



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 208

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HANSARD

Wednesday, May 6, 2015 — 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

CABINET MINISTERS

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 Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

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Yukon Party

Darius Elias	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
Patti McLeod	Watson Lake

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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
Wednesday, May 6, 2015 — 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 remembrance of Judi Johnny

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Judi Johnny of the Gwa'Sala Nakwaxda'Xw First Nation, who passed earlier this year on February 4 in Whitehorse.

Judi Johnny was born on November 2, 1949 in Smith Inlet, British Columbia on a float house. She joined the Baha'i faith in British Columbia and, in 1984, made the move to the Yukon where she quickly became an outspoken leader and a tireless advocate for persons with disabilities.

Once you met Judi — as many of us in this House knew Judi — you never forgot her. She was an advocate for change and fairness. She fought for women's equality and for the rights of workers. She cared about people, she cared about the environment and, most of all, she cared about her community.

People with disabilities often face barriers wherever they go and, unequivocally, Judi worked tirelessly to remove those barriers. Judi helped to establish advocacy organizations both locally and nationally. She was a board member of the DisAbled Women's Network Canada and, in the early 1990s, she founded the feminist disability collective Women with Wings.

We remember Judi for dedicating her life to ensuring that people with disabilities had full access to the services that many of us take for granted, particularly transportation services. Judi knew only too well the barriers that people with disabilities face wherever they go. As Judi said in an earlier interview, she did not see her disability as the inconvenience. According to Judi, the only inconvenience was the fact that she and other people with disabilities couldn't access the services that others could, and for that, she never stopped fighting to change that.

Last fall, as minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, I was honoured to help launch a poster to celebrate Women's History Month. That poster, titled *Honouring Women with Disabilities*, featured Judi Johnny along with fellow Yukoners Joyce Hayden and Stephanie Dixon.

In looking back, I am really especially grateful to the Women's Directorate and their suggestion to celebrate Judi in this way while she was here and able to see for herself just how much the community appreciated and valued Judi.

As well as being a fighter, Judi will also be remembered for her sense of humour, her compassion and her love of children, life and music. Her relentless efforts to help others can also be highlighted by her service in the Baha'i community and with the Yukon Status of Women Council, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the Yukon Council on DisABILITY, the Second Opinion Society, DAWN-RAFH Canada as a national board member, the Whitehorse Food Bank, the Whitehorse Public Library, Yukon Association for Community Living, Yukon Learn and the political movement itself.

For someone so involved in her community, it is no surprise that Judi was also very active on social media too. On her Twitter profile, she called herself "An interesting woman who lives with disabilities." Calling Judi an interesting woman is an understatement for sure. She was a fascinating, powerful, kind person, who made an impact on everyone she met, including me.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be here today to pay our respects and that of our government to a unique, special leader in our community who had incredible drive and determination. We will indeed miss Judi's voice and her strong presence, along with her motorized chair with its red flag flying in the breeze, but take comfort in knowing that her spirit lives on in the work so many Yukoners are doing to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

Judi is predeceased by her father, Alfred Johnny Sr., her brothers Alfred Johnny Jr. and Morris Johnny. We would like to extend our sincere condolences to Judi's family — in particular, her mother Lillian Johnny; sister Gerri Sam, and partner Doug Sam; brother Duke Johnny; sister Arlene Johnny; brother Rick Johnny, and Gina; and brother Joe Johnny, and Chris.

There are a number of individuals in the gallery this afternoon who have joined us here for today's tribute — among Judi's many friends and former colleagues representing a litany of organizations — including the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the Yukon Status of Women Council, Charlotte Hrenchuk and many, many others — I would especially like to acknowledge members of her family who have travelled all the way from Port Hardy, British Columbia to be here with us today — in particular, Judi's mother Lillian Johnny, and Judi's brother Joe Johnny as well. To Judi's family and friends and to everyone who was touched by Judi's powerful spirit, our deepest condolences to your family and to all Yukoners on the passing of Judi.

Ms. Hanson: I am both honoured and touched to rise on behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party — the Official Opposition — and the Third Party to pay tribute to Judi Johnny.

In fact, Judi was in the hearts and minds of many of her friends this past weekend at the NDP convention. Judi was a stalwart member of the party just as she was an active member of so many community organizations.

This past winter, I shared the sadness of many when Judi Johnny died on February 4 here in Whitehorse. As the minister just said, many of us in this Assembly knew Judi and knew that she was a force to be reckoned with.

Judi was confined to a wheelchair for the past 25 years of her life. She had post-polio syndrome, cerebral palsy and arthritis. Despite the serious challenges that her physical health posed, Judi said, "I've been disabled all my life, but that's just in a physical sense because I have hardly ever thought of that as a major inconvenience. I thought of trying to get the services as an inconvenience, but not my disability."

Judi was a part of the community in so many ways. Her motorized wheelchair with its red flag flying was a constant presence at community events, rallies or meetings. Judi served on the Yukon Status of Women Council, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the Yukon Council on DisABILITY, the Second Opinion Society, DAWN-RAFH Canada as a national board member, a member of both the local and national New Democratic Party committees on disability, the Whitehorse Food Bank, the Whitehorse Public Library, the Yukon Association for Community Living, Yukon Learn and, in addition to all of this, Judi took on the challenge of seeking election as an NDP candidate.

You know, when I asked people who knew Judi to give me one word that captured her, I got words like "feisty", "persistent", "funny", "dedicated", "tenacious", "fierce", "a warrior who loved kids", "friendly" and "defiant".

Mr. Speaker, as the leader of this party, I've been thinking about how we as a social democratic community can do more to celebrate those among us whose actions match the words they speak. As I reflected on this, it occurred to me that as a leader, I could help to do that by establishing a fund within our party that would recognize an individual or group whose words and actions demonstrated a deep commitment to the core principles of social democracy. Those principles of equality, democracy, sustainability, community and cooperation are, when applied to real life, immensely challenging.

A life lived seeking equality through equitable access to services — one who knows that social justice does not tolerate discrimination on the basis of race or gender or physical or intellectual ability, age or sexual orientation, often finds themselves challenging the status quo. So too when an individual or group commits themselves to democratic control of our political, social and economic institutions. When you add in a commitment to find a sustainable balance between the needs of our generation and the needs of the future generations, along with that strong sense of community and the values of respect, caring and compassion expressed in a desire to work cooperatively, not only do you have a true social democrat, but I would suggest you have every complacent politician's worst nightmare.

Living the principles we espouse is messy. Change does not come simply because power and the powerful suddenly go, "Oh yes, sure; let's change the status quo."

In celebrating Judi, we celebrate the gadflies — the ones who sometimes irritate us because they challenge us or they

challenge the systems that govern us because they are risk-takers — sometimes surprising themselves at the risks they take. They are ordinary citizens among us — our neighbours, our friends — who realize that they do have a voice and they have both a right and an obligation to engage in civil society.

In exercising her rights, Judi Johnny never relented. She never gave up, even as she was physically weakened. She knew all too well how systems and institutions can respond in dehumanizing ways to the most basic issues. Her struggles to have access to adequate supplies of oxygen, for example, or to try to get the Handy Bus system to respond to her needs as a person with disabilities appalled many of us who take breathing and getting around for granted.

Every year, we in the New Democratic Party will be remembering Judi through the awarding of a Judi Johnny Award. The inaugural award was made on Saturday. It is our hope that the challenges that Judi faced and the demands she placed on herself and all of us to be respected, to recognize the inalienable rights of the individual and the obligation of each to build a stronger, more democratic society by never giving in — or giving up — for those principles that form the basis of a lasting legacy for this remarkable woman.

In recognition of Speech and Hearing Awareness Month

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I rise in the House today on behalf of all members to pay tribute to Speech and Hearing Awareness Month. May is the month dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of speech and hearing. Many of us take our ability to communicate for granted, yet the ability to speak and hear is much more vital to our everyday lives than most of us realize. A person's quality of life can be severely impacted if a person cannot communicate effectively.

Here in Yukon, we are fortunate to have access to professionals such as speech and language pathologists and audiologists who can help diagnose and mitigate or resolve speech or hearing challenges. In most instances, the earlier the detection, the better — this is especially true in young children who can benefit significantly from early detection and support. Early testing of infants helps determine if a child needs to have further hearing testing and is a great early detection screen. The Child Development Centre also offers the Follow Along program where infants and toddlers are screened for major milestone developments in speech and hearing. These programs help ensure that any problems are detected as soon as possible. The department also has speech and language professionals in our continuing care facilities to help residents deal with speech or communication difficulties they may have.

I would also like to highlight that our government has signed three-year agreements with both the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in B.C. and Deaf and Hear Alberta. These agreements will enable Yukoners to have access to sign language interpretation services when they receive health care services in British Columbia or Alberta. The services provided by B.C. and Alberta supplement the Yukon government's American Sign Language interpreting

service, which was recently extended for another three years. The Yukon service has provided nearly 600 hours of interpreting service for medical and health-related appointments over the last two years.

