Opposition, for the Yukon First Nations and the Yukon public. As we witness the Harper government's unrelenting attack on Canada's environmental safeguards, Yukoners are justified in fearing the same for the Yukon, given the close relationship between the Harper government and the Yukon government's single-minded approach to non-renewable resource extraction.

As I was reviewing the Budget Address, I was reminded of a talk given last November as part of the TEDx series that a remarkable group of volunteers has organized for the past two years. The theme this year was "The Power of Re-invention".

One of the keynote speakers was Norman Fraser — an academic, a not-for-profit executive, a Silicon Valley CEO and a serial founder of multi-national corporations. His businesses are in the European top 50 in terms of growth companies. He's also very familiar with the Yukon, having been here a number of times. Some of the MLAs in this House will recall a meeting a month or so ago featuring a colleague of Dr. Fraser's who was from Moldova, who talked about the huge potential for the IT industry — an industry that Dr. Fraser was instrumental in establishing in Moldova in the early 1990s — in a country that, in the post-Cold War era, had no industries other than a faltering agricultural industry.

Dr. Fraser is a powerful proponent of the power of entrepreneurship to transform communities. On that November morning, he posed a number of provocative questions. At one point, he said that he knows that mineral extraction is the big Yukon success story. He then went on to say, however — without disparaging the mineral industry — he asked, what if its success is a problem? His question was: Given a choice, would you prefer to live in a diversified economy or a non-diversified economy? If your economy isn't very diversified, would you choose as your single industry, which you are so heavily exposed to, to be one that is historically boom and bust?

This is very interesting, Mr. Speaker, because it speaks to the potential that we have, if we can reframe and have a vision about the territory that's not singularly focused. His question was: Without reducing the size of the mineral industry, what would it take to make it no more than 10 percent of Yukon's economy? What other opportunities are there?

His premise is that by continuing to use the same old questions that people have been asking for ages, we are not

moving things forward. How can we change the question and, by doing so, create new opportunities?

In short, change the question and you change your world. Yukon has the capacity to do just that.

As the MLA for Whitehorse Centre, my constituents have regularly said to me that they want the Yukon government to focus its energies on building an economy that is inclusive and diversified. My colleagues, each of the members of the Legislative Assembly as the members of the Official Opposition, also hear this message time and again from their constituents. They will speak to this budget from their experience and perspective as MLAs for diverse ridings across Yukon. Each of my colleagues has developed an in-depth knowledge of their critic areas. This is an ongoing effort that has been greatly strengthened by our ongoing interactions with constituents.

Capital spending and other budget choices are an opportunity to build a more inclusive, diversified and strong economy. But this budget makes very clear that this is not the priority of the Yukon government.

The Yukon Party has given no thought to the factors that have contributed to this period of relative prosperity, namely the high world commodity prices that sparked the short-lived staking rush and the certainty of indexed transfer payments from the federal government. These factors and other factors had nothing to do with Yukon Party policies and, in many cases, persisted despite them, but they can be held to account for creating a climate of uncertainty that has made this territory more vulnerable to a mining downturn or missing the opportunity to diversify Yukon's economy by taking tourism seriously or investing in renewable energy.

By paying lip service to the very areas that promised to be the foundation of a fair and sustainable future, this government has shown time and again that it does not feel accountable to Yukoners and that it believes its tired economic messages are enough to satisfy Yukoners. No member of the Yukon Party Cabinet or back benches can claim any credit for the massive increases in federal transfers to the territorial coffers. When the Yukon Party came to power, approximately 86 percent of our territorial expenses were paid by the federal transfers. Today it's essentially the same, between 84 and 87 percent. Having the certainty of the economic support from the federal government can and should provide the Yukon government with the flexibility to develop creative, sustainable options for our economic future, for our economic present.

Yet the Yukon Party's economic strategy, if it can be called that, has been about managing an increased dependency on the federal government. For many Yukoners that dependency is what is behind the government's single-minded focus on non-renewable resource extraction, whether in the Peel watershed or other regions of the territory.

The Yukon Party may have benefitted from developments outside their control, but they've also squandered many economic opportunities. It is easy to govern in times of plenty, and these last few years have been times of plenty across the north, although Yukoners have not all benefitted from the

economic growth of the past few years. The Yukon did not take advantage of this growth to ensure Yukoners have access to affordable housing, for example. They did not take advantage of this period of growth to better prepare Yukon for a renewable energy future.

The government is just now realizing that the new mines need a source of affordable energy, but the hydro and other renewable energy sources that could have been provided to it are nowhere to be seen. It is not clear why the Yukon Party has been so reluctant to seriously invest in renewables.

Yukoners might suspect that the Yukon Party's plan is to increase our dependence on fossil fuels. It was interesting when the Minister of Finance talked about his and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources' trip to Ottawa. We'll be looking for the Premier to inform how his lobbying effort in Ottawa went with respect to attracting federal interest. It's hard to understand why the government is putting only \$2 million — and only \$2 million 12 years into its mandate — to focus on renewable energy. When we compare this investment with the commitment in the budget of \$38 million or \$39 million for LNG, that suggests that perhaps either they don't seriously have a plan with respect to renewable energy or they haven't been able to put it together.

The other notable feature with respect to the two or three pages in the Budget Address where the minister went on and on about why the federal government should invest in hydro in the Yukon is that, as he's urging Canada to invest, nowhere in those three pages does he mention First Nation partners. First Nation partnership is outlined very clearly in terms of hydroelectric development in the First Nation final agreements. I would hope that in terms of relationships and building our economy that that would be a very strategic element of developing the long-term planning for hydro development.

Before the latest downturn in mining, the government had a chance to build on the best of the boom cycle and create an environment for prosperity that will endure — not just for this generation but for generations to come — if they had started with that mandate, with that planning around renewable, and not been so fixed one way. However, we are now seeing a slump in economic growth and a mining industry trying to contend with the confrontational socio-economic and political environment that has been created by this government. The Yukon needs a government that understands that we can create jobs, protect our environment, honour our First Nation agreements and provide investors with a degree of predictability.

Yukoners frequently express pride in our beautiful territory and excitement about its potential for the future. As members of the opposition, we share that excitement about our territory's future.

We believe in Yukoners, but we also know that the Yukon Party government doesn't have a clear vision of that future. That lack of vision is reflected time and time again in the government's budgetary choices and that is why the Official Opposition cannot support the budget as tabled by the Premier. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: It is a pleasure to rise and speak in support of this budget tabled by the Premier on Tuesday of this week. I think it's a fantastic budget, which I would like to discuss at length if I can.

Before I get into the details of the budget and where this budget is going to take us and the direction it takes Yukon, I wanted to reflect for a few moments on some of the background to this budget and some of the accomplishments that we have achieved to date that have got us to where we are.

At the top of the list, in order to be tabling this budget — which, of course, includes the largest capital budget in the history of Yukon while simultaneously offering a \$70 million-plus surplus — it is important to recognize that the strong record of fiscal management has allowed us to do that. Something we need to recognize is that, without the responsible decision-making that has occurred on this side of the House for the last number of years, we wouldn't be in the position to make these sorts of investments and to create the sorts of opportunities that we are creating with this particular budget.

As I said, I'd like to speak a little bit about the background of this particular budget and some of the initiatives that have come from previous ones and are reflected here as well, and cover off some of that with my time today.

Before I do that, I did want to take a moment to thank my constituents, who have sent me here to represent them. The residents of Copperbelt North remain, as far as I can tell in my discussions with them, focused on a number of things that are reflected here in this budget. Chief among them, of course, is the need to have a strong economy and opportunities for Yukoners, not only for those currently in the workforce, but for the young folks who are coming up through the educational system to eventually also participate in the economy.

The economy is something I'll touch on in a few moments. First of all, I wanted to discuss a little bit about some of what we've been doing in the Department of Environment. In the past two and a half years, we have made considerable progress in improving our stewardship of the environment. We have taken concrete steps to improve government's response to animal diseases, in both livestock and wildlife and to minimize the negative impacts of potential animal disease outbreaks.

To do this, the animal health unit is now staffed and resourced and will soon have the benefit of access to a modern animal health laboratory. Those who are looking at the budget as I speak will note the investment in the animal health unit in that particular branch of the Department of Environment.

Key to the functioning of that branch is the *Animal Health Act*, which is shared legislation between the departments of Energy, Mines and Resources and Environment. From both departments, staff are working together to ensure that the modernized legislation that we

tabled in the last year takes both domestic and wild animal health into account.

The original *Animal Health Act* came into force in 1997. The Government of Yukon undertook a two-month public review, ending May 31, 2013, on proposed changes to the act, and the new *Animal Health Act* came into effect on January 1, 2014. It enables a more comprehensive government response to animal diseases in both livestock and wildlife, as well as helps minimize the negative economic impacts of animal disease outbreaks.

Healthy wildlife populations are important for harvesting, tourism, outfitting and the overall health of Yukon's environment. Healthy animals support competitiveness and productivity for the livestock industry as well. The modernized *Animal Health Act* allows the Government of Yukon to respond effectively to the full range of animal health risks and the impacts they have on human health.

I should also note that when the act was passed last year it was the first piece of legislation that the Department of Environment had put forward in a number of years, which was quite exciting for a number of those officials in the Department. I would like to thank them all for their diligent work in developing the act, consulting on it and supporting me in passing it in this House.

In that modernized act there were a number of key changes. The scope of the new *Animal Health Act* goes beyond disease to address hazards such as risks to human health arising from toxins in meat or bacteria in milk. It also expands the definition of "animal" so as to include hazards from dead livestock as well as live animals.

The new act introduced the option of compensation which the old act did not allow. A compensation program acknowledges that decisions made to protect the public will have economic impact on individuals and it is more likely that owners will report a hazard if they know they will be financially compensated and have a right to appeal.

The new act introduced three tools for managing hazards: quarantine orders, surveillance order and control orders. A surveillance order allows for monitoring in the area adjacent to a quarantine area to detect or prevent spread of a hazard. A control order can apply to all or part of Yukon and allows for restrictions to prevent the spread of hazards.

The new act clarifies the role and authority of the chief veterinary officer and inspectors, and the requirements for them to justify any orders that are issued. It allows for owners to request a review of orders and outlines how permits will be issued.

It does not alter existing livestock production practices, but offers flexibility in how a wide range of hazards will be controlled. The potential offences are clearly outlined in the new act and, while the upper limits to fines have been substantially increased to align with other Canadian jurisdictions, a wide range of penalty options have been included that focus on preventing violations or offences rather than simply punishing individuals.

The new *Animal Health Act* will continue to complement the federal responsibility for animal health carried out by the

Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the new act offers a wide range of penalties, providing flexible options for the courts to tailor the penalty to the severity of the offence and the personal circumstances of the individual.

The prohibition on the import or possession of cervids killed outside of Yukon is just one example of the steps we have taken to prevent the entry of dangerous diseases like chronic wasting disease into the Yukon and to keep Yukon's game populations healthy.

The budget that is allocated for this particular branch of Environment Yukon is somewhat aimed at the work that the branch will do to implement this new act. At the top of the list there is the creation of the regulations that will enact many of these provisions. As I mentioned, now that the branch — Animal Health unit — is fully resourced and staffed, that branch can begin to do the work that is contemplated in this piece of legislation that we passed last year.

Integral to the responsible management of Yukon's fish and wildlife populations are renewable resources councils and the Fish and Wildlife Management Board. Since the beginning of our mandate, we have made dozens of changes to the wildlife regulations on the advice of those boards. In my opinion, the relationship between the Yukon government, RRCs and the Fish and Wildlife Management Board has never been stronger. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of the members of all of those boards. There are many — too many to name of course — but the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the renewable resources councils and all their individual respective staff all do fantastic work in advancing the responsible management of fish and wildlife resources in the territory. Without them and without their advice and support and strong relationships, we simply would be worse off.

We have also continued our strong relationship with the gem of northern wildlife viewing, the Yukon Wildlife Preserve. Our government's commitment to multi-year funding and continued support have helped the preserve become the first institution north of 60 to be certified by the Canadian association of zoos and aquariums. That's something we've discussed previously in this House, but I wanted to take the opportunity to recognize it again because I really think it's a tremendous step forward for that institution and a tremendous step forward for the Yukon in general, not only as a destination for wildlife viewing, but as a jurisdiction that supports education about conservation and, of course, animal rehabilitation and health promotion.

The signing of the multi-year funding that occurred last year between me and one of their board members was a great step forward for the organization, and it further supports their ability to make long-term strategic decisions about infrastructure investment on that site.

In the budget before us today, you'll see the normal high level of support for the Yukon Wildlife Preserve in the Environment Yukon budget.

Our support of the Yukon Research Centre has also allowed it to become a leader in northern research and innovation. The work being done in Yukon on permafrost and

climate change adaptation really is world-class and is some of the best in the north. It's a critical component of our response to climate change here in the territory.