This month, please join me in acknowledging the dedication and hard work of our American Sign Language interpreter, and our speech and language and hearing professionals, and remind Yukoners to take action if they suspect a speech or hearing problem with themselves or a loved one.

In recognition of National Physiotherapy Month

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I also rise on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to recognize May as National Physiotherapy Month.

Every year we take this time to honour the work that physiotherapists do for us. Physiotherapists have in-depth knowledge of the human body and how it works. Thanks to their training, they can assess, diagnose, and treat symptoms of injuries, disabilities and illness.

There are more than 20,000 registered physiotherapists working in Canada. Here in Yukon, about 40 physiotherapists work in private clinics, hospitals and for Continuing Care in Health and Social Services. Physiotherapists work with people of all ages and health conditions.

While they help us heal from injuries such as dislocated shoulders and sprained ankles, their role is much more expansive than that. They help manage chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease, provide personalized advice and best practices, and set up individual exercise programs to help us achieve maximum healing. They are experts at analyzing our movements, identifying restrictions and diagnosing problems. Working with patients, they design treatment plans that are consistent with our health status and abilities, and work with us to adjust the plan as treatment progresses. It is a hands-on job, dealing with us at a time in our lives when we feel vulnerable and in pain. They do it with courtesy and professionalism and leave us feeling better.

In closing, I would like to invite everyone who has ever employed the services of a physiotherapist to take a moment to appreciate the valuable service they provide and maybe take the time to thank them.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors?

Are there any 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?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide current and up-to-date mandate letters for Cabinet ministers.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Mental health services

Ms. Hanson: Yesterday, the minister announced his government's new mental wellness campaign, entitled "Flourishing". This campaign is entirely comprised of brochures, a website, radio ads — not very actionable. The first line of the brochure reads, "Flourishing is about feeling good and doing well."

Mr. Speaker, mental health and mental illness are about more than just feeling good. If individuals living with complex mental health challenges and without needed supports could choose to just feel good, they would. It is time to stop laying the blame for our government's failures on mental health at the feet of those in most need of real support.

Why is the minister dragging his feet on delivering an actionable mental health strategy for Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Unlike the Leader of the Official Opposition, this government congratulates and commends the department for bringing forward such an important campaign this week, during Mental Health Week. The Flourishing campaign focuses on mental wellness, not on mental illness, and what we can do, as individuals and citizens of Yukon, to work on our mental wellness and how we can encourage other Yukoners to work on their mental wellness.

I'll take the comments from the Leader of the Official Opposition with a grain of salt, but I commend the department for bringing forward this campaign, Flourishing, to reach out to Yukoners to work on their mental wellness.

Ms. Hanson: Yukon's Flourishing campaign is centred around five pillars of happiness and well-being known as PERMA, an acronym for positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. In fact the Flourishing brochure suggests some actions Yukoners can take under each pillar of PERMA to support their happiness and well-being. For example, one could savour the positive, feel one with the music, and celebrate others' positive experiences. The PERMA model is taken from Dr. Seligman's book *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*, although it was news to the University of Pennsylvania's positive psychology professor who had not heard of the Yukon's Flourishing campaign before yesterday.

When will the minister develop a made-in-Yukon mental health strategy that works for Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: This government will stand by and behind services such as the new construction of the Sarah Steele Building and Alcohol and Drug Services. We'll stand behind the services that we offer through Many Rivers, working with Many Rivers, Mental Health Services and mental health nurses. We reach every community in the territory. There is a lot of good work being done, and we'll continue to stand behind that, especially in a budgetary manner, often which the members opposite continue to vote against.

The Leader of the Official Opposition seemed to take offence to the Flourishing campaign. Certainly I had an opportunity just yesterday morning to be on CBC with the manager of Mental Health Services who put this campaign together, and I commended her for her work and for reaching out to Yukoners who care to work on their mental wellness.

Ms. Hanson: I would like to quote the Yukon government's website, www.yukonwellness.ca, which states: "We can learn from what others have done, but we also need to find solutions that will work for Yukon people, families and communities." It also recognizes that, while personal choice is important: "Not all people have the same chances or choices in life to be well; and not all people have the same opportunities to participate fully in the social, economic and political life of the community in which they live."

The Health and Social Services staff know that Yukon needs a made-in-Yukon mental health strategy that meaningfully addresses complex social determinants of mental health, but this government seems to think that telling Yukoners to think of three good things before they go to sleep at night is strategy enough.

When will the minister develop a made-in-Yukon mental health strategy that works for Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I'll be sure to pass on the sentiments from the Leader of the Official Opposition to the staff at Mental Health Services with her criticisms of the Flourishing campaign. This is certainly a campaign that I stand behind. I see great value in a campaign that reaches out to individuals to encourage them to work on their mental wellness. I think if we all took time out of our day every day to work on our mental wellness, we would perhaps see a decrease in mental illnesses and the requirement of services through government.

We'll continue to work with the Department of Health and Social Services on the mental health strategy and, in due course, when that strategy is ready and is complete, then we will release it. Until that time I expect the department to work on it, be strategic in their approach and, when we have a product that is ready to be released, we'll release it.

Question re: Electoral reform

Ms. Moorcroft: Last night, the winds of change were blowing from the southeast. Last night, a tired government that thought they had almost a natural right to govern was tossed to the curb by a record high voter turnout that embraced change. Never doubt that anything is possible in an election campaign.

Almost daily I talk to Yukoners who are excited about when their turn comes to vote for the future of the territory. Some Yukoners are very keen that this vote come quickly, but there were a number of problems that occurred during the 2011 general election and we should fix some of those problems before Yukoners go to the polls again.

The Yukon Chief Electoral Officer has identified many areas for improvement in her recent report. Does the Premier agree that there is work to be done to strengthen Yukon's election rules before the next election?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: As the member should be aware, any potential changes to the *Elections Act* would be discussed at Members' Services Board — of which, of course, I am a member, as is the Leader of the NDP, her party leader — and that discussion, as has always taken place when changes to the *Elections Act* are contemplated, should occur there. We will give that due consideration and give due consideration to the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer, as well as the opinions of all members of the Members' Services Board.

Ms. Moorcroft: After the 2011 election, all parties participated in a review and identified what needed to be fixed. The Chief Electoral Officer of Yukon has just provided a very thorough report on the Yukon's elections rules, and the report identifies a number of measures that should be undertaken to increase voter turnout and strengthen our democracy. We owe it to Yukoners to improve our voting system before the next election.

Will the Premier move a government motion so that members of the Legislative Assembly get the opportunity to debate the Chief Electoral Officer's report?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I know it appears the Member for Copperbelt South, in addition to taking the opportunity to add an irrelevant preamble to her questions — I'm not sure why the member is bringing this forward here, considering that the practice for discussing changes to the *Elections Act* is now, and has been for many years, that those discussions would first occur at the Members' Services Board. The Leader of the NDP, the Leader of the Liberal Party, the Minister of Community Services, the Speaker as chair of the committee, and I are the members of the Members' Services Board, duly appointed by this Legislative Assembly. The practice has certainly been within our caucus, and I would hope it is within others, that the caucus representative on that committee will discuss with their caucus colleagues matters of significance that are coming before the Members' Services Board and gain the input of their caucus and make those representations at the MSB.

Again, we are certainly happy to have that conversation as the Members' Services Board, and I believe the MSB is scheduled to again discuss this matter in the next several weeks, so I'm not quite sure why the member has chosen to bring this forward to the Legislative Assembly, rather than following the process.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, the Members' Services Board will not meet until May 22, which does not leave any time for this Assembly to debate the motion before the House rises.

In the riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes during the last election, the enumeration of First Nation citizens was spotty at best. If not for the major work done on the ground to identify voters who were not enumerated, a large number would not have been able to vote. This is unacceptable. The Chief Electoral Officer identified concerns with enumeration errors and omissions and said — and I quote: "The importance of accurate Lists of Electors cannot be overstated". They are "...one of the single most significant determinants of a successful election".

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier act on the report by the Yukon's Chief Electoral Officer in order to increase voter turnout for the next election?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, again I would actually remind the member that Yukon has higher voter turnout in territorial elections than most jurisdictions do. I don't know what the turnout was in the member's riding. I know that in my riding, the voter turnout has typically been around 80 percent. I think the last time, if memory serves, it was about 82-percent voter turnout, which is certainly a lot higher than in many jurisdictions and higher than we saw in the recent Alberta election.

Again, we've taken a number of steps in the past; in part, based on recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer as well as discussions at the Members' Services Board that resulted in improvements made prior to the last territorial election, which increased the opportunity for voters to add themselves to the voters' list if they had been missed and provided, for the first time in decades, an opportunity for voters who had been missed at enumeration to swear in at the polls with the support from another eligible elector who was on the list.