There's a lot that can be said about the Yukon Research Centre and about the great work that is being done at that facility. Much has been said already over the course of my time here. It's something I've quite enjoyed speaking about because of the fact that it's so exciting.

One of the things I found to stand out with regard to the Yukon Research Centre was the announcement they made last year that the Yukon Research Centre was indeed fourth in Canada in terms of research income. That doesn't sound too amazing when you look at it at face value, but when you think that little Yukon and the small research centre at our Yukon College is surpassed only by SAIT, NAIT and the College of the North Atlantic, in the entire country — all those research institutions in Ontario, Quebec and across the rest of the west and the Atlantic provinces all pale in comparison to the Yukon Research Centre.

That announcement by the Yukon Research Centre that they had been ranked fourth in Canada was an underrated announcement and one that deserves significant commendation because of the fact that they're really punching above their weight. It's worth noting that the Yukon Research Centre has tripled its staff over the last four years and that research has grown in areas of mine site restoration, bioremediation, cold climate technology innovation, climate change and the social science of resource development in the Arctic. These are all fields that are very important for the academic debate and discussion about these topics, but they also provide very practical and meaningful impacts on the lives of Yukoners, as we deal with these very issues they are studying and doing work on.

If I may, I would quote the Premier in his response to that particular announcement. He said, and I quote: "The funding support that the Yukon Research Centre has received demonstrates the centre's significance on the international stage... Fostering northern-focused research and innovation is important for the Yukon government and the centre plays a key role in expanding the knowledge industry and in developing technologies that provide sustainable solutions for sub-Arctic regions around the world."

I think that sums up quite nicely, and I'd like to thank the Premier for his words and echo them again today because I really believe that they are profound in that sense.

As well, working together with First Nations, we are implementing, planning and managing numerous parks, special management and habitat protection areas throughout the Yukon. The successful completion of the management plan for the Devil's Elbow and Big Island Habitat Protection areas are just examples of some of this work to date. We have done some great work so far, Mr. Speaker, but there is obviously more work to be done as we work with our First Nation partners to develop management plans and to implement those management plans for a number of our protected areas in the territory.

As folks will probably be familiar, there was recently a public consultation around the Kusawa Park that was undertaken by the Parks branch and I look forward to seeing the results of that. As well, I think that we are nearing conclusion on the Ddhaw Ghro Habitat Protection Area. That is something that has been in limbo for some time, in part because of government. I'm happy to say that we are taking the steps necessary to move that forward now. I'll be working with the governments of the Selkirk First Nation and Na Cho Nyäk Dun to advance.

Once the Selkirk First Nation concludes their election for chief, I'll be happy to work with either existing Chief McGinty or whoever succeeds him, in advancing the Ddhaw Ghro management plan for that particular habitat protection area.

So, Mr. Speaker, across the board, so far — basically the midway point of our mandate — I think that we're protecting, maintaining and enhancing our natural environment while ensuring it is secure for the sustainable use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

If I may, I'd like to turn now to the Department of Economic Development as significant work has been done over the last few years in that department as well. A lot of that work is cumulated in what we see in the budget before us now. The Department of Economic Development has experienced some significant turnover in the last six to 12 months. We've seen, obviously, a new deputy minister come in, but also at the senior management level there are a lot of new faces. I think that can be a great opportunity and I think it has been a great opportunity for the department to strengthen its focus on certain areas but also to refocus and take new looks at other areas where we can make a difference in the Yukon within the mandate of the Department of Economic Development.

One of the best examples of that, I think, was the creation last year of the Technology and Telecommunications Development Directorate, or as I have previously affectionately referred to it — T2D2.

It is a branch of the Department of Economic Development that is focused, as its name suggests, on the development of technology and telecommunication. Its mandate is fairly clear, but I think what the individuals in that branch have done with that mandate is actually worth acknowledging. They have been very creative with what they have done. Some of the work that they have done to date includes the hosting of a makerspace event; which was a renowned success. It was actually quite stunning how many people came out for that particular event. What it did was spark an energy in that particular community and the group of people who are interested in that field to come together as a community and advocate on behalf of their interests, both in terms of their own particular interests and for the greater good of the economy as a whole. The hosting of that makerspace event I think was really a launching point for the building of a sense of cohesion amongst what was previously a fairly disparate group of people.

Additionally, the T2D2 branch was involved in a very unique project which saw, in conjunction with Yukon College, the launch of a balloon into space. It is not often that employees of the Yukon government can say that their work took them to space. That is something that is deserving of comment, commendation and recognition, because it really was a fascinating project that sparked the attention of a lot of people in the Yukon and around the globe.

So as you can see from just these two small examples, the makerspace event and the balloon launch, the folks at the Technology and the Telecommunications Development Directorate are doing much more than what their mandate simply suggests, which I think is fantastic and certainly support very much. I've said to them before that obviously their mandate is what it is, but although it's not written, included in their mandate is — to be candid — doing interesting and cool stuff and generating interest and buzz around not only the industry and the sector of the economy, but this particular segment of society. I think it has been a great success so far and I look forward to taking the next steps with that branch. I'll discuss some of that when I discuss what's actually in the specific budget of the Department of Economic Development in a few moments.

If I may, I haven't had as much time with the Public Service Commission as I have had with Environment or Economic Development, but I did want to note that I've appreciated the support and advice and information that has been provided to me by the Public Service Commission and the staff within that department. We've taken some important steps in the right direction on a number of different fronts.

Of course, we are currently consulting on the whistleblower legislation that we've discussed previously in this House. That will provide an excellent opportunity for Yukoners, individually as well as groups, unions, and others such as NGOs or interested groups, to provide comment on that. As I've mentioned before, I should thank the members of the select committee who provided the report in December 2012, which really guided the work that we have been doing since then.

I look forward to bringing forward that legislation when it's completed — once we have completed the consultation and the subsequent review and drafting. Eventually we'll have a chance to table it in this House.

Another interesting aspect of the Public Service Commission that I was aware of previously, but hadn't appreciated how important it was, was a pilot project that is being undertaken by the department. That is the American Sign Language interpreter program that operates out of this building. It allows members of the public to have the services of an interpreter for sign language. I was aware that that was important and it sounded good, but it wasn't until I spoke to some of the people who had accessed that programming that I really understood how fundamentally important it was, and how much it had had a fairly dramatic impact on their livelihoods. So I really appreciated the importance of the program. It is a pilot program that is set to conclude in September. We are in the process of evaluating it currently

and I look forward to seeing that evaluation and understanding if there have been any other challenges that I'm not aware of with that program. Then we will be in a position to decide how to proceed with it. I would simply note that I was very impressed by it and impressed by the services that were provided, as I learned from one of the people who had subscribed to the program.

With that, I should turn to the specifics around the budget itself and why I think it puts us on an excellent path forward, not only for the development of our economy and the stewardship of our environment, but a number of other aspects which I will, for the most part, leave to other members and ministers to discuss. But the aspects around what is going on in Education and Health Care and Justice and a number of other departments that I obviously am not personally responsible for — there are a lot of exciting things in here that deserve comment, but of course time doesn't permit discussion on everything. I will turn to the economic-focused aspects of this budget in relation to my department, the Department of Economic Development.

One of the important things that the Department of Economic Development does and will continue to do is the promotion of Yukon as an excellent place to invest and to start and operate businesses. That is why I was very pleased to see in the budget highlights and in the Premier's budget speech that we will be tabling legislation to change the small business tax rate — to cut that rate from its current four percent to three percent. That is an excellent step forward. I am always excited when I see small business taxes being cut. I think it is a fantastic idea. I look forward to working with the Premier and the Minister of Finance in discussing that further with the business community.

Another aspect of the budget announcement made on Tuesday by the Premier in his budget speech was the announcement that we would be conducting a review of the burden of red tape on Yukon businesses. To do that, we will engage with the chambers of commerce — most likely, the focal point will be with the Yukon Chamber of Commerce as the only territory-wide chamber of commerce — to conduct such a review.

Ultimately, what we want to do there is identify the current burden, measure that burden, and provide opportunity for commitments around reductions to that burden. I think that's something that will go a long way toward making the Yukon a more business-friendly jurisdiction, to making it more attractive to Yukoners to start their own businesses and for existing business owners to grow and succeed in their own businesses.

As well, the commitment has been made here that we will review the business incentive program. As members know, that program provides rebates for contractors who hire local labour and use local products to ensure that Yukon companies benefit from government contracts. Of course, we want to ensure that that program continues to be effective. We know that it's been well-subscribed to over the years, and to my knowledge hasn't had many problems. But, of course, it's always prudent to take an objective look at these types of

programs and determine whether or not they've been successful, and whether or not changes are necessary in order to maximize the impact of the program. So that's something I look forward to doing in the year to come.

Critical to a healthy Yukon economy is a healthy mining industry. In order to have a truly healthy mining industry, we need to have a full pipeline of projects right from the beginning, with small, grassroots projects that are typically advanced by prospectors or those in the early stage of the exploration industry, right through to producing mines and everything in between.

When I say everything in between, I mean the bevy of projects that range from advanced exploration projects through to projects that are advancing into the assessment and regulatory regime and ultimately — hopefully — toward production.

What you see in this budget are a number of opportunities to support projects at each one of these stages in the pipeline. First of all, at the smallest level — at the grassroots level — there is an increase in the 2014-15 budget for the Yukon mineral exploration program to a total of \$1.4 million. I think that will be a welcome item in the budget for many in the prospecting community. I know that there are some great examples of projects that have come through that program and been successful. Some of the more advanced projects that we see out there now are actually products of that program, so we know that it has been successful.

Once projects move forward beyond that grassroots stage is the time when they need to be conducting exploration. As we all know, exploration in the Yukon can be quite expensive. It involves oftentimes helicopters, planes, drills and scientists like engineers or geologists or chemists to conduct that work. It creates a significant amount of jobs for Yukoners. In order to have that exploration industry, they need to be able to attract investment.

That's why I'm pleased to see this year's budget includes over \$700,000 specifically for investment attraction. It's with that money that the Department of Economic Development will continue to partner with industry in a number of different ways, not just individual companies but with industry organizations, like the Chamber of Mines, and also marketing consortiums, like the Yukon Mining Alliance, to promote Yukon as an excellent place to invest.

What that work typically entails is liaising and working with industry to go out to key economic or financial markets throughout the world, whether it's New York or London or Hong Kong. It's key that Yukon gets out and promotes itself as a great place to invest, but it's important that we do this strategically. It's not something where we can just go out and start waving signs and say, "invest in Yukon." You have to do it strategically; you have to be aware of what you're doing.

So to that end, I'm also pleased to indicate that we will soon be releasing an investment attraction strategy that has been developed with industry input through the Yukon Mining Alliance, the Chamber of Mines and from individual companies. It's my hope that strategy will give us an excellent picture of what events and functions we'll be attending

throughout the coming year. That'll give us a really solid idea, not only for our own purposes but for industry's purposes, of where we are going, and it will give them an opportunity to plan out their years, as well, and decide whether or not they are going to participate in certain conferences or not.

Oftentimes smaller companies will indicate that they will only go to a certain conference if they know that government is going to be there with a booth and with a presence, so that they can leverage that interest and attraction and build on it.

Finally, at the more advanced level — at the production or advanced project stage — industry has been very clear with us that their priority is in two general areas. One is infrastructure and one is in permitting. I'll leave the permitting piece aside for now, because I think that perhaps other ministers may be better suited to discuss that. I'd like to focus on the infrastructure component of that, because I think that if this budget does one thing only — of course, it does much more — one thing that it does excellently is invest in infrastructure. The infrastructure investment in this budget is unparalleled and unprecedented.

When I say infrastructure that the mining industry needs, their needs are vast and diverse. Chief among them are roads, power and other training infrastructure. On the roads front, as has been previously noted, this is the biggest expenditure on our territory's roads in the Yukon's history. Not only is it big, but it is strategic. There are key areas that we are investing in to ensure that, when production decisions are made by a mining company, that government is not the reason to delay.

To that end, I was pleased to note that \$600,000 is being allocated to conduct functional planning studies of three strategic areas: the Nahanni Range Road, the Freegold Road and the Klondike Highway. As we know, those are three areas where we can all think of the individual projects that are accessed by those roads, but what they will do is give us an idea about what will be needed by those particular projects when a decision is made.

One of the key resource roads that is currently employed by industry is the Robert Campbell. I was pleased to see a significant investment in the Robert Campbell yet again this year. Not only does that particular project provide a lot of jobs for local contractors, road builders and those in that particular industry, but it is a strategic vein for our mining industry to facilitate getting the ore to market. In the case of Yukon Zinc's Wolverine mine, it's absolutely paramount that that road is in good enough condition to get their product to market.