We are proud of those steps that have been taken to improve Yukoners' access to votes. We will certainly give due consideration to all of the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer. But as the member should know, those discussions typically do take place at the Members' Services Board and I would encourage the Member for Copperbelt South to talk to the Leader of the NDP, who is their party's representative on the Members' Services Board. I would encourage the Leader of the NDP to reflect the input from her caucus colleagues at those discussions.

Again, I would encourage the member to recognize the process and look forward to that discussion.

Question re: Energy supply and demand

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, for many years, the Yukon Liberal Party has been advocating for the government to adapt an independent power producing policy or an IPP policy. This initiative was first promised by this government in 2009. Similar to the government's promise to create a mental health strategy for example, the commitment to an IPP policy has been an empty promise for many years. This policy, if it came forward, would enable independent producers to generate power to help the territory to meet present and future power demands. It has been six years since this promise has been made. Last fall, the minister said that it would be — and I quote: "...in place sometime within the first six months of 2015".

Mr. Speaker, that's only two months away. So far, this is yet another item that falls under the "unfinished business" column for this current government. Will this latest deadline be met or are we looking for another delay?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I should just quickly take an opportunity to correct the record. I believe I was responding to a question from the Member for Mayo-Tatchun in Question Period the other day and suggested that the IPP policy would

be ready later this month. I was actually referring to the study on the Yukon to Skagway transmission line.

But in response to the member opposite's question, we are anticipating that the IPP policy will be ready to go sometime before the end of June. The consultation process last year — during that, we received over 40 responses to the draft policy and that feedback is providing valuable guidance to the development of the final policy. It still has to make its way through our internal processes — caucus and Cabinet processes — but I am very excited that we are following through on the commitments in the *Energy Strategy for Yukon*.

As I have mentioned previously, I am very proud of the work that we are doing on energy. We certainly see from the Yukon Energy Corporation that the vast majority of our grid energy is generated by renewable sources. We have the microgeneration program in place as well as an associated program to provide subsidies to people who are looking to purchase microgeneration products. The biomass strategy — we are out for consultation right now. There are a number of initiatives that we are undertaking, not the least of which is the next generation hydro project being led by the Minister of Yukon Development Corporation.

Mr. Silver: We do know that there are lots of initiatives moving forward, and we do also know that Yukon is a leading jurisdiction in Canada for renewable energy — I believe it's over 90 percent. Yukoners are very proud of that fact and so is the Liberal Party. We do hope to continue this trend and we believe that independent power producing policy could bring new, reliable energy sources into the Yukon grid. We in the Liberal Party are very anxious to see this policy moving forward in a responsible manner, as it could provide a much-needed increase to our territory's own power supply. Unfortunately, we have been waiting of this for many years — 2009 in fact. As the minister mentioned, there was a consultation held last summer. Usually after a consultation of this sort, we get a summary document or a *What We Heard* document.

Why has no summary document been issued after consultation wrapped up last summer?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Officials in Energy, Mines and Resources have compiled all the public input into a *What We Heard* document and that will be released. I am looking forward to introducing this IPP program in addition to the microgeneration program that we introduced. We are in the midst of consultations on a biomass strategy, which is another exciting opportunity, not only for energy and space heating and perhaps even district heating opportunities, but also to kick-start the forest industry. The economic impact of the fuel-wood industry that we have right now is over \$3 million. We see some tremendous opportunities for growing that sector of our economy and putting boots on the ground and people to work in that private sector industry to support biomass and the valued added that would come from district heating and space heating as well as potential power generation.

Over 99 percent of the grid energy generated is from renewable sources. Most of that is from hydro sources. We

have a number of legacy projects, but there have also been projects invested by the Yukon Party government — Mayo B and enhancements to Aishihik come to mind. We look forward to the clean energy future that we have committed to and following through on our commitments such as the IPP, microgeneration, biomass and enhanced hydro opportunities.

Mr. Silver: I do realize that there is a lot of work that goes into a policy such as this. Last fall the minister said that he was planning to take some time to get it right rather than rushing. I would argue that six years later would be hardly considered rushing. The fact that it's not in place represents how low this might rank on the list of priorities for the government. Our neighbours to the south — British Columbia, for example: 92 electric purchasing agreements — EPAs — with IPPs. Their policy has been in place for many, many years. Many of these projects are from renewable energy sources such as biomass, wind and hydro.

This could be a good news story — or it could be, if the government actually gets a policy in place — and it has been six years. I guess the question that is still being begged is: Does the minister anticipate accepting power from independent producers? When would that be, if this policy ever gets brought forward?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Yes, of course, Mr. Speaker. That is why we are embarking on the work of this policy.

I should actually take the time as well to thank the officials in Energy, Mines and Resources who have done the work in putting this together. This is part of the overall energy strategy, as the member opposite referenced, from 2009. One of the first announcements that I was able to make upon taking responsibility for Energy, Mines and Resources is that we have actually met our renewable targets that are contained in that energy strategy. Again, thanks for the good work of the previous Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and previous Yukon Party ministers and Cabinet and caucus members who are committed to clean energy.

This government wants to focus on clean energy options, whether it's the next gen hydro as the long-term bookend or other opportunities, such as the wind energy opportunities that we have seen come forward from some of the First Nations, solar opportunities that exist in many communities, including the community of Old Crow. There are a number of excellent clean energy opportunities, and once this policy is introduced and goes through our internal process — I do anticipate that being before the end of June — we look forward to getting it out there and entering into power purchase agreements with individuals and companies to ensure that we can continue to meet Yukon's energy demand, both now and in the short, medium and longer term.

Question re: Veterans' disability pensions

Ms. White: Given that yesterday we marked the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands, I would like to return to the subject of veterans' benefits. In past Sittings, supporting our veterans became more of a debate about terminology than the role that government can play in that support. I am referring to non-taxable disability benefits

awarded to veterans to compensate for pain and suffering through the veterans' disability pension.

Last year, the Yukon Housing Corporation made a decision to exclude these benefits from housing calculations. My hope is that their compassionate decision to respect our veterans will be extended to other branches of the Yukon government.

Will the government commit to excluding Yukon veterans' non-taxable disability benefits that compensate for pain and suffering from their calculations of social assistance?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Before I get started, I certainly want to acknowledge and thank the good work that the people at the Legion do in support of all members — not only military members, but members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as well, people in uniform — and the supports that they provide for those members and for their families.

As I have said in this House many times, Yukon is a great place to live and it's a place where we ensure that we look after those people who are in need — not only those people who have laid their lives on the line as veterans, but for all people who live, work and play in this territory.

Ms. White: Once again, I got words and no action behind those words.

These benefits are already classified as tax-exempt by the Canada Revenue Agency. The Yukon government should not be in the business of clawing back benefits intended to offset pain and suffering inflicted as a result of military service.

Last Sitting, the previous minister told this House that — and I'm quoting: "Payments provided for pain, suffering, hardship or wrongdoing are exempted income. Therefore, they are not calculated as part of the social services calculation."

In light of this statement, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health and Social Services confirm that the exemption covers the federal veterans' disability pension provided to compensate for the pain and suffering caused by service-related injuries and, if so, when will the government make a public statement to that effect?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This government continues to provide benefits to people when they need it, not just at the end of the year. People with low income need benefits, and they need them right now and not just when they're filing their taxes. This government continues to ensure that, through the programming that we have, all people in need can access those benefits — not just when they file their taxes, but on a monthly basis as well.

Question re: Keno area mining runoff

Mr. Tredger: Last week, I raised concerns that have been brought to me by the residents of Keno regarding the toxic runoff from the Onek adit. The Elsa Reclamation and Development Company had stated — and I quote: "Even in 2006, Onek was recognized to be a potential threat, both due to the high concentrations of metals in the waste water it was discharging to ground, as well as for its proximity to Keno City's drinking water source." The highly toxic effluent runoff from Onek adit is now pooling in Keno. To ensure that Keno's

drinking water source is safe, Yukon government services had been doing water quality tests on the community well, yet, for some reason, these quarterly tests have been discontinued. As of May 1, Keno's well hadn't been tested since February 2014.

Could the Minister of Community Services explain why Keno City's —

Speaker: Order. The member's time has elapsed.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: The Yukon government is committed to ensuring that Yukoners have access to clean and safe drinking water throughout this territory. That includes Keno, of course. We know that the services they're provided in Keno are a little different because of the small nature of the community. I don't know the answer as to when various wells are tested. That's something of an operational nature that I'll have to check.

What I am confident of is that the Yukon government will continue to provide clean, safe drinking water to all Yukoners, including the residents of Keno.

Mr. Tredger: Tests were done on a quarterly basis because there was recognition that the residents of Keno were living in a highly contaminated area. The Onek adit is widely considered one of the most contaminated sites in Canada, and runoff from the adit is pooling in Keno. With his dismissive attitude in this House, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources demonstrated last week that the legitimate health concerns of the people of Keno are not taken seriously.

It is absurd that the drinking water well water for an entire community, located next to one of the most contaminated sites in the Yukon, was somehow allowed to slip from quarterly testing. How can this government assure the residents of Keno that the water from the well is okay when quarterly water quality checks that they were promised are not being done?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: First of all, I would disagree with the member's comment about the attitude of this government. As all members on this side of the House will agree, ensuring that Yukoners have access to clean, safe drinking water is a top priority of this government. We've invested considerable amounts of money throughout the territory over the last few years to this end.

We have made drinking water improvements in communities throughout the territory, whether they be LACs or municipalities, and we do our best to ensure that Yukoners have access to that clean, safe drinking water.

With regard to the specific frequency of testing for a specific well in one community, I don't have that information in front of me today. I can return separately, or outside of the House, with an answer to that question, but I'm confident in Yukon government officials that they are doing the good work to ensure that Yukoners do have access to clean, safe drinking water. That's the priority that we've given to all Yukon government departments — that all Yukoners should and continue to receive access to clean, safe drinking water regardless of where they live in the territory.

Mr. Tredger: I cannot believe that the adequacy testing of well water in Keno is falling through the cracks. This

situation is nothing new to residents of Keno. The Keno area, inclusive of the Onek adit, is one of the most contaminated sites in the Yukon. However, residents were given assurances that their drinking water would be closely monitored to ensure that it met drinking water quality standards.

In January 2012, the Department of Health and Social Services committed to conduct ongoing quarterly well testing at the community well. This government made a commitment to the people of Keno and they failed.

What is the government doing to assure the residents of Keno that it won't happen again?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: As I indicated previously, we make investments throughout the territory with regard to drinking water infrastructure. That includes working with municipalities and working with LACs to provide drinking water in those communities, but we also work with unincorporated areas like Keno to provide drinking water wells. We do so in Carcross, Tagish, Marsh Lake, Ross River, the Klondike Valley, Rock Creek and Old Crow as well as Keno.

My understanding is that residents of Keno do have access to clean, safe drinking water and that it does meet the standards, but if that's not the case, of course that's an unacceptable scenario and we will have to look into that. But as I said, I don't know the frequency with which individual wells are tested or what an appropriate level of testing is, but I'm happy to look into that matter and provide a response.

The direction that we on this side of the House have given to our departments is that all Yukoners should have access to clean, safe drinking water. We have made considerable investments to that end. One only needs to look at our budget this year to see the extent of those investments and look at previous budgets to understand the considerable investment we've made in drinking water in the territory.

We will continue to do that. We'll continue to invest in infrastructure. We'll continue to work with communities to ensure that all Yukoners have access to clean, safe drinking water, including those residents of the community of Keno.

Question re: Midwifery regulations

Ms. Moorcroft: Having a midwife present during childbirth is a positive reproductive choice for women and their families. Yesterday the Minister of Health and Social Services said his government is considering regulating and funding midwifery services and the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate praised her government for passing pharmacist and nurse practitioner legislation after several years of consideration, even though those acts have no regulations and are not yet in effect. The Yukon remains one of the last jurisdictions in Canada to recognize, regulate and fund midwifery to make it safe for women and practitioners.

Why is this government still failing to uphold women's reproductive choice by not providing regulated and funded midwifery care?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I would like to thank the member opposite for her question on this very important topic to women and to really many Yukon families in the territory.

As I referenced yesterday, we recognize the regulation of midwifery is of significant interest to many families and many women throughout the territory.

We believe and continually are improving Yukoners' access to health care and are supportive of the work that midwives do. We also believe that women throughout the territory should have access to the best pregnancy and birth care options available, including the services that midwives offer. As I articulated — and the Minister of Health and Social Services also spoke to yesterday — we are committed to working together with the Community Midwives Association Yukon, the midwives who are present in the territory at this time, to work together on next steps, including the creation of a working group to look at the work that has been done to date, look at all of the jurisdictional work that has been undertaken in every other province and territory, and to really develop a comprehensive plan for detailing options for regulating the profession in our territory.

Mr. Speaker, that work is underway. We are committed to working with our stakeholders and we look forward to that.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, numerous reports demonstrate midwifery is a safe and often preferred childbirth option for women. In 2010, a government-led consultation found 88 percent of respondents favoured government regulations in midwifery. Midwives can provide maternal health care services that are key to decreasing infant mortality in rural areas. I remind the minister that Yukon rated a C grade for infant mortality on last year's health report card.

The ministers of Health, Women's Directorate and Justice have announced they've met with the Community Midwives Association Yukon to talk about the merits and challenges associated with midwifery and have struck up a working group.

Isn't the minister embarrassed to stand up in this House and say that he will review the reports begun in 2007, hold a conference and talk about the merits and challenges of midwifery instead of regulating it when we know it's safe?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this government certainly recognizes the value that midwives bring to the territory. As the Minister of the Women's Directorate has already indicated, a number of ministers have already met with the group. We are looking forward to continuing that dialogue. I know the department has already reached out to them with respect to establishing a working group and that would include, we hope, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, the Yukon Medical Association and representatives from Yukon government, as well as other stakeholders.

We are supportive of the work that the midwives do in the territory and Yukon government is currently considering regulating the practice of midwifery in the territory. Good work is being done and this government stands behind that work. We certainly look forward to progress and we are willing to talk to them. We are willing to find out the challenges and the benefits of midwifery. We're not going to guess on that, Mr. Speaker. We need to go right to the professionals providing that service in the territory.

Ms. Moorcroft: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party began the dialogue on midwifery in 2007. Maybe they're not listening. The studies are clear: The professionals and the public are in favour of regulating midwifery. It's this Yukon Party government that says it supports midwifery, but refuses to act when other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world recognize midwifery as a safe and healthy childbirth choice.

The highest numbers of admissions at Whitehorse General Hospital are for maternity care. Women from Yukon's rural communities have to travel to Whitehorse to give birth. Because midwifery isn't regulated, rural women who travel to Whitehorse to get care from a midwife are not able to get their travel expenses covered whether they go to the hospital or not.

I will ask the minister again today: Does he believe it is fair that rural women who choose midwifery are penalized by not having the same financial supports available to them as women and families in Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I will again reiterate for the members opposite information that Yukon government is committed to expanding birthing options for all women in this territory and has been working to that end with the addition of the additional infrastructure within our respective communities and working with organizations such as the Community Midwives Association Yukon. As I said yesterday, the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Minister of Justice and I have all met individually and collectively with the association over the past couple of months. Yesterday we were very pleased to partake in the International Day of the Midwife at LePage Park following the proceedings here in the Assembly. Representatives of the association also welcomed this great news in terms of collaborating with the Yukon government, moving forward and coming up with detailed options and a comprehensive plan for moving this very important issue further for the benefit of all Yukon families, particularly Yukon women.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 970

Clerk: Motion No. 970, standing in the name of Ms. McLeod.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Watson Lake: THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to enter into bilateral agreements with each interested municipality to implement the existing domestic water well program within municipalities.

Ms. McLeod: I am honoured to rise today in support of Motion No. 970, urging the Government of Yukon to enter into bilateral agreements with each interested municipality to implement the existing domestic water well program within those municipalities.

This motion speaks to expanding the scope of a very successful and useful program offered by the Department of Community Services. The rural domestic water well program is designed to facilitate the development of a domestic potable water source on rural residential properties outside of municipal boundaries. The program is designed to help ease the long-term costs of water delivery in rural areas while providing access to a reliable, clean source of drinking water. The current program has been in place in 2004 — yet another example of a great Yukon Party initiative benefiting Yukoners.

Close to 250 property owners living in unincorporated areas have been able to access sustainable and affordable drinking water through this program. Many rural Yukoners have benefited from this program, but as we develop more country residential lots, many Yukoners who need to dig wells are ineligible for this program.

The program helps property owners drill a new water well or make improvements to an existing well for domestic use and allows residents to access low-interest loans that can be paid back over a maximum of 15 years. The current eligibility is limited to only rural residents living outside municipal boundaries for which the Government of Yukon is the taxing authority.

By way of this motion, we are encouraging the government to work with Yukon municipalities to make this program available to Yukoners who may benefit from the program, but are currently ineligible because they live within municipal boundaries.

We can see that this work has been ongoing. The City of Whitehorse voted last week to sign their agreement with the Yukon government. I would like to thank the current Minister of Community Services for advancing the work on this program expansion and partnering with Yukon municipalities, but I would also like to thank the previous minister for his work. Under his watch, amendments to the *Municipal Act* and *Assessment and Taxation Act* that permit this program expansion were passed last fall. Agreements and program changes like this take time to arrange and Yukoners appreciate both of your efforts, working with Yukon municipalities — my thanks to you both.