On the energy front, there are some significant steps being made and advanced in this budget. I would note that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Premier have been articulate in their expression of the vision this government has for energy. It includes short-, medium- and long-term steps to ensure that we have a clean power future for the territory. In the long term, the crown jewel of the energy vision is the development of a new hydro project in the territory. I'm pleased to see the \$2 million being allocated for that particular project. There are other mid-term projects like

the potential of an interconnection with Alaska through the economic corridor of Whitehorse to Skagway.

I see from the gesture that I'm actually running out of time, so I should skip over some of the infrastructure developments that I had hoped to discuss and turn to some of the other investments. Naturally, as I said, a key need of industry is training, ensuring that we have a trained workforce.

That is why I was pleased to see the investment in the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining that is being made in this budget. That program and the training provided through the college has already resulted in a number of local Yukoners being trained through that and found jobs in the mining industry.

I did mention previously the Yukon Research Centre, but what people don't realize is that the mining industry is a knowledge industry. It is an industry that is based on science and based on a lot of fairly important scientific aspects. Chief among them are the kind of remediation and engineering aspects to the mining industry that are advanced at the Yukon Research Centre.

The example that we recently learned about between the Alexco Resource Corporation partnering with the Yukon Research Centre to host a PhD student under the tutelage of the industrial research chair there to study local water resource remediation opportunities is an excellent example.

I don't have time to get into a number of the things I had hoped to, but let me turn now briefly to what lies ahead for the Department of Environment. I have indicated previously my excitement about the site assessment and remediation unit's work this year. They are doing an increased amount of work this year, including projects throughout the territory, and I had the opportunity to announce the work being done in Old Crow a few weeks ago that is, I think, probably overdue. I am excited that it is moving forward.

I would be absolutely remiss if I didn't note the very exciting development of the Conrad campground on Windy Arm with the Carcross-Tagish First Nation that received some degree of discussion already earlier this week when we discussed the MOU between CTFN and Yukon government.

I did also want to note — and this isn't an aspect of the Department of Environment that often gets talked about — that last year was an exceptional year for our wildlife viewing program. We released last year a wildlife viewing strategy that was well received and I was pleased to note that in 2013 attendance at the wildlife viewing programs events had doubled from previous years. I don't know if that's specifically because of the strategy or not, or just because of the incredible passion and enthusiasm that those officials have, but, nonetheless, that result is quite simply excellent and I'm very pleased to note that.

I didn't have a chance, unfortunately, to get into too much more around the human-wildlife conflict pieces that we've discussed, but as you'll see in the budget, Mr. Speaker, there is \$25,000 to continue to support WildWise Yukon, which is something that I discussed a number of times last year, in last year's discussions. That organization has done a lot of great

work and has been very successful. They've developed a website, they've developed materials and they have done some excellent projects throughout the Yukon, most specifically, of course, is the bear-proofing of the waste bins in the Copper Ridge area. As far as I can tell, it's an excellent program and an excellent example of methods or actions that can be taken by Yukoners to prevent negative interactions between them and wildlife.

But, Mr. Speaker, since I seem to be running out of time, I will conclude and say that I think this budget does an excellent job in advancing the priorities of this government. I focused my remarks primarily on the environment and the economy, as well as some comment on the Public Service Commission, but I look forward to hearing from my colleagues in discussion of other priorities like in education, health care, justice and a number of other very important priorities of this government.

I would like to commend this budget to the house.

Mr. Silver: Before I get into my reply, I would just like to take this opportunity to thank my constituency of Klondike for the privilege of representing them here in the Assembly. I also want to apologize in advance to the good people of Dawson City for my spending of so much time in Whitehorse for the next few months, but I will assure them that I will continue to work hard for them here in the capital. It was great to spend the majority of the last three months in Dawson. I would also like to thank my friends, family and colleagues for their continued support and understanding.

This is also my first sitting as the Leader of the Yukon Liberal Party and I am honoured to carry out the new responsibilities that job entails into this sitting.

Mr. Speaker, as I did last year at this time, I want to begin today by congratulating the government on its budget. The Yukon Party has no doubt spent considerable resources putting this together. They have no doubt done their best to prepare the image for the future. Unfortunately, this image does need some work.

Work is needed to meet the public's rightful demand for better planning than we've seen in the past. Work is needed to give Yukoners a budget that shows their government is listening, and work is needed to give Yukoners a budget they deserve and a budget that helps them achieve a sound and secure future.

When the people of Dawson chose me to represent them, it was not so that I could ignore their interests and take the government's message to Dawson, it was in fact the other way around. They trusted me to bring their concerns and priorities to the table. They wanted a representative who would fight for them and who would make sure that their government would plan for their future. So on behalf of my constituents and on behalf of all Yukoners, I would like to call attention to some shortcomings of this budget and offer some concrete solutions on how the government can better address these needs.

This is the third budget from this government and we are seeing a new approach. The Yukon Party government has stumbled around for two and a half years not listening to

Yukoners and with no real vision for the future. They have now at least made a decision and the plan — and it's actually an old plan and not a very original one — is to try to spend their way to a re-election.

There is a big increase in capital spending this year and the next. The forecast, however, drops off substantially the year after the next election. The plan is not sustainable, but over a short period of time — no care is the message. That will be somebody else's problem after the next election. This mortgaging the future approach is best highlighted by the Premier's own words on page 3 of the budget speech, and I quote: "Mr. Speaker, there is a reason this is the largest Capital Budget in Yukon's history. At a time when the private sector is facing economic challenges, this is the time for the Yukon government to step up to the plate and invest in infrastructure that will facilitate and stimulate the private sector."

This is the Premier's way of saying that private sector growth has stalled, and the days of us coasting on high mineral prices is over. How are we going to turn this around in time for the next election? Spend, and spend again. It's unfortunate that the government has spent so little time during the first half of its mandate planning for this day that we all knew was coming.

Last year, the Yukon had one of the worst GDP rates of growth in Canada, only at one percent. Now that the slowdown is upon us, the government's response to their own poor planning is to spend, and to spend again. This kind of pre-election spending leads to rushed, poorly planned, and overbudget projects. Trying to cram a great deal of spending into a short window will also result in more jobs going to outside contractors.

I met with contractors last week who have been watching this approach being tried over and over again and the result is always the same, they said — Outside contractors coming in to pick up extra work, and no extra benefit going to Yukon workers or to the Yukon at all. The short-term political goals of the government are the top priority, not properly managed and well-timed spending.

Let's look at F.H. Collins for an example of a project that was rushed before the 2011 election. We all remember the Premier and a former minister of Education with their golden shovels, out before the last election to mark the beginning of the construction of the new school. Well, Mr. Speaker, two and a half years later, construction has not even started, and a contract for the building of the school has been awarded to a company from Alberta. That was done on purpose, I might add, because of the way that this government wrote the tender. It made it virtually impossible for a Yukon company to win the bid. The local tradespeople that are being headhunted by the Alberta company are not happy with this. In this budget, we're finally seeing the real cost of this project, and it is millions more than Yukoners had been told. It is now listed at \$51 million. Now, at least \$6 million of that was spent on a now-scrapped design. This money was wasted; this money is lost.

Next to the overbudget and behind-schedule rural hospitals, this project is the poster child for what happens when governments try to ram projects through, based on political and not practical or well-reasoned deadlines.

There are a number of questions and concerns I have about projects that are in the budget, or not in the budget, and I'd like to go through them now. Cuts to the Building Canada fund: there is a major disruption in this critical infrastructure funding, caused by the federal Conservatives' inability to roll out new funding in a timely fashion. This is an issue here and across the entire country. We are at the beginning of a gap here that will see only \$19 million flow to the Yukon, instead of the \$35 million seen in the 2012-13 budget. Despite warnings from premiers across this country, the federal government has let this happen and we are seeing the impact of this poor planning.

The budget speech, all 60 pages of it, did not mention the Yukon Party's platform commitment to create a university of the Yukon. The government has said little about this project for some time now and is certainly failing in delivering this campaign commitment.

Another broken promise is the failure of the government to fund a new Dawson City recreation centre, as promised by the former Yukon Party MLA for Klondike. It demonstrates the budget commitments that the Yukon Party made — we are doing what we said we were going to do — is a hollow promise not backed up by action.

The budget speech did mention a new hydro dam and \$2 million has been set aside for planning purposes. This is the first serious amount of money set aside for this process. We know planning Yukon's energy future was sidetracked by several years by the Yukon Party's plans for privatization of the energy future.

We know a former Energy, Mines and Resources minister personally signed several contracts to get the privatization ball rolling. I am pleased to see that this fund is set aside; however, it is clear that the government is in no hurry to actually do anything on this project prior to the next election. We are midway through the term and the government hasn't even selected a location for this project. Finding a solution to our growing energy demands will fall on the next government.

The Premier mentioned his work on the future of Shawkak funding and, make no mistake, there are millions of dollars on-line if this funding is not restored. I raised the issue last year and urged the Premier to go to Washington to make the case. It is unfortunate that the Yukon Party has to react to try to get funding reinstated instead of proactively ensuring this funding was not cut in the first place. The Premier, on this issue, is behind on the count, as they say, and we hope that he doesn't strike out when the new transportation bill is released, hopefully later this year in the United States.

Another item that seems to have been pushed on to the back burner is the expansion of the Whitehorse General Hospital. Mr. Speaker, there is only \$470,000 in the budget this year, after promises last fall from this government that it was set to build a \$60- to \$65-million expansion this year.

Perhaps the Minister of Health and Social Services can help explain why plans have changed since the last time we met.

At the same time, the government is spending almost \$3 million for a temporary home for our new MRI machine. This is another example of poor planning, resulting in extra money being spent.

The budget also contained a new, higher estimate for the new McDonald Lodge in Dawson. Last year, the project was listed as \$7 million. New figures show that it is at \$11.3 million. Why have millions been added to the budget on this project?

I was surprised to see that the Health and Social Services department O&M budget forecasted lower than last year. An almost \$30-million reduction in health care spending seems to me a bit optimistic and maybe even a bit unrealistic. I will be asking the minister how he plans to achieve the goals or whether this is simply the result of the one-time bailout that the Hospital Corporation announced this time last year.

I will also have questions for the Minister of Highways and Public Works on the government's announcement that the O&M for the new Dawson waste-water treatment plant will be around \$350,000 a year. People I've spoken to in Dawson who are familiar with this facility have told me that the fuel and heat alone will be at least that amount, and that the final number will likely be double or even higher.

There are a few numbers missing from the budget speech as well — for example, any concrete numbers on how many visitors are coming to the Yukon from Germany. I wrote the minister asking him to back up his claims that increased marketing in Europe has resulted in more visitors to the Yukon from Germany. He didn't answer and the Premier didn't mention this either. I'll be asking the minister for those numbers.

Another number missing from the budget speech was the amount of debt held off the main books by our Crown corporations. Figures last fall put the numbers at around \$196 million. When the government talks about the Yukon being debt-free, we never hear about this debt that is stashed off in the books. Yukoners are paying millions of dollars in interest every year on this debt and will until at least the year 2040 on some of it.

It was also interesting to see the Premier finally shed some light on the process that is in place for amendments to YESAA. The Premier confirmed that the Government of Yukon submitted its recommendations for changes to the federal legislation with no input from the Yukon public and it is my understanding that it did not discuss amendments with the Yukon First Nations. No collaboration means no development on a common Yukon position. It is unfortunate that the government has not bothered to share its proposed amendments with the public, only with their Conservative colleagues in Ottawa.

There are a number of specific questions I have about announcements made in Tuesday's budget. I would like to move on to some of the items I am happy to see in the financial blueprint presented this week.

Even with a blindfold on, if you throw 1.3 billion darts at a board, you are bound to score some points. So there are measures in this budget that I can support and have indeed pushed the government to implement. They include the small business tax cut, the red tape review, progress on the second Internet connection to the south — I am pleased to see the government has decided that it has a role to play in making this happen. This is very different story than when I first raised the issue and was told that it was something that the private sector should take care of.

The continuation of the interim electric rebate is another item that I have pushed the government to continue. Funding to help young athletes to attend the next Canada Winter Games in Prince George is also something that I can get behind.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of rhetoric in the budget about the private sector; however, the reality is, when you look at the spending numbers, it's quite different. The current government has increased the operation and maintenance cost of government by \$100 million in just two short years.

This Yukon Party government has been very successful in growing the size of government. We know, for example, according to the statistics published by the government itself, there are 700 more public sector jobs in the Yukon than there were just a year ago. According to the government's own budget documents, the Yukon continues to generate only 13 percent of its own revenue. The rest still comes from Ottawa. So there's a lot of talk about growing the private sector but it's not matched by the numbers, Mr. Speaker.