I would like to share some additional details about what is eligible under this program. The program is available for the purposes of drilling a new groundwater well; the installation of a surface water well; or improvements to existing drilled groundwater wells and surface water wells. This is as long as the wells are for domestic use and all work is done by a registered service provider. Wells for commercial use are not eligible under this program. The program is not available to any components related to the hauling of bulk water including, but not limited to, storage tanks for trucks and any other element of a water-hauling system.

The program is based on a number of general principles and practices. These principles and practices are used to guide decisions that are not explicitly covered in regulations. I would like to highlight them as follows: responsiveness to needs of rural Yukoners; the provision of safe, reliable, affordable drinking water responds to numerous ongoing requests from rural property owners; full cost recovery, so all property owners are responsible for any costs incurred through this program; risk rests with property owners, so any risks associated with drilling a well, including the possibility of a well producing non-potable water, a low-flow well and/or any other foreseen or unforeseen outcomes rests with the applicant in all cases and must be addressed before funding is released through this program; and property taxes must be current, so all applicants to this program must have their taxes paid up to date.

Another important aspect of the program is that applicants may only use service providers registered through the service provider registry. The registry helps program participants to find qualified service providers. These service providers will be the entities that sign the contract with the Government of Yukon and will receive payment from the government. Likewise, there is a well driller registry. Service providers must only use well drillers who are registered through this registry. All drillers listed agree to construct wells that meet the minimum standards set out in the Canadian Ground Water Association guidelines.

Property owners planning water wells should also be aware of a number of health concerns related to their use. I would like to take just a moment to go over some of those precautions that Yukoners should take note of and use.

Yukon well owners should conduct a bacteriological test at least once a year. Testing your drinking water for the presence of bacteria, such as total coliforms and *E. coli*, lets you know if your well is contaminated by disease-causing microorganisms. Water can be tested for bacteria at the Environmental Health Services water laboratory located at No. 2 Hospital Road in Whitehorse. Good news, Mr. Speaker — there is no cost for this service.

As well, owners should also conduct a chemical test. They should conduct two consecutive years to start with in order to confirm that there is no significant change in water chemistry. If there are no concerns and there are no significant changes in water chemistry from one year to the next, then tests can be done at a five-year stretch or interval.

No Yukon laboratory tests currently for the chemical, physical and radiological parameters found in drinking water. However, that water can be tested for these parameters in addition to bacteria at accredited laboratories in B.C. and Alberta. The water laboratory selected will provide you with the appropriate sample bottles, forms and sampling instructions. Yukoners will incur costs for shipping and testing, and the cost of testing for the 30 common parameters has been about \$200 plus shipping.

I would like to remind Yukoners that it is important to take these steps and have your wells tested. Although your drinking water may taste fine and smell fine, it still may have

bacteria or chemicals that can cause health problems. Yukoners who would like more information should contact the Department of Community Services for more information.

Just a side note on my home community of Watson Lake — we do have a lot of private wells. Our municipal water and sewer infrastructure doesn't extend to a good deal of the town, so drilling a well is sometimes the only real option. Some people do opt for a water tank and have water delivered, and that is largely related to the cost of either/or installation.

Most wells within the town are deep wells — some of them up to 200 feet — so the cost to drill a well can be quite high. I think that there are a lot of folks in my town who will be able to benefit from this program, and I'm hopeful that the Town of Watson Lake is prepared to sign off and participate in this program, so I thank everyone for that.

I would like to thank the ministers and their officials for the work they have done to bring this program change forward — congratulations — and I look forward to seeing this work completed.

I would like to encourage other members to take some time today and speak to this important matter and vote in favour. It's a winner.

Ms. Moorcroft: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP Official Opposition and we will be supporting the motion that is before the House. The domestic water well act is a Yukon government program that provides homeowners with a five-, 10- or 15-year loan that is repayable through the owners' property taxes in order to construct a domestic water well.

I know that our family drilled a well in the 1990s, so the program has been in effect for many years. It may have been renamed in 2004, but it has certainly been in effect under previous administrations.

The program, however, was only available to Yukoners living outside of incorporated municipalities until the legislation was amended in November of 2014 to include residents of Yukon municipalities. In order for the amendments to the bill to come into effect, there is a need to enact agreements with any of the municipalities throughout the Yukon that are interested in implementing the existing domestic water well program.

So what we're debating today is that the government is asking for support to conclude bilateral agreements with Yukon communities to implement the well water program in incorporated municipalities. It would seem that the motion is before us today because the association of Yukon municipalities is meeting this weekend, and the Yukon Party government clearly needs a good news story to distract from their inability to work collaboratively with municipalities on a number of key issues.

In fact, I found that the leaders in several municipalities across the territory, whom I contacted to speak about this motion, have indicated that they are interested in moving forward and that they were under the impression that the agreements would be concluded for signing ceremonies at the Association of Yukon Communities meeting that is scheduled for later this month — this very weekend.

We are supporting this motion. The domestic well water act is an important tool that allows Yukoners to access clean water on their property. The Yukon NDP also supports Yukoners' rights to clean water, regardless of where they live. The Yukon Party government has an ongoing commitment to ensure that all Yukoners have access to clean, public drinking water, and not all property owners have the space to dig a well, and not all Yukoners are property owners. In order to meet the obligation to ensure that all Yukoners have access to clean, public drinking water, there may be a need to do more than simply entering into these bilateral agreements with interested municipalities.

Haines Junction signed an accord awhile ago, and their council does not anticipate high levels of demand. Whitehorse has assented to an agreement at council, but it has not yet been signed. Look at the community of Watson Lake, the mover of the motion's own community. The government is currently in court with the Town of Watson Lake and the Liard First Nation over the contamination of Watson Lake's water supply in Wye Lake, resulting from Alaska Highway runoff.

Water tests have shown that, while the water is rated to be safe to drink by Canadian testing standards, minerals such as manganese particles, which affect the public's trust in drinking water quality, have been observed in Watson Lake water. It's essential to recognize the important roles that domestic water access and public drinking water play in ensuring the right to water in Yukon communities.

I do have to ask whether the government is making a clean public drinking water supply in Whitehorse a priority. Does it think that domestic water wells will solve all of these water woes in Watson Lake?

Aboriginal Yukoners who live on Liard First Nation land cannot access the domestic water well program because of First Nation property arrangements. I would like to raise the concern of how they can be expected to access clean drinking water when the issue of contaminated public drinking water remains unaddressed.

In Whitehorse, council passed a resolution to sign an agreement with the Yukon government to broker access to the domestic water well program. Under its terms, the Yukon program would be managed by the city although the loans would be financed by the Yukon government, which would receive the repayments from the city as they are collected through property taxes.

Whitehorse does not expect that many people will take advantage of the program although, if there is high demand for access to the program, the city risks being overwhelmed with the administration of the program.

Mr. Speaker, as I did note when I spoke to the *Domestic Water Well Program Amendments Act* in November of last year, constituents in my riding in country residential subdivisions have potentially high costs in drilling wells. I noted that then and I want to note that there. They may have water delivery rather than their own well, and they also have to have their own septic systems. That could lead to contamination if there are increased numbers of wells and septic systems, given the proximity of the lots. I know in the

discussion at city council, there was mention made of supporting more urban and a more dense housing mix within the City of Whitehorse. Any expansion of country residential properties would need to consider the effect of having multiple properties with both water wells and septic service on those adjacent lots.

With an increased number of wells potentially being drilled in neighbouring subdivisions, there's a need for good data on water courses, water quality and water flow to be available as well as data on the residential, the commercial and the industrial water use, and on the location of wells. We have spoken in this House — and the Yukon NDP has raised the important concern of having a sufficient number of monitoring wells, particularly in order to determine impact from industrial activities on water tables. There are a number of industrial subdivisions within the City of Whitehorse where there may be properties that allow residences and may have wells as well as the industrial activities. There does need to be a comprehensive regime in place in monitoring the water use and water quality.

A couple of questions that I would like to raise before I close — whether the government will plan to assist the City of Whitehorse with the administrative burden of administering the domestic water well program, and would it do so for other municipalities that sign bilateral agreements? I wonder whether the government has an idea of how many Whitehorse residents will request financing for the program, and has the government budgeted any monies this year in consideration of the potential uptake that residents in Whitehorse and in other communities may make of the agreements to implement these domestic water well programs to enable property owners to drill their wells?

I repeat that the Yukon NDP does support the motion before the House.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I would like to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this motion forward. I think it's an excellent motion that is timely and very relevant to the Department of Community Services. I look forward to hearing comments and questions from members throughout today's debate. Ultimately, I look forward to passing this motion as it will fall to me, likely, as Minister of Community Services to act upon the motion and bring forward the actions requested in this motion.

I appreciate learning that the NDP will be supporting the motion — that is excellent news — although I have to say that I was a little bit disappointed with some of the inaccurate statements made by the Member for Copperbelt South. I wasn't able to write as quickly as she was making inaccurate statements, so I perhaps won't be able to address them all, but let me try.

First of all, the program in question came into effect in 2004. There was no program prior to that. There was a program of a similar nature although much less successful and much less well-suited to the needs of Yukoners that was operated by Yukon Housing Corporation prior to 2004. For a number of reasons, that program was set aside because of its

lack of success and this program was brought forward in 2004 by the Yukon Party government in that year.

Since then, it has been an incredibly successful program. It has provided a number of households throughout the territory with access to drinking water through the program by allowing them to drill a well on their property and be supported by this program as it is quite a costly endeavour to drill a new drinking water well.

Since 2004, 240 projects have gone forward under this program, with a total value of the projects from the program's inception from March of 2004 to March of 2014 at \$5,425,000. There has been a considerable uptake in this program throughout the last decade plus. I don't have numbers as of this current budget year, but I do know that in 2013-14 there were 30 projects underway through this program, with a total value of over \$728,000.

The program, for the reasons described by the Member for Watson Lake in her opening remarks, obviously has been very successful, and we look forward to continuing it. However, we know that, over the past number of years, a number of property owners within municipal boundaries who have rural residential or country residential lots and don't have access to municipal drinking water infrastructure have expressed interest in the program. That interest and those comments from property owners, as well as municipalities, prompted the Yukon government to make changes to the relevant legislation last year. I would like to commend the previous Minister of Community Services for bringing forward those legislative changes last year and for passing them in the House. I stand to be corrected, but I believe those changes passed this House unanimously.

Since those changes were enacted last year, the department officials in the Property Assessment and Taxation branch, which administers this program, have been hard at work in developing the necessary subsequent regulations to bring the provisions forward. As well, a very important part of that is the necessity of entering into agreements with the municipalities, which is indeed the subject of today's motion.

Since those discussions have been underway, all municipalities have indicated that they are supportive, and all, to my understanding, have passed the relevant resolutions or bylaws, depending on the respective municipalities. So it's our intention to now move forward and sign these bilateral agreements, as indicated in the motion, following the passage of today's motion.

The Member for Copperbelt South seemed to indicate that Haines Junction had already entered into agreement — that's not correct. None of the municipalities have entered into agreements yet. We will be doing so, hopefully, this weekend, while we go to visit Haines Junction. When we sit down with the municipality of Haines Junction this weekend, I look forward to signing that agreement — and with all other Yukon municipalities.

Yukon municipalities have expressed some questions about the administration of this program and the potential cost that's associated with it. That's why we will be including in the agreements that the municipality may collect a fee of \$500

to cover the administrative costs that fall to them as a result of administering their end of this program. However, the funding of the program itself and the loans and finances provided to the individual homeowners through the program will remain with the Yukon government.

So the administration of the program by the municipalities will not result in a negative financial situation for those municipalities and, indeed, they will, on a per application basis, receive a \$500 fee from the program applicant. We're confident that the \$500 fee will be sufficient to address those concerns raised by some municipalities.

I note that a number of municipalities were very excited about the prospects of entering into this type of agreement. I had the opportunity to visit the Town of Faro last weekend for the Crane and Sheep Viewing Festival along with a number of my colleagues, including the Minister of Environment, Minister of Economic Development and the Premier. During my meeting with town council last week they expressed their support of moving forward with this program.

The Town of Faro does of course have a drinking water infrastructure within the municipality, but they also have a subdivision in their community that isn't serviced by their municipal drinking water, which is the Tintina subdivision. I know that the individuals living in the Tintina subdivision are very much looking forward to having access to this program and I believe even the mayor of Faro lives in that particular subdivision, so perhaps she herself will be able to access this program.

One of the interesting features of the program is that it actually allows a great deal of information to be gathered about groundwater by drilling these wells. When drinking water wells are drilled, there is an important amount of information that can come forward as a result. Previously we hadn't been collecting and compiling that data from the individual property owners. There wasn't ever the direction to do so, but as a result of the work that we had done previously under the water strategy, it became apparent that this was very important and valuable information and that it should be compiled, collected and deposited somewhere where it could be of use to the public.

So I was pleased to work with the Minister of Environment upon his becoming the Minister of Environment and my becoming the Minister of Community Services earlier this year to enter into an agreement between the two departments to allow for information sharing with regard to this specific project. On April 2, 2015 — through a memorandum from Kelly Eby, the director of Property Assessment and Taxation branch of Community Services to Heather Jirousek, the director of Water Resources branch of Department of Environment — the offer was extended to share information on an annual basis, including any forms completed in the past on a move-forward basis at year-end. Community Services will provide a copy of the form for all projects funded for that year to the Water Resources branch.

So Mr. Speaker, the intent of that collection of information is that the Department of Environment could consolidate that information and provide it to the public via

their Yukon water website. This would allow ultimately the members of the public who are interested in perhaps drilling a well or interested in the groundwater in their neighbourhood to go look at the website and see the experience of other people who have had wells drilled in their property to see a number of things, including the quality of the well, the depth of the well, the type of well and the relative success of the well on the properties in their neighbourhood. I think that's an excellent step forward and I think it's a testament to some excellent collaboration between departments to ensure that data is shared among us as government, but also among the Yukon public.

The domestic water well program is but one important feature of the way that Yukon government provides drinking water throughout the territory. I noted in some of the comments made by the Member for Copperbelt South about Watson Lake that there were a number of inaccurate statements there. Of course the legal issue that was between the Yukon government and the Town of Watson Lake has been set aside and put in abeyance. The Yukon government and Watson Lake continue to work together very collaboratively in that community to ensure that citizens in the municipality of Watson Lake have access to clean and safe drinking water. To that end, we are moving forward just this year, in this budget that we are debating in this session, with a new water treatment plant for that community. I believe that work is underway currently. I know that a tender has been awarded and over \$5 million is anticipated to be spent in the coming year to see that facility constructed in Watson Lake.

As the Member for Watson Lake noted, there are a number of individual households in the community of Watson Lake that don't have access to the municipal drinking water infrastructure and so many of them have wells. I know from previous experience as the Minister of Environment that some of the wells were challenging for some of the residents in Watson Lake. It is my hope that, by providing this program to those citizens in Watson Lake who don't have access to municipal drinking water infrastructure, they will be able to afford to drill new wells or improve existing wells, so that they can ensure that they have access to clean, safe drinking water.

We are continuing to work with the municipality of Watson Lake, both through their municipal infrastructure and through individual household wells, to ensure that all Yukoners, including those in Watson Lake, have access to clean, safe drinking water.

Drinking water is something that requires significant collaboration among Yukon government departments. Obviously Community Services manages drinking water supplies in unincorporated communities and provides access to loans through this program for eligible residents, as well as working with individual municipalities through a number of our funding programs, including Building Canada as well as the gas tax fund, to ensure that municipalities have up-to-date modern drinking water infrastructure.

There is also a role for the Department of Health and Social Services, which monitors and regulates drinking water

quality in Yukon in accordance with the Yukon *Public Health and Safety Act* and its regulations. The Department of Environment administers water-related policies, regulations and programs under the *Waters Act*; Highways and Public Works and the Yukon Housing Corporation develop and operate water systems for government-owned facilities in communities throughout Yukon.

Other governments and stakeholders also play a role. For example, the roles of other levels of government can vary in each community, but generally speaking, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada provides a funding and advisory role in First Nation communities to ensure safe drinking water.

Most First Nations, both self-governing and non-self-governing, manage all or part of their water supply and distribution, including trucked and private wells, to citizens and, in some cases, also provide public drinking water access points for self-haul and trucked water services for rural Yukoners. Municipalities manage the water supply and distribution within municipal boundaries and, in some cases, also provide public drinking water access points for self-haul and trucked water services for rural Yukoners.

Private citizens also have a role to play as it is estimated that there are approximately 2,000 private wells in the Yukon. Private systems may include wells or water holding tanks. Homeowners are responsible for the operation and maintenance, testing and treatment of their individual systems. The Department of Environment has collaborated with various departments, stakeholders and the public to develop and launch the new Yukon water strategy. Its objective is to account for all interests and values related to water in Yukon and to take a holistic approach in managing those values.

That water strategy was developed during my time as Minister of Environment. It was something that we had committed to in our platform of 2011 and was a priority identified by the Premier to me in becoming the Minister of Environment in 2011. It was something that I know the department officials worked very hard on over a number of years to develop, and now that we have completed that task, the department and its new minister, I'm sure, are looking forward to implementing the water strategy.