We need a budget that reduces our dependence on Ottawa. After 10 years in power, this government has doubled its dependence on federal money. When the government came to power, approximately 80 percent of expenses were paid by federal transfers. Now, Mr. Speaker, almost 87 percent of our expenses are paid with federal money. On behalf of Yukoners, I'm calling on this government to plan to achieve a more dependable and less dependent source of revenue. While the government likes to boast good financial management, the facts remain that Yukoners get more of our budget as a percentage from Ottawa than we did 10 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, there is a different way of governing and I am interested in serving all of Yukoners, not just some groups — and I believe that it can be done. The government of a few serving the needs of a few — that must end. The Yukon Party's view of the world was spelled out yesterday when the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources criticized me for trying to raise concerns to both the resource sector and the environmental movement. It's this government's view, articulated yesterday, that you must choose one or the other. This government has clearly put the resource sector on the top of the list and criticizes anyone who has a different point of view or who might try to find some common ground between the two sides.

Yukoners remember the attack that the Premier made on the environmental NGO in his budget speech of last year. We heard more of the same yesterday — this us-versus-them approach of the government.

The issues facing the territory are real and they are many. The present government, like their colleagues in the Harper government, are interested in their base and they have forgotten the obligations to represent the interests of us all. We are in the midst of a hostile period in Yukon's political history. There is an unwillingness in government to hear the voices of its citizens — the unilateral decision on the future of the Peel watershed is a great example of that.

We should be interested in serving all Yukoners, not just one segment of the population or another. The us-versus-them approach that is on display now has to change. We must move forward, not beholden to special interest groups, but to the interests of all Yukoners.

Yukoners have deserved a government that listens. They deserve leadership that doesn't use fear to polarize and they have earned an alternative that focuses on our common goals. We need a government that listens, not lectures, one that builds relationships, not legal cases, and one that looks out for Yukoners, not for itself.

The Liberal caucus is not bound by special interest groups from outside the territory, Mr. Speaker. We are here for Yukoners. We are going to make decisions that are in the best interest of our territory. We are not going to hide our intentions from Yukoners and, when we need advice, we're going to look to Yukoners, instead of the interest of big corporations or business executives from Outside.

Over the past decade, the politics and policies of successive Yukon Party governments have disrespected First Nations. They have put all their economic eggs in one basket and now, as mineral prices drop, our economy is slowing down.

With our resources and our natural beauty and our bright, hard-working citizens, we have the potential to be a model of success for the entire country. I believe that that potential is not being harnessed, and I believe that we need a new form of leadership. We need leadership that empowers First Nation governments and consults openly and fairly. We need leadership that listens to our public servants instead of muting them and interfering with their decisions. We need a leadership that enables our private sector instead of entangling them in red tape. We need leadership that brings about a better type of politics in the Yukon instead of the us-versus-them approach. The polarization divides us and it ignores our common bonds.

I will not be supporting this budget before us, as I have no confidence in the government that crafted it.

In closing, I would like to thank this government for all the work that they did do in preparing this budget but, on behalf of all Yukoners, I'd like to challenge this government to do better. Yukoners deserve better planning, they work too hard for their money to be wasted, and Yukoners deserve better listening. They are too important to have to fight to be heard.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I'd like to begin by extending my sincere appreciation and thanks to my constituents in Porter Creek South for having the confidence in me to represent our

riding and providing me with this unique opportunity. I'm truly forever grateful for their encouragement, for their support and the faith they have in me to represent them here in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. In fact, the moments I look forward to most are those spent in the grocery store or the coffee shop or on the sidewalk or the gym, for example, when I meet up with friends, with constituents, and talk about the issues that matter most to them. It is, in fact, through those conversations that I am kept grounded and informed on issues that matter most to Yukoners.

I'd also like to thank my family for their support and their patience. Entering into political life — as my colleagues on both sides of this Legislative Assembly I'm sure will attest to — poses some challenges to family life at the best of times. I have a full appreciation of all MLAs in that regard.

I'd also like to thank my government caucus colleagues, executive and administrative staff for their tremendous support, for their wisdom, for their encouragement and feedback, and for their humility and creativity.

There's no question that, without their support, our daily tasks would be much more challenging. From our Premier to our Cabinet ministers, MLAs, our executive and administrative assistants, we have an incredibly hard-working and dedicated team.

As I said before, each of us sitting in this Assembly today ran for office because we want to make Yukon a better place. Sometimes that means change, sometimes that means letting things evolve on their own, and sometimes that means just staying the course.

In addition to that, many of us also likely ran for other reasons. For me, it was important to give back to the people — the Yukon Party government — who stepped up to the plate, not only to help my son Jack, and the issues he faces having autism spectrum disorder, but also who helped many other families and children who are affected not only by autism, but other varying degrees of disabilities. In fact, I don't think the Yukon Party government gives itself enough credit for the work they've done on the social side of the ledger.

Yukoners know that without a functioning, stable economy to support it, a social safety net isn't going to help anyone. Yukoners also know that time and time again, the Yukon Party government has provided just that — a strong, stable economy, and a solid social safety net.

Let me back up a step, because it's important to make note of what the Yukon Party government has done on the social side of the agenda over the past number of years.

I know the members opposite criticize the Yukon Party for not doing enough on the social side, but I can tell you that the attention the Yukon Party government pays to the social agenda is of utmost importance. Supporting families with autism and providing the opportunity for Autism Yukon to be established is merely one incredible accomplishment that we've made. There are many, many more.

I'd like to thank the Minister of Health and Social Services for his leadership in areas such as the enhancements to the family supports for children with disabilities, providing

an additional \$100,000 per year to be used to support requests for specialized aids or equipment that fall outside the existing program guidelines. It is unfortunate that the members opposite have already indicated they will not support or vote for this. Increased funding has also been made available to support additional therapies for children. My son Jack is living proof that these are wise investments.

I know the Minister of Health and Social Services is also working with organizations, like the Food Bank, the Salvation Army, the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, FASSY, Autism Yukon and LDAY, to name a few, to make a difference in our territory. I'd like to acknowledge the good work of my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, in advancing Yukon's land, mining and energy policies. Due to his efforts, we have investors taking a very close look at building our tourism sector in the Carcross area, as well as work being done on improving Yukon's energy infrastructure and the ongoing relationship with the mining sector.

Our Minister of Highways and Public Works does a solid job of providing leadership to that ministry. Our visitors appreciate our transportation network and I also appreciate the contribution his department makes to our buildings around the territory.

The work currently being done at the Dawson City Airport to accommodate Air North charter flights from Fairbanks, through their contract with Holland America, is just one example of this good work. Yet the members opposite have already stated they will not support or vote for this.

Mr. Speaker, during the campaign, I heard time and time again the need for more land to be made available in the Whitehorse area. The Minister of EMR and the Minister of Community Services are to be congratulated for their efforts in making more land available. Because of their work, we now have lots for sale over the counter. For Yukoners, that's a very positive step.

A few moments ago, I spoke about my son, who has autism. One of our hopes is for Jack to one day bring home a T4 slip, so when I saw that Education has entered into a labour market development agreement for persons with disabilities with the federal government, I was pretty interested. The agreement is in effect from 2014 to 2018, and its overarching goal is to improve the employment outcomes of persons with disabilities. I personally think this is a great idea and I'd like to acknowledge the work of the Minister of Education in bringing this forward.

I'm appreciative of the leadership shown by the Premier. It is important to note that a stronger economy means we can do more on the social side. Our government has successfully built a better quality of life for Yukoners while rebuilding our economy. This spring 2014 budget is clearly a piece of a larger package and, over the next few minutes, I'd like to pay some attention to the broader context.

It is important to remember where we came from, because most of us sitting here will remember that, prior to the Yukon Party taking office in late 2002, Yukon was in the throes of a terrible economic recession. Our unemployment rate was far too high; our population was declining. Both

Opposition parties did their best to euthanize mining in the Yukon, and the Yukon's private sector economy was in need of a grade boost.

These were the challenges before us when Yukoners elected the Yukon Party government in 2002 and re-elected us in 2006. I know that both Opposition parties would prefer not to be reminded of the past but, Mr. Speaker, it is important for Yukoners to remember exactly what their choices are and the harm that policy choices from the Opposition parties can have on our economy and on our territory as a whole.

Our clear vision for moving forward together maintains our path to support our commitments to all Yukoners. We will continue down the road to improving upon achieving a better quality of life, building a prosperous, diversified Yukon economy, managing and protecting Yukon's environment and wildlife, and practising good government. Yukoners selected the Yukon Party. Yukoners selected us to lead the territory, because the Yukon Party team has the vision, the energy and the experience to meet these challenges head-on with confidence.

On October 11, 2011, Yukoners made a good choice to continue to prosper and grow under the stewardship of a re-elected Yukon Party government. Yukoners, as I've said before, are smart people. And as I've said before, members opposite like to tell folks that, if they ran Yukon, life would be so much better, yet we see very little vision from them. I'm very doubtful about things being better, but many know it would certainly be different.

It was in fact between 1996 and 2000, under the helm of the Opposition's time in power, that 2,855 more people moved out of Yukon than moved in. The track record of the Opposition is of economic collapse and the resulting decline in population, as Yukoners were forced to move to find work. A look at the other economic indicators — workforce numbers, unemployment rate and GDP — all show that the Yukon Party government has succeeded where the members opposite were unsuccessful.

I will hold the track record of this solid Yukon Party team up against either of the Opposition parties any day. The Yukon Party government will continue to use budgets to make considerate and strategic investments. In fact, under a Yukon Party government, our territory and our economy are continuing to grow.

Both parties opposite have demonstrated to Yukoners that their policy choices are bad for our economy and result in population decreases. The Yukon Party has in fact demonstrated that we can deliver growth and prosperity.

I don't share these comments in haste. I share them because I want to make the point that the Yukon Party made decisions to replace the failed policy of both parties opposite with policies that work for Yukoners. It's as simple as that.

I'd like to take a few minutes to provide an update to Yukoners on a few things the Yukon Party team has accomplished within my area of responsibility, because we've successfully used our budgets to achieve our platform commitments to Yukoners. We committed in partnership with Yukon First Nations and Yukon College to establish a law

enforcement career orientation program at the Northern Institute of Social Justice to prepare First Nations and women for careers in law enforcement or in the justice system.

Our Yukon Party government developed and has committed to continue to implement the *Yukon Substance Abuse Action Plan* that focuses on education, prevention, harm reduction, enforcement and treatment. Within the enforcement pillar, the Department of Justice established the SCAN unit, which continues to enforce the SCAN act.

Recently, Yukoners have seen an increase in print and on-line public service announcements, as well as radio announcements, with regard to safer communities and neighbourhoods. As a result, we have seen an increased number of activities to the branch. SCAN has collaborated with partners, such as Yukon Liquor Corporation and RCMP, on efforts to address illegal activity and associated harms. I would like to thank the staff of SCAN for a job very well done.

We have also ensured that the arrest processing unit includes access to medical resources for individuals requiring them. I am very much looking forward to the completion of the APU over the next few weeks. We have also supported an alcohol and drug service addiction counsellor for the Community Wellness Court, and have ensured that the correctional service staff and contract services are ongoing to support the Community Wellness Court.

Speaking of which, we have committed to support the Community Wellness Court to address specific social problems in the north, such as substance abuse and FASD, by emphasising individualized court orders and supervision treatment. Speaking about FASD, I was pleased to announce, with great support from my Yukon Party caucus colleagues, the FASD prevalence study that will be underway shortly. The entire country is watching Yukon on this front and I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all of my government caucus colleagues for their support of this very important project.

This government has invested in corrections infrastructure that supports the principles of public safety and offender accountability, such as the replacement for the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. Yukoners will likely also remember that we've implemented a new philosophy of corrections that emphasizes the protection of the public, holds offenders accountable, and provides appropriate opportunities for rehabilitation. I visit the correctional facility every few months and I am very pleased with the work that is being done by that team.

On another note, staffing is now complete for the new RCMP specialized response unit, which will better respond to sexualized assault and domestic violence. A performance framework has also been established for this very important initiative. The *Victims of Crime Act* that passed in the spring of 2010 has been supported with a number of public education initiatives outlining information on how victims of crime have rights. A victim of crime emergency fund, including emergency cell phones, has been implemented to address some of the emergency aspects of being victimized. We have

implemented the recommendations of the Internet Safety Advisory Committee to ensure that Yukoners are protected from cybercrime and Internet predators.

Over the last couple of years, I have been afforded time with the staff and management of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, and I applaud the partnership with the Minister of Education on files such as this to better protect our children and youth from on-line risks and sexual exploitation. As a result of our partnership, we've entered into a three-year agreement with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection to build awareness of the cybertip.ca website. This site hosts valuable information for both kids and parents.

In the fall of 2013, we had our second year hosting the Community Safety Awards, which were created in 2012 to recognize citizens who make significant contributions to community safety in the territory. I'd like to extend my most sincere appreciation and congratulations to the 2013 winners and I truly look forward to seeing our award winners at the 2014 awards this fall.