I think that this domestic well program change will go a long way toward enacting some of the values and goals identified in the water strategy, and I think that Yukoners will be well served by the water strategy and the specific actions therein.

There's much more to say but, as you've indicated to me, Mr. Speaker, I'm short on time so I will not be able to explain further some of the numerous investments that Yukon has made in drinking water over the years. As I have indicated previously, we have made investments in just about each and every community in Yukon over the last number of years to ensure that Yukoners have access to safe, clean drinking water, whether they are in municipalities, whether they are in areas covered by local advisory councils, or whether they are in unincorporated areas. We have made considerable investments to ensure that Yukoners do have that access.

The next steps for investment in drinking water infrastructure will come in the coming years as we move to implement the new Building Canada plan, which, of course, has drinking water at its core. Our focus has been ensuring that those important regulatory issues or pieces of infrastructure that have regulatory issues are addressed first and foremost in the implementation of the Building Canada fund. We will continue to do that and prioritize projects and direct long-term funding for local governments to plan and deliver infrastructure across the territory.

To date, the amount of Yukon projects approved under the Building Canada fund equals approximately \$265 million in eligible costs. Of this, \$182.9 million is being contributed by Canada, \$57.6 million by Yukon and \$24.9 million from other sources. Of course drinking water and waste water are at the top of those lists when it comes to those investments.

Under the Building Canada fund, \$2.5 million with an additional \$700,000 from Yukon was provided for the water treatment plant that opened in 2010 at Army Beach at Marsh Lake. That facility provides residents and commercial water delivery businesses with access to drinking water that meets national standards. We have invested \$1.5 million in Ross River for a new water treatment system and fill point that were commissioned in late 2012. In 2013, more than \$500,000 was available for the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. Close to \$1 million was for the Carcross-Tagish First Nation water treatment plant and fill point for local residents in Tagish and came on-line in 2013. The \$9 million for the Village of Haines Junction will fully replace the 1970s-era infrastructure in that community. The list goes on and on with regard to the way we have invested in drinking water in this territory.

I realize my time has elapsed so I will commend this motion to the House. I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing it forward. I thank the Minister of Justice, the former Minister of Community Services, for making the necessary legislative changes last year, and I look forward to acting on this motion this weekend at Haines Junction at the AYC.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I am happy to be able to speak to this motion here today. I want to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this motion on the floor. I think it's very important. Some of the stuff that the government does on this side — I don't think it gets recognized that much — whether it is in the media. We seem to be caught up in questions of the day quite often — whether it's the members opposite asking questions about their campaign platform and us implementing it. When we were knocking on doors back a few years ago, one of the things I heard loud and clear was the success of the 2004 rural domestic well water program. Over 250 property owners who were living in some of the unincorporated communities had the opportunity to access cost-affordable wells.

Just moving forward with that, my constituents told me — they said: "Hey, you know what? There is a lot of rural residential out here where we are never going to see water and sewer lines. We have great septic systems that meet the

standard, but we are hauling our water. Is there an opportunity within some of the municipalities that we could have this?" My commitment was, "I'll push for this for you." I am happy to see this come forward.

I listened to the Member for Copperbelt South talk about Haines Junction, and I don't know who she was talking to in Haines Junction, but I am glad to see that my municipality has signed up for that. One of the things that we debated was making sure that there was some money available for them for the administration, and there is \$500. It takes time. When you look at the *Municipal Act* and the *Assessment and Taxation Act*, that stuff takes time to go through. We rely on our officials to do a lot of that upfront work so we can get these programs out to Yukoners, and a lot of this plays into rural Yukon. This program is designed to facilitate the development of a domestic potable water source on rural residential properties outside of municipal boundaries or inside of municipal boundaries that will help ease the long-term costs of water delivery in some of these areas — access to a reliable, clean source of drinking water.

We will continue to work with our local governments. I am looking forward to being in my community in Haines Junction. I am glad to see AYC out there. It is a little bit of an economic driver. It's a busy weekend. There are lots of things going on this weekend.

I listened to Question Period today, and the members opposite asked questions and we only have a short time to answer the questions. There's a lot of stuff that the Department of Environment does do when it comes to water and when it comes to safe drinking water and monitoring it. I just wanted to speak a little bit about that today so I could get it on the record.

I had a chance to meet with — as I took over the portfolio — I would be remiss if I didn't thank my fellow ministers who made this happen — the previous Community Services minister and the Community Services minister now, and the Minister of Justice — and to push these programs forward — listening to Yukoners and pushing stuff forward.

In my department, I had the opportunity to tour and I got a briefing. My Water Resources branch is incredible. They're a great bunch of people out there, and I want to highlight some of the stuff that they do.

Our Water Resources branch has five water monitoring networks that measure water quality and quality parameters. The locations of the water monitoring stations — and this is for the members opposite and for all Yukoners — www.yukonwater.ca. Within the water data catalogue, there's a list of all the hydrometric and water quality monitoring stations and maps with station locations, and they're included in the appendices there.

The water quality monitoring — monitoring includes water licences, water quality audits, long-term trend and baseline monitoring. The water quality monitoring program — this will be good for the Member for Mayo-Tatchun — has solid data records near historic mining areas — for example, Keno Hill, Faro and Dawson — and near our major urban centres — Whitehorse — but has limited information in the

north and south of the Yukon where there's the potential for new resource development.

Of course, the department, in doing their due diligence and good work — two water quality trend stations were recently reactivated in Old Crow — the Porcupine and the Old Crow rivers — in response to the heightened interest from the community in the health of their water.

In addition to establishing monitoring programs, three baseline water quality studies are currently underway in the Eagle Plains/Upper Porcupine watershed — that's where there are oil and gas reserves — the southeast oil and gas region and the heavily staked White Gold district — potential cumulative effects. These are in response to the heightened natural resource exploration and the good economic certainty that we have in the Yukon here.

Hydrology monitoring is another thing that we do. This is the snow survey stuff. We do groundwater monitoring. The Yukon water strategy and water monitoring — there are new funds, and these are funds we have in these budgets that I'm hoping the members opposite will vote for at the end of session because it is important. These new funds obtained through the Yukon water strategy would greatly assist in the expanding of our hydrology, groundwater and water quality networks.

Using funds obtained through the Yukon water strategy, 48 hydrometric stations and five water quality stations will either be added or upgraded. The locations for current and planned station locations can be found in these attached maps at www.yukonwater.ca. Additional groundwater monitoring stations will also be added this year.

We have the hydrology networks, or Yukon hydrometric network that's in the Water Resources branch in the Department of Environment. We also have the Canada-Yukon hydrometric monitoring network, which is the Water Survey of Canada and Environment Canada. We have the Yukon meteorology network, which is also in the Department of Environment — the Yukon snow survey in the Department of Environment.

I want to talk a little bit about groundwater networks. This is key and it plays into people who are accessing this program that the Member for Watson Lake has on the floor today that we're talking about because this is baseline data.

This is a long-term groundwater monitoring program. That is, of course, in the branch. It's to collect information on long trends in groundwater in the area where there is infrastructure — country residential subdivisions. This long-term groundwater program was initiated in 2001 as part of a multidisciplinary research program started in the Wolf Creek drainage basin and later expanded to other locations. There are currently nine continuous monitoring stations in the network, four of which are in the Whitehorse area, as well as Faro, Dawson City, Watson Lake, Beaver Creek and Eagle Plains.

One of the other things I wanted to talk a little about is that my fellow colleague, the Minister of Community Services, talked about sharing information and our Yukon water well registry, which is again in the Water Resources branch. The program objectives and descriptions here are to

improve and to continue gathering knowledge on the characteristics of groundwater aquifers in the Yukon through information from the development of groundwater. Who knew groundwater was this technical and important?

The registry was established in 2005 as a publicly accessible groundwater database containing construction details of groundwater level information from water wells around the Yukon. Some information is provided voluntarily and some comes through the rural domestic well water program, which requires reporting about well-drilling through the water well drillers' form.

I know I have had the opportunity to talk to a few of the well drillers who actually do drill the wells. They are excited. They see a bit of an economic driver for them and the opportunity to drill more wells, but also the opportunity for rural residents and the municipalities to have access to this so they don't have to haul water so they can have water on-site at their home locations.

Our water quality index compiles important information also about the state of the water quality and it identifies emerging trends. It reduces data about the water quality body to a numbered scale and that corresponds to ratings, such as poor, good or excellent. This index evaluates the sustainability of the rivers to support aquatic life, but it also is about safe groundwater and drinking water.

So Mr. Speaker, I do commend this motion to the House. I'm glad that all members will be supporting this motion. I think not everybody has the opportunity to live in downtown Whitehorse. We have people in the rural communities who are very important, especially to a few of us rural MLAs in this House today on both sides. I think it's key that we have a program like this. I'm glad to see all the municipalities are going to be signing up to it.