I'm also very proud that Yukon is working with governments of the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Canada to respond to the unique challenges of policing in the north. It has been two years now since Yukon negotiated a new 20-year territorial police service agreement, which reflects the unique nature of policing in the north and includes provisions for cost mitigation and harmonization of RCMP standards with best practices.

The Department of Justice also continues to respond to Justice-related needs of children who witness domestic violence and other forms of victimization. Federal funding for the former Our Way of Living Safely program, or the OWLS initiative, ran out, and new funding and information related to national best practices has resulted in a new program to assist children called "Lynx." There is good work being done here and all involved should feel very proud of their contributions to our territory.

I've also been extremely busy with the Department of Tourism and Culture. In fact, I'd like to read a letter that I recently provided to the media. It reads, "In 2013, the number of border crossings into Yukon increased by eight percent and reached an all-time high, according to data from the Canada Border Services Agency. Given that border crossings are a long-standing indicator of tourism visitation, this is a very positive sign for the tourism industry and the Yukon economy.

"The value of tourism to Yukon is indisputable. In total, the industry contributes about \$200 million to our annual private sector revenues, including money spent on local hotels, restaurants, and tour operators. When the additional impact of visitors who purchase their travel with Air North, Yukon's airline, is considered, the numbers tell a clear story of a growing Yukon tourism industry. Tourism is a strategic industry for Yukon, providing significant and sustainable growth opportunities. That's why the Department of Tourism and Culture, together with industry representatives, spent the first part of 2014 focusing on several key marketing initiatives that support even greater success. We are fortunate to have an exciting story to tell the world. People from all around the

globe are eager to experience the territory's natural beauty, abundant wildlife and rich culture, to say nothing of the opportunity for unparalleled adventure. Yukon's tourism products go a long way toward selling themselves.

"However, our job in government and in the Department of Tourism and Culture is to harness the industry's momentum and take strategic actions to ensure continued benefits to Yukoners. One of the most important steps we're taking is to further broaden the scope of our marketing work in performing markets, with initiatives such as our trade mission to Australia last month.

"You may not know it, but Australia is our second-largest overseas tourism market, accounting for almost 20 percent of our overseas travel. Recognizing the potential to deepen our relationship with Australian tourism partners, while promoting Yukon through Australian media, department officials and I travelled there in early February, to partake in Canada Corrobooree. This annual event is led by the Canadian Tourism Commission for the purpose of connecting Australia tour operators, wholesalers, media and retail travel agents with potential Canadian partners.

"The trip was a huge success. In addition to facilitating business-to-business meetings for the Wilderness Tourism Association of Yukon, we concluded five cooperative marketing agreements with tourism operators. These agreements are strategic tools that significantly increase our global marketing reach and impact. Partners match Tourism Yukon's marketing budget for specific initiatives, effectively doubling the total marketing investment.

"Through these types of agreements, we leverage more than \$1.8 million each year from partners toward selling Yukon as a destination. One of the agreements we signed in Australia was with Holland America, which already has a strong presence in the Yukon and has been integral to the tourism industries success.

"The agreement we concluded last month promotes its new Alaska/Yukon Land + Sea Journeys product in Australia while enabling Tourism Yukon to access the company's vast global marketing network. It is a great example of the mutual benefit that cooperative marketing provides to Yukon's tourism industry and to the territory as a whole.

"Moving forward, we will continue to work on similar initiatives, all with the ultimate goal of maximizing our return on marketing investment to promote our Yukon brand and grow revenues for Yukon businesses. I congratulate the many members of Yukon's tourism industry on their success. Last year may have been record-breaking, but if the past two months is any indication, the best is yet to come for Yukon's tourism industry."

Mr. Speaker, that letter was printed in the *Whitehorse Star*.

Speaking about overseas visitation, with the CanNor assistance of \$2 million over the past four years, the department has been able to pursue an enhanced overseas destination awareness marketing project. This initiative has been a great success, with overseas visitation to Yukon growing by 33 percent over the life of the project. CanNor

support of the project was time limited, with the funding to terminate at the end of March 2014. Given the success of this project, our Yukon Party government has decided to maintain the enhanced level of investment in overseas marketing with our own resources. Because of the support from my colleagues on this side of the Legislative Assembly, Tourism and Culture's marketing budget for 2014-15 has been increased by \$590,000 ongoing for this purpose, to which the members opposite have already indicated they will not support or vote for this.

The Department of Tourism and Culture continues to support programs such as the touring artist program and the Advanced Artist Award to provide assistance to visual and performing artists to enable them to conduct tours and to compete in southern markets. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party government established Culture Quest as a permanent fund and we've maintained the arts fund and the arts operating fund, which support groups such as the Yukon Art Society and the Yukon Film Society.

As minister, I continue to develop a greater appreciation for the important role that arts and culture play in contributing to the social and economic life in Yukon. The department will continue to provide assistance to the arts and cultural organizations and Yukon artisans.

We will also continue to promote exhibits, concerts, festivals and programs. We will also look for creative ways to promote multicultural events for new Canadians coming to Yukon.

I'm particularly proud of the work that the Department of Tourism and Culture does with industry, communities and First Nations to promote our solid Yukon brand that markets our territory as an attractive year-round destination.

We've enhanced the marketing of Yukon as a quality travel destination through strategic awareness campaigns, especially in relation to Yukon's traditional markets in the United States, Canada and Europe. Involving partners such as Air North, Yukon's airline, we can also promote affordable domestic and international air access to the territory.

We also work closely with the Yukon Convention Bureau, industry and Yukon communities to further promote the Yukon as a choice destination for hosting meetings, conventions and sports events. I recently had the pleasure of attending the Bravo and Golden Bravo awards hosted by the Yukon Convention Bureau, and I'd like to extend my appreciation to the winners of those awards for bringing in thousands of additional people to our territory last year.

We've also created a product development program to assist Yukon tourism operators in developing and enhancing the quality of their product. We continue our efforts to make areas like Kluane National Park more accessible to Yukoners and visitors from around the globe.

We also work very hard to further promote Yukon's artists and musicians, including emerging artists, by supporting creative and entertaining venues for the benefit of visitors from all over the world and Yukoners alike.

As well, strategic initiatives continue to support Yukon's heritage resource sector. We continue to explore options to

promote Yukon's incredible contribution to archeology and paleontology.

In fact, the archeology and paleontology teams have impressed me, to say the least. They have worked tirelessly to find new artifacts and fossils around our territory. The program manages the territory's fossil resources and inventories, curates Yukon fossils and conducts research on Yukon's ancient life and environments. The program is also involved in outreach and educational programs that include public lectures, classroom presentations, travelling fossil displays, scientific conferences and publications — as I said, impressive work to say the least.

We continue to analyze investments and marketing partnerships, projects, campaigns and programs funded or delivered by Tourism Yukon. We are strengthening and leveraging strategic partnerships in the tourism industry around the world.

The Department of Tourism and Culture, in conjunction with Yukon stakeholders, continues to deliver a consistent, compelling and solid Yukon brand. I am pleased to see the department consolidating and maximizing the efficiency of our marketing resources.

In conclusion, as people listen to the Yukon Party team deliver its reply to the Premier's budget speech, I suspect some common themes will develop — themes such as how important our economy is to our constituents and how the Yukon Party has again and again done great work to promote a healthy, sustainable economy.

I also suspect that people listening will hear what the Yukon Party is doing in areas such as environmental stewardship. I thank the Minister of Environment for his leadership and the good work he has done on things like the Peel land use plan to ensure the modifications meet the needs of all Yukoners, just to provide one example.

Our constituents will also better understand what we're doing to promote a better quality of life for Yukoners. Earlier I alluded to the leadership of the Minister of Health and Social Services, but it goes further than that. We'll hear about infrastructure and highway projects from the Minister of Highways and Public Works. We'll hear about the good work being done by the Minister of Community Services with regard to EMS, fire, and working with community partners to move Yukon forward.

We'll hear more about the good work that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is doing to build upon our economy with initiatives such as the increase in funding to the mineral exploration program and the work being done to ensure that we have the power required as our territory continues to grow and increase demands.

From the Minister of Education, we'll hear about new and ongoing initiatives with the Department of Education. One example of this is the pilot project at F.H. Collins geared toward students who are motivated to pursue both sport and education. The Yukon Party believes in making investments in our future leaders.

Looking through this budget and reflecting on his budget speech, it is clear and it is evident that we are afforded great

leadership under our Premier and Minister of Finance. Yukoners are smart people. Yukoners have elected the Yukon Party to govern this territory for three consecutive mandates, and Yukoners know that the Yukon Party will deliver what the opposition parties have proven that they are simply unable to do.

Mr. Elias: I'm honoured to stand before you today to speak to this 2014-15 budget. I can honestly say that this is one of the best — if not the best — budgets that I've read in my time here as MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin.

As I stand here today as the MLA for the Vuntut Gwitchin riding and the community of Old Crow, I can assure my constituents once again of my commitment to them, our vision, our priorities, goals and objectives. I want to thank my constituents for their trust in me serving them. I am a Vuntut Gwitchin at heart and, most of all, I am Vuntut Gwitchin for my children and grandchildren whom I love so much.

I know that ultimately our children's security will depend partially on our government's work to set the stage for them to have access to the same education and job opportunities that previous generations have enjoyed. We owe to all generations throughout our territory — in particular, we owe to our youth — a chance to contribute to our Yukon society and to build a secure future. Our youth will work toward that, but they can only be sure of achieving it if we set the stage for them and we encourage and enable them.

Out of the gloom and pessimism of the Opposition I choose to find the great opportunities for an era of growth, progress and optimism in our territory. I believe this budget does reflect the needs of Yukoners.

I'd like to use a quote. It says: "If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in little matters. Excellence is not an exception, it is a prevailing attitude."

That attitude of excellence exists on this side of the House and I am proud to be a part of that atmosphere. Mr. Speaker, like in any Legislative Assembly within the Commonwealth, there are lines of division and heated debates, as there should be. But, to me, what makes our Assembly special is that we are able to come to many unanimous agreements on shared commitments to our territory's citizens in making their day-to-day lives that much better.

Our government has charted a course for Yukoners, a course that will create jobs for our families in every corner of our territory. Our fiscal responsibility speaks for itself as we have, once again, a healthy \$70.2-million surplus, — a safety net, if you will, Mr. Speaker. Make no mistake: we will face new challenges, but the significance of those challenges we will face will not be overwhelming and we will not hide or shy away from solving them.

Under the leadership of our Premier, I am confident that we will all have the courage to make the difficult decisions and hard choices that lie ahead. I say confident, because I have seen our Premier and our ministers drawing their strength and inspiration from so many Yukoners over the years, around our great territory. I get much of my motivation

from past and present leaders from Old Crow, leaders who gave so much without any chance of reward, so that we could receive healthier lands, waters and wildlife to pass on to future generations.

On the international stage, I was once again privileged to recently travel to Washington, D.C., to have the opportunity to press our case to Canadian and United States officials about issues that concern us all. It is so important for us to be vigilant and seek out face-to-face meetings with our international partners. I had the pleasure of discussing our concerns, providing some awareness and advocacy, and most importantly, saying thank you on so many issues, some of which included the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and our continued goal of wilderness declaration for the coastal plain of the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd.

We also discussed the Porcupine caribou herd's management on the Canadian side and the new population estimates of 197,000 strong animals. We discussed the Fortymile caribou herd and our objective of expanding their range in the Yukon. We also reported the good news that they have recently been using habitat that they have not used since the 1950s and their population estimate is now above 52,000.

There is the crucial issue of the Yukon River chinook salmon, where conservation and escapement targets have not been met in five of the last seven years. We have experienced very poor chinook salmon runs and the biologists are predicting yet another terrible run this year again.

I expressed how these and many other issues affect the socio-economic and cultural well-being of our citizens and that we must continue to live up to our international agreements, and that we looked forward to continued cooperation on shared interests with our neighbours. I would like to extend my thank you and mahsi' cho to the Premier for inviting me to address these and other important issues with him.

The government is making new significant investments — whether it be \$3.45 million that is being provided to continue the interim electrical rebate, or the small business tax rate that is being reduced from four to three percent, or the \$630,000 in increases to the Yukon mineral exploration program, to a total of \$1.4 million, to \$600,000 for functional planning for the Klondike Highway, Freegold Road and Nahanni Range Road — whether it's the \$600,000 plus \$150,000 from three First Nation development corporations to prepare a business case for building a second fibre optic data cable connection to the south to increase availability of data services to the Yukon; whether it's the \$85.264 million for the largest transportation budget ever to be worked on highways and bridges and airports, and also the \$8.2 million under the Shakwak agreement for the north Alaska Highway, the \$7.8 million for pavement overlay of the Haines Road, the \$8.77 million for the reconstruction of the Robert Campbell Highway, kilometre 97 to 107; whether it's the \$5.5 million for construction of the new single-span Tatchun Creek bridge; whether it's monies in my constituency for \$50,000 for the caribou education effort; whether it's \$1 million for new waste-water treatment for Ross River that's being designed

this year, with plans for operation in 2016; whether it's \$150,000 for F.H. Collins furniture and equipment; whether it's \$367,000 for an FASD prevalence study; or \$1.675 million for upgrade of a number of social housing properties in 2014-15; or \$1.284 million for the schematic design of the Sarah Steele Building replacement project, to be tendered in 2015 and construction completed in the summer of 2016; or — and I will expand on this — the \$2.7-million contribution for a partnership with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, and potentially Canada, to build a community and recreation centre in the community of Old Crow. The list goes on and on and on, Mr. Speaker.

There has been an issue that I want to address in the Assembly today. The approved *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* is a plan that I can work with and support. I advised over 60 of my constituents of that position in the last public meeting I held in Old Crow and in numerous home visits. We had a very frank but respectful community discussion about this issue. It went very, very well.

I have read this 200-plus page approved plan for public lands in our territory three times. When I say I can work with it, I can work with 73 percent of the Peel River watershed being withdrawn from oil and gas. I can work with the 16 land management units and the 26 policy recommendations and the 11 research recommendations. I can work with the upcoming park planning. I can work with our territory being number-one in Canada in protected areas. I can work with a 19,800-square kilometre protected area. I can work with less than one percent of these lands being developed at any given time. I can work with this plan being complementary to the *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan*.

Mr. Speaker, the Peel area is 67,430 square kilometers. The country of Ireland is 69,000 square kilometres. At this point in time, I want to tell a little story, because I was at the very first meeting seven or eight years ago in Dawson City. There were dozens and dozens of people there, and everybody spoke around the table. I was at that meeting. What I heard was difficult for my ears. I am on record somewhere. I cautioned the commission members, and I cautioned those Yukoners in the audience, that this *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* is just that: it's a land use plan. It's not a protected area plan.

When I look back on my experiences within north Yukon and what our people had to go through to ensure that 4,345 square kilometres of Vuntut National Park was protected for all time, and 6,500 square kilometres was protected in Fishing Branch, and 19,000 square kilometres of every drop of water that flows past Old Crow from the Old Crow Flats is protected — the people of Old Crow have been through this protected areas issue before in the public. When I look at what we've experienced in north Yukon and I look at what has been protected under the protected areas, in the Peel River watershed that equates to two Fishing Branches and one national park in one fell swoop — that is protected in our territory today.

The total of protected areas in the Yukon is now 82,000 square kilometres. The country of Austria is 82,445 square

kilometres and has a population of 8.5 million people. When I say I can work with this approved plan on public lands, you bet I can. Seventeen percent of our total land base is under some form of protected area, which is a profound and very relevant piece of information that Yukoners should consider.

Land use plans are incredibly complex documents, and it doesn't do them any justice to attempt to explain them in a few paragraphs or in a speech in the Assembly where I have limited time.

I do recommend that all Yukoners review the approved plan itself and consult the website at www.emr.gov.yk.ca/lands/peel_watershed. Ultimately, I truly believe that the land use plan that we have approved for the Peel watershed is balanced, one that provides a significant level of protection for large swaths of area while also a limited amount of responsible economic activity in other areas. I know that it hasn't made everybody happy. I have heard from some that it allows entirely too much activity and doesn't restrict industry enough, and I've heard that it prohibits too much entirely and is too restrictive. There is no doubt that this was a difficult decision, but I do believe it was the right one, and I truly appreciate the thoughtfulness of so many Yukoners' comments to me and especially of my constituents in Old Crow with regard to the Peel River watershed. There's no doubt that debate will continue about this over the course of this spring sitting, Mr. Speaker, and I will have more to say.

In my riding, there is \$50,000 contributed in this budget to the caribou education effort. There is \$46,000 to recreational programs in Old Crow. There is a \$60,000 commitment to the Rampart House heritage restoration project and, just recently, we've almost completed the \$700,000 commitment in partnership with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation on the construction of a winter road that also brought in a newer fire truck for our community that, unfortunately, had to be used immediately upon its arrival.

Mr. Speaker, I want to expand on and give a little history with regard to one of the line items. It's no secret in this Assembly that I've been advocating for and working for it for a number of years. That's the \$2.7 million allocated to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation in partnership to build a community and recreation facility in Old Crow. I want to thank the Cabinet and the Premier for recognizing this demonstrated need in our community of Old Crow because, again, it's no secret that our community has considered this a priority.

Way back in 2002, we were talking about this priority in the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation at Tlo-Kut, and the elders spoke at that time. They said if we're going to build something like this, nobody can get paid for it. This has to be an effort like we used to do.

If we wanted a church, we built it. If we wanted a house, we went and got logs and built it ourselves. We just didn't write letters to the government asking for money. That's exactly what transpired here.

With a little bit of history with regard to this project, in 2004, a Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation General Assembly resolution was passed to undertake a feasibility study and to

seek partnerships for that. In 2005, another Vuntut Gwitchin General Assembly resolution was passed to develop a volunteer working group and seek out funding sources to begin work. In 2006, another Vuntut Gwitchin General Assembly resolution was passed for a working group to develop and design and come up with actual costs of the building and to look for partners.

After the committee was formed, we developed a community questionnaire and conducted several public meetings over the course of a couple of years. The feasibility study was completed and funded by the Yukon territorial government for the amount of \$10,000 in April 2007. In 2007, another general assembly resolution was passed by Vuntut Gwitchin citizens in support of financial allocation toward the project and for the working group to move forward and determine actual costs of the complex. The Vuntut Gwitchin Government provided \$60,000 to the working group.

A community petition was also submitted to the Legislative Assembly in May 2007. A public meeting and progress report was done in June and December 2007, and the Old Crow Recreation Society was created.

In 2008, the working group raised \$136,000 for the development of the schematic drawings, to determine the accurate construction costs of the community and recreation centre. Finalization of the building site and commitment to use the waste heat from the ATCO generators was achieved in 2009. Completion of the final drawings and securing funds in 2009 and 2010, with the help of the community, was also accomplished. We also developed an operation and maintenance plan for this facility in 2010.

Then, an important issue on this timeline is when the world recession hit and this project came, to put it lightly, to a screeching halt because priorities around the world, right down to local communities, drastically changed. But we didn't give up, Mr. Speaker. We continued with this effort and we continued our advocacy work. It's such a pleasure to stand on the floor of this Assembly and announce that our territorial public government is seeking a partnership with another level of government, and hopefully the federal government, to achieve this community priority. I've watched small communities — when community and recreational centres get built, the fabric of that community changes.

Case in point: recently in Iskut, British Columbia, they just opened their new community and recreation centre, and they have three teams coming up already, participating in the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament that's going to start tomorrow at 7:00 a.m. here in our capital city.

On that matter, the Gwich'in Spitfires and the Gwich'in Braves, two youth teams that I am coaching, hopefully come Sunday at about 7:00 p.m., will be holding some type of medal around their little necks. I am so proud that they are all coming and travelling from all over the territory to participate in this wonderful community event.

The concept of this facility was borne through years of community collaboration and volunteerism, and I thank my constituents for their direction and involvement in making this commitment happen. This facility will strengthen the fabric of

our community and is a great example of our Yukon government partnering with First Nations to benefit Yukoners.

There are some unsung heroes behind the scenes that have worked tirelessly on this project for years and were not paid one cent. Mr. Greg Charlie, Mr. Ron Dodd, Ms. Maxine Netro-Fehr, Mr. Kenny Tetlich and Mike Rispin deserve a lot of accolades and were instrumental in the advancement of this wonderful initiative, so I thank them.

As I said earlier, the winter road to Old Crow was achieved this year and I will be receiving a detailed briefing on the project in its entirety soon and will be sharing those points with the Legislature from time to time during the spring sitting. It is important to note that one of the major objectives for the back haul, or the trucks leaving the community, was achieved, and the waste metal and dangerous goods from Old Crow have now exited the community.

It is also important to note the vigilance of the truck drivers. Just one way from the Dempster Highway to and from the community of Old Crow took 35 hours. So there was a lot of patience and diligence that needed to happen on behalf of the truck drivers to get to and from the community, but everybody did it in a safe and secure manner.

Mr. Speaker, we have our new store. The Arctic Co-op has been delivered to Old Crow. We have several residential houses that have been delivered to Old Crow and there are so many happy constituents who were able to ship their personal effects and household effects for free, and also their personal vehicles to assist in the development of their small businesses and so on and so forth. So it's another success story in partnership that I wanted the Assembly to note.

In terms of land-based experiential learning, this spring the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School camp will begin. This is another initiative where government-to-government partnership has been a resounding success. It is my hope that our new Minister of Education will soon be travelling with me to the community of Old Crow and out on the land to Old Crow Flats to attend this camp. It's such a neat thing to see elementary school students learning about science and about their culture and their language, all out on the land, and how their cultural skills and their values can benefit today's western society. To see that program grow over the last three or four years has been so exciting, and it has been a great initiative for our community.

Chief Linklater says, and I quote: "Students themselves saying I can't wait to go back to school next year. How many kids say I can't wait to go back to school next year so this has I think been a great success." This camp was well-attended and I hope to be there soon.

There was an issue about hydraulic fracture stimulation in North Yukon and oil and gas issues that I also had to address with my constituents. The leadership of our community is so exciting to me because, when they saw the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing in our territory get approval from this Assembly and with a mandate, our community of Old Crow created a similar committee. They just came back from the Fort Nelson region and the Alberta region, and they are going to be going to some

places in British Columbia to do their due diligence as a community so that they can have an informed public dialogue among our community's citizens with regard to the issues of oil and gas — one of them being hydraulic fracture stimulation. That's another good news story.

I'm proud of our citizens, my constituents in Old Crow, who have taken it upon themselves to spend their time and effort and capacity to ensure that they have the best possible dialogue in our community and can participate in the Yukon-wide dialogue as well.

Through the leadership of our chair from the committee, we will be going to Old Crow and having public hearings in Old Crow. The community looks forward to our attendance there as well.

Our government's partnerships with First Nations are shining lights across the territory and have the potential to unleash major economic benefits to our entire territory and, at the same time, build healthy, vibrant communities. We will not lose sight of our shared goals: supporting job creation; protecting the environment; and providing support and protection for the most vulnerable among us. We have to ensure that we do what we can to maintain a strong economy, so that we have a secure tomorrow. I believe this budget is doing just that. The future looks bright in our territory that we love so much.

As a territory and with our government recognizing the autonomous self-governing First Nations that have law-making authority over their lands and citizens, in a cooperative effort with our federal and municipal governments we will ensure — whether obliged to or not — a focused and progressive agreement to make our Yukon the best place in the circumpolar north to live, play and work.

This is a great budget for a great territory, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Barr: I want to first welcome all members to the House. I haven't had a chance to do that and I really appreciate being back here with all of you to do the peoples' work. I would also like to say in my opening remarks that I am thankful for the support, not only of the people in the House and my colleagues, but the people in my constituency and around the Yukon. I wasn't able to be here during the last budget speech.

Those of us who know some of the issues, personal family stuff that we all have been dealing with over the past year — family members dealing with cancer — I was sitting reflecting and listening to some of the opening remarks and thinking back that I didn't get that opportunity last year. But I do know that it was a welcome comfort from the extended well-wishes of not only members in the house, but people at large in the Yukon that just wished for those good things. I continue to deal with those issues at a personal level and I also know that so many of us do have prayers and offer support to all of us who are dealing with this epidemic, I might say.

I want to thank my constituents for placing their trust in me to serve them as the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. It is my honor to stand here on their behalf and respond to the budget speech. I know every member of this House

represents many Yukoners who came out and voted for each and every one of us. As I reflect on my own riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, I find it a welcome nod to those who state that they did not vote for me in this last election. They voted for other parties.

However, over the last two and a half years, I have been able to meet with constituents from all political stripes and we've been able to work together in finding common ground within Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, not only on one or two issues, but there's a great dialogue that's happening out there and a willingness to work together to accomplish common goals.

So I would also like to extend my appreciation for not only the staff in the Yukon New Democratic Party, but the other MLAs that I am truly honoured to work with. I feel very supported and also very confident in all those in office who I am honoured to spend time with over the last few years and on an ongoing basis, and I look forward to continuing that relationship.

I've been living in the Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes riding for I think it is 27 years now, as was mentioned yesterday, at Crag Lake. It's beautiful in the Southern Lakes. Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes — I would not want to be any other place. When I first moved there I thought, "Well, this is okay for now," and now I can't imagine any other place. I truly appreciate all the folks in the Southern Lakes region and Mount Lorne who feel the same way. They love that area.

We're in such great proximity to Whitehorse, Alaska, Watson Lake and Atlin. We're an hour away from all this splendour and opportunity for future economic growth, but also family who can flourish. I think, from those folks who go to the schools out in that area who are bused in from the schools or the home-schooling — there are several home-schools in that area. I have the privilege of attending so many events, from Marsh Lake to the Jackalope, to the ski races, to the pancake breakfast there, to attending music activities. Tagish has the same things: pancake breakfasts, music opportunities, fairs that have evolved over the last few years at the community centre. Carcross is the same. There are events, especially with the new Carcross Commons, which seems to have revitalized so much attention and people coming to Carcross.

Mount Lorne volunteerism — as with all the communities I just mentioned, is kind of mind-boggling to see all the events that continue day in and day out, month after month with the effort that the people in all of those communities put out because they love each and every individual community that they live in.

In Carcross, as with many other communities and First Nation communities in the Yukon, we've had a few potlatches in the last few weeks and we will be attending another one here in Whitehorse. The resiliency of the rural communities when dealing with people passing on later in their years, elders — or some of us have loved ones who are passing on at a young age — and how we come together not only in the communities that I'm in but across the Yukon — we can stop and take the time to comfort each other in those times of need.

I feel very proud to know that I live in a territory that has so much goodness — the continual fundraisers that we see that go on, whether it is for the Peel or the Cancer Society to help with people falling through the cracks.

We're talking about the Friends of the Ross River Footbridge — not only depending on the government, but to come together as a community. The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin was speaking to this. The community comes forward and puts in their part. It's safe to say that within the rural communities, it has been my experience that there is a handful of volunteers who show up time and again, year after year, and who volunteer for the volunteer fire department, EMS, EMO, school councils and pancake breakfasts. They are there all the time — and just a huge shout-out to people who make the Yukon work behind the scenes, who have so much to offer, and who make the Yukon just an awesome place to live in.

I want to say that the role of the Official Opposition in the Yukon Legislative Assembly is to hold the Yukon government to account for the responsible and effective management of this territory, but also to applaud when there are areas where we see a different vision — we as the Yukon New Democratic Party and others in the Yukon — and may not see where the Yukon Party is of the same mind of a vision.

So I think that within this budget that I'll make more comments on today — the government belongs to us all, and it should represent all of us when it decides how to spend from the public purse and should be able to utilize this purse to the best use of our common resources for all of us — not one agenda, not one group, but all of us.

I'll be reiterating some of the points I've heard in previous comments today, and the reason for that is because I believe they deserve to be restated. They're important. They're not only important to me, but they're important to Yukoners at large.

I would like to salute the hard-working employees of the Yukon government. They do the real work that makes a difference to Yukoners, delivering the public services that we all rely on. Also, public servants work under different political leaders with different priorities. They deserve acknowledgment for the hard work that they do.

We are committed in the Yukon New Democratic office to learning as much as we can about the critic areas. We're grateful to all the people who share their experience and help us bring forward constructive and relevant ideas that are meaningful to the people we represent.

As opposition politicians, we know how important it is to really listen and offer an alternative vision of how to better meet the needs and priorities of Yukoners. I know that sometimes it baffles me how far apart we are sometimes. But that's a reality of what we are all here working with, yet sometimes I go, "Holy jeez, how are we ever going to come together?" I do think that it is effort well spent and I know I will be continuing to do my best at being open-minded, but also standing strong in the issues that I believe in and that I believe that many fellow Yukoners believe in.

I will first speak about the 2014-15 Yukon budget in broad terms. The Yukon is the beneficiary of a large amount of federal transfer monies. Sadly this government has wasted too much of it.

Over the last 12 years, Yukoners have observed that having big budgets does not translate into big results for our communities. Too much time and money has been wasted on capital projects, on court cases, on poor planning. The Yukon Party has simply not developed a sustainable and resilient economy, one that benefits all Yukoners and Yukon citizens.

There could be no doubt that this governments approach with First Nations is harmful to us all. No one is winning, except maybe a bunch of lawyers. The court cases are creating economic insecurity and irritating old hurts. The number of these court cases is continually mounting. We just heard of another one yesterday. I listened to various chiefs, not only in the Yukon — I was speaking with the Tetlit Gwich'in leadership — say, with the Peel, for example — that the amount of their people's money that would otherwise go toward school, education, environment programs, seniors and elders programs, and housing programs — because they feel strongly about the issue, they are setting aside huge dollars to combat the plan that the Yukon Party has put forward.

I have to ask myself how much money do Yukon taxpayers not have available to them for similar programs that are more respectful of ongoing working relationships with Yukon First Nations and the desires of the Yukon people — how much more we could continue if we could find more middle ground in some of these areas.

When I was listening to the member who was just speaking — the Member for Old Crow — and speaking about the efforts of the people of Old Crow and the Vuntut Gwitchin, I remember of some of the struggles that I took time out and attended and advocated in my own way, and supported the lands of the Vuntut Gwitchin, the water, the Porcupine caribou herd — not only myself, but many other Yukoners and other First Nations of the north — the Tetlit Gwich'in, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Na Cho Nyäk Dun — all First Nations in the struggles to maintain the Porcupine caribou herd. I am happy that Old Crow and Vuntut Gwitchin are getting — and have — those areas protected. Their concerns — that we also stood in to support — that now is a reality that I would be very proud also to say that the Tetlit Gwich'in, the Na Cho Nyäk Dun, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other First Nations are able to stand and state the same — that they're happy that they're getting the same validity in their vision for their people and their areas, as the Vuntut Gwitchin, as others are receiving.

Although there are — and I'll name them as I go along — positive projects within the Yukon Party's budget that I'm happy to see, I will not be supporting it because it's not enough for what I hear from Yukoners. That's why we're here — to work hard to bring those areas more in compliance with a win-win for all of us, so we can all prosper — every man, woman and child — and the environment that we will need to sustain us long before we're sitting in this room.

Economies are about relationships — open, respectful and mutual relations between individuals, groups, among governments and between governments and civil society. Quality of life is about having a job that pays enough to afford the basics — decent housing and food.

Yukoners are hardy and they are flexible and adaptable, but prices are high. Under this government's watch, the costs of housing and food are rising faster than the wages. The gap between the rich and poor is growing and that ultimately is a disadvantage to the whole community.

The government, it seems, has truly no vision for a diverse, sustainable Yukon economy. They only seem to have eyes for one-time extraction of raw resources and it seems to make them blind to other viable and thriving sectors, like tourism. This is going to be a hard budget to support. It just does not connect with what my NDP caucus colleagues and I are hearing out in the community, as we travel around and participate in events.

The Yukon Party approach does not reflect the needs and aspirations of Yukoners. It is a dated approach, reminding many of us of the old colonial ways of thinking — old, tired ways of not relating. It seems the Yukon Party forgets that the First Nation agreements were all about all of us in the Yukon. It's not about us-versus-them ways of relating. With all the lawsuits, the Yukon Party seems to see the agreements as a win-or-lose game, but there was no winner taking all in the negotiated agreements. The agreements are about respectful relations. When we have a government that knows how to respect relations, all Yukoners will benefit.

Within the mining sector, we need to modernize our mining legislation. It's not going to go away, no matter how many lures the Yukon Party throws at the issue. It's better to just do what legislators do: develop better legislation.

Courts are not the right place to develop legislation. Why not work toward creating the relationships and the kind of legislation that will ensure the long-term viability of the resource extraction industries in Yukon, and ensure a lasting financial legacy for future generations? I recall the Yukon Forum — a missed opportunity to build the exact relationships I'm speaking of.

The Premier's Budget Address repeatedly emphasized the record capital spending projected this year. It is hard not to remember the amount of capital mismanagement this government is responsible for. Maybe they've learned — one can only hope.

A report on government spending in Canada done by the C.D. Howe Institute was just released this week. The report gave the Yukon government a failing grade for its ongoing mismanagement of Yukon's finances.

The C.D. Howe report says that the Yukon is among the worst jurisdictions in Canada for meeting its budgeting targets. The government has dismissed the report's findings, with the excuse that territorial financing is more difficult to budget because so much of the revenue comes from federal programs.

The NDP believes Yukoners deserve better. The Premier said his government is focused on growing the economy. With

the growth rate for last year at one percent, the government is clearly not succeeding.

Tourism is the one thriving industry that is helping to shield Yukon's economy from the negative consequences of the downturn in the mining sector. Yet this government is not building on the success in this sector. It has not really listened to the industry associations. With a \$1-billion budget, the government can only come up with an additional \$590,000 for the overseas tourism marketing budget.

The CanNor funding is ending, and we believe on this side of the House that the Yukon government has the ability to build — not just get back in line with what has been done, but really be bold and honour the tourism industry by putting forward money that I spoke of earlier today — \$2.5 million — with a vision beyond that that would not only just keep the same old, same old at par, but really put forward and recognize the tourism industry as it does and build on the efforts that we have all been working toward.

It took the crash of commodity prices to get the Yukon Party to even acknowledge the tourism sector's success. But where the budget for the Department of Tourism and Culture has grown by approximately \$3 million over the past five years, that increase is dwarfed by the close to \$30-million increase for Energy, Mines and Resources over the same time period — \$30 million for EMR. We can certainly put in an additional \$2.5 million to bolster our marketing opportunities in a sustainable sector.

The tourism sector is an area that is here, it's there even when market prices fall. We should be pushing forward; we should be enhancing these.

Now is the time to build on the success of the CanNor funding for tourism marketing. Now is the time to make that strategic public investment. Investing in tourism pays off. As I was stating, it brings direct and indirect benefits to not only every tourism operator in Yukon, but many unrelated businesses. The general rule of thumb is that the return on investment from tourism marketing is 28:1 — sound investment and one in which the Yukon Party has chosen to underinvest. That's our belief. That's the belief of many Yukoners.

I would like to also comment on the quality of life of the people in the Yukon communities. Yukon government has responsibilities in many areas that impact the quality of life of Yukoners and their communities. Health care for example — the approach to health care here has seen a massive increase in costs but all that spending has failed to deliver improved health outcomes for Yukon patients and families. One would hope that it has but, quite frankly, all this government has after 12 years is hope. It has not coordinated data-gathering mechanisms and it has not developed systems to utilize the data it does gather to modify or eliminate programs that no longer deliver the intended outcomes.

Yukoners will be paying millions of dollars for years for the Yukon Party's political decision to build acute care hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City.

Some Hon. Member: (inaudible)

Mr. Barr: Why would we applaud for a lack of vision? I can't understand that.

Yukoners will be paying millions — I will restate that — maybe it wasn't understood. Yukoners will be paying millions of dollars for years for the Yukon Party's decision to build acute care hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City. Despite the findings of the 2008-09 health care review and the follow-up in the community report, *Taking the Pulse*, the Yukon Party gave direction to the YHC to take over and transform the Watson Lake and Dawson facilities to acute care hospitals.

It was a political decision to not listen to Yukoners and ignore the need to conduct a proper needs assessment before starting to build, as the needs assessment that was completed last year in response to the Auditor General's scathing 2013 report on the Yukon Hospital Corporation put it. We still do not know the final bill for the new buildings. We do not know the expected annual operating costs of the new facilities. Last fall, the government did not even indicate the total cost of outstanding court cases and liens against the hospital property.

What we do know is the Yukon Party government has not been listening to Yukoners. Yukoners have said they want to have their babies close to home, but the new, expensive hospitals do not allow for that. Yukoners have said they want to keep their elders close to home too, but the government is planning to warehouse 300 seniors in Whitehorse.

Yukoners have said that they do not want seniors to see their last days in acute care beds, but the government has no territorial end-of-life strategy and there are no palliative care beds.

The territory lacks an integrated system to deal with the huge toll that substance abuse plays in our communities. Liquor is the third largest source of revenue for the Yukon government. But the costs of our consumption of alcohol are impossible to calculate, given the extent of the ongoing impacts from drinking and driving, from drinking while pregnant and from all of the ongoing related health care costs. This government promised a mental health strategy a few years ago and has delivered nothing.

Better late than never — at the Auditor General's urging, the Yukon Party finally did a needs assessment for what they built as acute care hospitals. I quote from that needs assessment now: "Expanded management of mental health services in home communities is essential." Not listening to Yukoners is costing us all too heavily.

As I said, I know that I am not going to get a chance to go over all of my notes. I do appreciate that there is going to be money spent. First of all, I'll say that there's money in this budget for a fire hall in Carcross. That will be welcome, to look at that happening.

I'm happy to see Beaver Creek receiving their fire hall and that it's going to be moving forward. It is a bit of a bone for the folks of Carcross to still remember that they were next in line. It's now on the table, so that's great.

I'd like to thank the Minister of Community Services for going out to Carcross. I had invited him, and it was in January, maybe early February, that he did attend, and the

people are thankful that he did tour the community club, as requested, and acknowledged the ideas of possibly a fire hall and a community club. I know the fire marshal was there and some of the members of the local LAC were there. They're happy for that, that there are conversations, and it would be welcomed by the community for that to go forward.

I would like to say, as I was listening to the member from Old Crow, that community centre, like other infrastructure in Old Crow, was put up by members of the community — the original community centre. It was their work. They got it out, they had work bees, and I listened to the seniors and elders of that community who took the time to do that, and who have been — long before I can even remember — they've been fighting to have it replaced. So thanks for the movement on that.

I would like to also acknowledge that the Conrad campground is coming forward. I would like to state that, in a memorandum of understanding, also within that the marina is part of the plans. I can't help but also state that these are projects — with the final agreement of Carcross-Tagish First Nation — were to be implemented prior to this.

Also, the marina — the boat launch, where it was moved — it's my understanding in speaking with some of the elders that although the boat launch and the marina area have been moved from the old White Pass place to where it exists today, it was never fully completed as it was in the plans. I really have to state that, although we are happy to see those things happening, they've been long awaited to be completed and moved on.

When I think of the people who are still struggling day to day in their addictions throughout the territory, who have no place to live, who are couch-surfing — and not just young adults but teens who are finding places through the winter still, who I speak to — will move into abandoned places and a group of them pool the blankets and huddle up to get through the cold winter nights. We still have a long way to go to honour the folks who have no place to live — and some, through no reason of their own, can't afford the rents. Some people are on fixed incomes. Some want to just be at the Salvation Army because of their fear for their family members. That is their home; they go there each night if they can get in. Those are still real issues that I think we struggle with and that we're going to have to do more about for Yukoners. We believe that housing is a right on this side of the House, a right by all.

The after-care and addiction is a continued message we hear of throughout the territory that I don't see in this budget, nor in past budgets by many governments that have never really fully recognized the swath that addiction has, the impacts that it has on the Yukon. I am happy to hear that within the Yukon Liquor Corporation there is movement for social responsibility. That is something that I brought up several times — that we are looking at finally recognizing that is a full-time position that needs to be in place.

With that in mind, they may sound small and they may not really count in the big picture of mining and fracking and all of these things that take up our time, but those are very real

day-to-day situations that people live with — people who are just trying to survive. We hear a lot of those stories, and to articulate the survival of people on a day-to-day basis who don't have time to be even voicing their opinions or showing up to vote, because all they can best do is either find a place to live at night, get a few meals, or try to be there with their kids — or the grandparents who are looking after their kids.

I think we need to do more. We need to do more in supporting the foster parents. We need to do more in supporting the Yukon Foster Parents Association, the people who decide in the Yukon to take over responsibility and go over and above where others, for unknown reasons, are not able to look after their own children. We need to support them in a huge way. They are really the backbone of this territory — the people like that who do those kinds of things.

I just want to thank you for the time that I've been able to share here today. I appreciate those folks who listened and I look forward to working with everyone.

Hon. Mr. Kent: It's my pleasure to respond to the 2014-15 budget as well. I congratulate the Premier and my caucus and Cabinet colleagues for putting together what I and many others consider to be one of the best budgets that has ever been presented in this territory for a number of reasons.

Like the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes did in his opening address, I would like to welcome everyone back to the House for the spring sitting, and especially the Member for Klondike in being acclaimed the Leader of the Liberal Party and removing that interim tag from his title. I may stand corrected, but I believe he is the first Member for Klondike to be more than an interim leader of a political party. Mr. Jenkins in the Yukon Party time served as interim leader when he was the sole member of his party in the House. Congratulations to the MLA for Klondike for being acclaimed Leader of the Liberal Party.

As I mentioned, I am very, very proud of this budget and I wanted to spend my entire time speaking of all of the good things in there, but something caught my ear earlier today during debate by the Leader of the Official Opposition with respect to a little bit of — for lack of a better phrase — perhaps some EMR bashing, and I need to address that.

The Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Whitehorse Centre, in her budget reply questioned the officials at the Oil and Gas Resources branch in Energy, Mines and Resources and wondered out loud what they did. As many of our hard-working public sector officials do, they were listening to the proceedings of the Legislature today, and I was able to get some of the past year's accomplishments very quickly from Oil and Gas Resources and officials at Energy, Mines and Resources.

Again, this industry is something that has been active in the Yukon for an awfully long time. We've seen the Kotaneelee fields, the producing wells down there, contribute between \$45 million and \$50 million in royalties to the Yukon government over the past number of years. Of course, those wells are in decline but it is still a significant amount for spending on important things for Yukoners like education and

health care and housing and many of the other services that we know are important to our citizens.

Right now Northern Cross Yukon is conducting one of the largest 3D seismic programs in the country, in Eagle Plains, employing as many as 100 people on-site. Those 100 people certainly appreciate what's happening in the oil and gas industry.

Again, I found that for the Leader of the Official Opposition to question what the officials do was very disappointing, and I will inform the House what some of the accomplishments of those individuals have been over the past year. There are actually nine full-time equivalents, or FTE staff, at the Oil and Gas Resources branch, or OGR, and they are assisted by one legal counsel from Justice.

In the past year, some of the accomplishments made by that branch include the enactment of the natural gas processing regulation. The OGR took two parcels in Eagle Plains through the entire disposition process to a call for bids. They reviewed, approved and licensed the Watson Lake bi-fuel project. They reviewed, approved and licensed the Northern Cross 3D seismic project that I spoke of and that is currently employing as many as 100 people at peak this winter, of which 30 percent were Yukoners. Many of them were VGFN citizens or have Yukon-based businesses.

OGR fulfilled the duty to consult where necessary to ensure aboriginal rights and title were fully considered and accommodated where necessary prior to approving projects. They executed benefit agreements for these two projects with the proponents and the affected First Nations to provide employment, training and business opportunities. Those First Nations, as mentioned, are the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun.

OGR is reviewing the Yukon Energy Corporation's LNG project and is involved in the review of the proposed Casino mine project, specifically its proposed use of LNG. Both of these projects are being led, of course, by the Executive Council Office as they are executive committee screenings under the environmental assessment process that we have.

The Oil and Gas Resources branch undertook emergency action to stabilize well B-62 in Eagle Plains in collaboration with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. This action was taken to safeguard the environment, and particularly the waters flowing past Old Crow. This year we will be properly abandoning this well and there are dollars in this budget for us to complete that work.

As a responsible regulator, we ensured that the new proponent in Kotaneelee, EFLO, is familiar with the Yukon assessment and regulatory processes. We presented twice to the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing. Further, upon their request, there was collaboration on oil and gas education and training for VGFN citizens.

I'm glad the member for Vuntut Gwitchin mentioned the individuals from his community who were travelling out, because they were on the same plane as the Minister of Highways and Public Works and me on Friday, going out to

visit these sites and educate themselves on hydraulic fracturing and the oil and gas industry.

Further, OGR staff travelled to Old Crow and presented, in conjunction with Northern Cross Yukon and the VGFN, the results of the benefits arising from the 2012-13 drilling program, which represented an investment of \$80 million. This drilling campaign was permitted and monitored by OGR.

OGR and its co-regulators have conducted numerous inspections of all oil and gas activities in Yukon. Co-regulators are from other EMR branches, the Department of Environment, Occupational Health and Safety in particular.

OGR executed a new service agreement with the BC Oil and Gas Commission. The agreement includes the sharing of information, such as guidelines and lessons learned, cooperating in the review and assessment of development programs, and working collaboratively on common issues, such as transboundary oil and gas basins, and regulation development.

They participated in the water strategy review, and its upcoming implementation. There was collaboration with the Yukon Water Board on guidelines for oil and gas development that will ensure harmonized, efficient and responsible regulation of waters and wastes associated with oil and gas activity.

It has collaborated with Environment to purchase and install two water stations in key oil and gas basins. There is one in Eagle Plain and one soon to be installed in Liard. Subject to approval, there will be amendments brought forward to oil and gas licence administration regulations, oil and gas geoscience and exploration regulations, oil and gas disposition regulations and royalty regulations — all of which bring clear, stable and responsible regulation to Yukon oil and gas tenure and operations.

Mr. Speaker, those are but a few of the accomplishments of one of the branches in Energy, Mines and Resources. I know that all of the ministers and government members are proud of each and every individual who works in their department or for them, on behalf of the Yukon public. It is unfortunate that the Leader of the Official Opposition, the NDP, is very clouded by her anti-fracking stance and brings forward disparaging remarks against public officials who work very hard every day. I am sure there are others out there wondering whether or not she approves of them.

On to my reply to the Budget Address: I too would be remiss if I didn't thank my constituents, the people in Riverdale North, for continuing to participate in events that I have in the constituency, such as my annual barbeque, and for bringing forward their concerns to me whenever they have them. I certainly enjoy hearing from constituents, as I think that is one of the most important and exciting things that we're able to accomplish as MLAs: helping people in our ridings with specific issues. I have been able to do that on a number of occasions and can assure the people of Riverdale North that my door is always open. If you have any concerns whatsoever, please give me a call, give my office a call. I'm happy to meet with anybody at any time.

With respect to the 2014-15 budget, there are a number of areas that I'm going to address. Some are specific to my riding. There are a couple of important projects in my riding of Riverdale North that are underway. One of the reasons that I ran for office again and chose to run with the Yukon Party was their commitment to building the economy and ensuring that we were in a strong fiscal position and giving us the ability to invest in important things to me and my constituents, such as health care, education and infrastructure development. I hope to touch on a few of those items in the budget that are important to me.

Finally, I'll conclude by highlighting some of the projects in Energy, Mines and Resources, the accomplishments of the last year and the priorities for this year. It's an exciting department and I'm very happy to be the minister, following on the work of the previous minister. I'm excited about the advancements they've made in the core responsibilities of oil, gas and mineral resources, forestry, agriculture and land, to name a few. The amount of work that those officials do across government in assisting other departments is extremely important as well.

I'm going to start with a project in my riding that has had an awful lot of attention over the past couple of years since we took office, and that's the F.H. Collins replacement project. I believe the physical location is actually Riverdale South, but so many of my constituents have gone to F.H., and so many Yukoners have graduated from that school that I think it's a school and a project that belongs to the entire community and, indeed, the entire Yukon.

I know we've heard a lot about the prices. We heard about it today in Question Period, so perhaps what I could do is just read an excerpt from a Yukon Chamber of Commerce news release, entitled "The Yukon Chamber of Commerce comments on the awarding of a \$31.14 million contract for the FH Collins Secondary School replacement project". In it, it says, "The Yukon Chamber of Commerce (YCC) is pleased with the Yukon government's February 19 announcement of an Intent to Award letter to Clark builders for the F.H. Collins Secondary School replacement program.

"Mr. Richard Thompson, Interim Chair of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce commented, 'this time last year tender responses for construction of a replacement high school had ranged from \$48 million-\$60 million, all over the Yukon government's budget of \$38.6 million. While we have concerns that the re-scoping and rebidding process for F.H. Collins caused hardship for those businesses involved in the initial tender response process, we are certainly pleased to see that the rebidding process has resulted in a project that will save Yukon taxpayers almost \$17 million compared to the last round of bids, while still delivering the product that is required for the students.'"

Mr. Speaker, Peter Turner, who is the President of the YCC added, and I'll quote again: "we applaud the Yukon government's efforts to 'right size' this project and are confident that the project will yield substantial partnership, employment and business opportunities for Yukon businesses and workers."

Like the Yukon Chamber of Commerce and so many other Yukoners who I have spoken with — individuals in my riding and individuals in the community — they're pleased that we made that decision to retender and go with a different design. It is one that has been built successfully and economically in the Province of Alberta and serves the high school students who attend there very well. I know I have personally visited the school. The current Minister of Education and the Minister of Highways and Public Works have also visited that school.

I have just a couple of comments, because I know we've heard some criticism from across the floor with respect to the Outside contractor. Today I was at lunch with the Minister of Environment at a local hotel and in one of the rooms there, Clark Builders, the successful contractor, was holding an employment open house. They were taking resumes and they were talking to tradespeople. They informed us — I guess we'll call it a "job fair", essentially, because that is what it looked like to me — that they've already hired a project coordinator from Whitehorse. I know some of the subcontractors. The electrical subcontractor in particular is from Whitehorse and the design contractor is from Whitehorse as well. So to suggest that somehow all of the benefits of this project are going to go to an Outside company and Outside workers just isn't correct. Clark Builders is committed to the community, even, as I mentioned, with the job fair that they were holding today at the hotel in Whitehorse.

I think people will notice that even with respect to Special Olympics Yukon — a charity that is important to many members in this House, no matter what side of the floor they're on — Clark Builders has come on as a sponsor.

Speaker: Order please. The hour being 5:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. Monday.

The house adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following document was filed March 27, 2014:

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Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board responses to November 26, 2013 Committee of the Whole questions, letter re (dated December 17, 2013) from Joy Waters, President/CEO to Doug Graham, Minister Responsible for the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board (Graham)