When we get out to Haines Junction this weekend and the municipalities and this government signs this, I think it's going to be a good example of this government listening to Yukoners, working for Yukoners and bringing a program forward that is well needed for healthy, safe drinking water for all Yukoners now and in the future.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward this motion, Motion No. 970:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to enter into bilateral agreements with each interested municipality to implement the existing domestic water well program within municipalities.

The rural well program has been very successful and I know a number of my constituents have taken advantage of it. I am glad to see it being extended to our incorporated municipalities. I know I have talked to councils in both Carmacks and Mayo, which will be affected by this, and they were both very happy to be able to endorse it.

There are a number of things around ensuring that there is clean, safe drinking water for all Yukoners and this helps in our municipalities and certainly in our rural areas to ensure that it is affordable. I did have a little bit of concern about the \$500 fee that would be levied. I am not sure whether that

would be in all cases, in all municipalities, or whether that would be optional within the municipalities or not. As members are aware, drilling a well is an expensive endeavour and to have a \$500 fee on top of that may make the difference. I am assuming that that \$500 fee would be — the municipality has the option to levy that. Perhaps members opposite can — I see a nod "yes". I look forward to how that will be administered, because I know that trying to drill a well is expensive and sometimes an extra cost may be just too much.

As I said, the rural domestic program has been a big success and a number of people in my jurisdiction — my riding — have taken advantage of that and speak very highly of it. It gives them a lot of options. I know I looked at it, but because I am not on the road system, it was going to be very expensive to get a rig into my place, but I know people on the roads have benefited from it and it has been very successful.

Such a program does give us a number of options to consider and a number of opportunities as well primarily around data collection. When the fracking committee went to Alberta, they were told by the regulator that they had thousands — thousands — of domestic wells and thousands of oil wells that were drilled and they were only then starting to gain an understanding of how groundwater and aquifers interacted and how groundwater, aquifers and surface waters interacted. This is an area that I think we need to find out a lot more about and how it works. The drilling of wells — I would hope they're all recorded and that data is collected from them. That would be important. I know that in some jurisdictions the well quality — the quality of the water — changes from within 200 or 300 meters. Sometimes the water quality changes and the depth where you can access water changes.

I think this is an opportunity to develop a favourability map to look at where our aquifers are, how they flow, and how we access them, as well as determining baseline data for water quality. I see this also as an opportunity for local businesses to begin to develop the expertise to be able to test our waters, to be able to do the assessments necessary so that we can determine what is in our water, how we can determine whether it's safe or whether it's remaining safe. We can assess whether that's changing over time. This is particularly important now as we start to look at how we can deal with climate change and make the adjustments necessary. As we know with climate change and warming, particularly here in the north, it is affecting our permafrost, particularly in areas where there's discontinuous permafrost, which much of Yukon is covered by. What changes are happening? How is our groundwater changing? What does that mean?

The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin mentioned how, in his riding, a lake disappeared. A lake that had been there for generations suddenly left. The more studies we can have, the more data we can collect on wells and on our water system, the better that would be.

I know that the Minister of Community Services mentioned that there were a number of ongoing tests being done. We were beginning to develop a sense of what we have in the Yukon with our endowment of water, both above ground and underground, but I caution people not to jump to

conclusions to ensure that we invest wisely and that we invest significantly so that we can understand our systems. As I mentioned, in Alberta where there have been wells being dug for well over 100 years and where there have been numerous oil wells and gas wells dug, they have far, far more data than we have and, according to their Department of Environment and their information, they are just now starting to get a handle on how the aquifers flowed, where they flowed; whether it was along the same lines as the water systems and the river systems, whether it was different. I know there was some talk about the water in the Cochrane area migrating into the Bow River valley. It's important that we understand these, not only for industrial use, but also for our own use because we know that our climate is changing and our water systems are changing.

This is a real opportunity to collect the data. In some jurisdictions, the water is lessening, there's less water and the water table is dropping. If we have these wells, let's make sure that we are testing them on a regular basis and that we are evaluating them so that this year I may have to go down 100 feet, but maybe next year somebody in the neighbourhood only has to go down 20 feet. Maybe the following year or with climate change, they might have to go down 200 feet. This is the type of information that can be beneficial. It can be economical and allow us to efficiently use, map and understand our water resources.

I thank the Minister of Environment for bringing up Keno this afternoon because, in my question, we did talk about the water in Keno. There are lessons to be learned there. As the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources alluded to, the toxic water from the Onek mine is going through the tailings and into ground. What that means is that the toxicity is building a plume into the groundwater system. We are not sure how far that extends or what happens when it does do that, but we do know that there are contaminated wells in Keno — wells that are no longer usable. We also know that the well that is being used — the community well — is usable now. There is concern that, with this toxic effluent going into the ground, it may or may not move in a plume toward that. The concern is that once the groundwater is contaminated, it is very, very difficult to clean up. In fact, we are not sure we can. Scientists have looked at that in other areas in other jurisdictions and, if it can be done at all, it is an incredible expense.

It is great that we are getting these groundwater wells; let's test them regularly. That is what the citizens of Keno were looking for. When we contacted the medical health officer, he was surprised that the tests had been discontinued. We have to make sure that, when we do test, we have the facilities and we have the capacity to be able to test the water on a regular basis. When people drill in a community, they want, after they have spent that money, to be assured that the water in their wells is safe. I think back a few years to Pelly Crossing — Pelly Crossing was on a well water system, but there were also septic tanks, and that created a problem. There were serious concerns that some of the septic tanks were contaminating the wells. Over many years of drilling and many years of using septic tanks, Pelly Crossing worked very

hard with this government and the federal government to ensure that now they are on water delivery and that they are also on a sewage disposal system. One of the concerns that I heard about is that, within a municipality, the wells will be in closer proximity.

I know that there are bylaws in most of the municipalities, but it bears paying close attention that these wells are not in proximity to septic systems or to other wells or to sources of contaminants. Many of the communities have legacy projects that are contaminated, and there are contaminated sites, be they sites that the Government of Canada used or the military when they were building highways, or whether the current Yukon government uses them in Highways and Public Works buildings and maintenance yards.

We have increased our vigilance and we have moved ahead, but many of these sites are legacy sites and there is concern. I would ask that the Yukon government be aware of that and ensure that local residents have access to any well data and any testing data before they go to the expense of drilling a well and that, once the wells are drilled, they are tested in a feasible way on a regular basis for any changes or any contaminants that may occur.

The other aspect of that is to ensure that there's a data system where wells that have been dug are tracked, so that in 10 years, in 15 years, in 25 years, we know where the wells have been dug and when they were dug, what kind of flow rate there was, and the data on those wells so it's available to people now and in the future. That's again where collecting baseline data is important, because then we can go back and assess it, so if there is activity in the area — rural, municipal or industrial — we do have that data collected and are able to move forward with it.

I thank the member for bringing this forward. I think it is a good step by this government. I know it's supported in my jurisdictions and I certainly will be supporting it. I commend them for their efforts. As I said, I've spoken to many country residential residents, as well as residents in both Mayo and Carmacks, and they are looking forward to it. The residents within the communities are glad to have access to it. I thank the government for making this program available.

It's important to recognize that many country residential subdivisions must either have water delivery or drill their own well. Water delivery in some cases is not possible and in other places is extremely expensive.

As I said, the mayors of both Carmacks and Mayo indicated that they were in favour of this motion. They look forward to signing agreements to bring this program into effect before the summer. I thank the member opposite for bringing this forward and I congratulate the Government of Yukon and Community Services for bringing this forward. A lot of work was done on that and I thank them for making safe water a priority for rural and municipalities in the time going forward.

Ms. White: Excellent; lucky me. I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward her motion.

I was just listening to some of the exchange and debate. I have a rural riding and friends who obviously live in places where water does not come out of the tap unless you have a well or a holding system. I spend a lot of time on the government websites just trying to figure out how accessible information is and where to find it and things. On the Community Services website — it's a big website. It's complicated and it has lots of things and it's interesting to note that, in order to find the domestic water well program, you have to go through the Property Assessment and Taxation tab and it leads you to the information. It has a lot of stuff written down about whether a well is right for you and where you want to put it and things to think about with a well.

Listening to the Minister of Environment when he talked about the www.yukonwater.ca website and he was talking about the well registry, I think it's important to know that on that Yukon water website right now, under modern Yukon water, so far only 18 out of the 29 networks are available on that water data catalogue and one that is not included is the Yukon water well registry, so it is not easily accessible right now. It gives you many, many different departments to contact to see if you're interested in really following up where those wells are and to contact that registry.

In recent times, I've been learning some of the complications about having a well and the proximity to septic fields, to holding tanks, to low ground, to high ground, to industrialization, to cattle — all those interesting things — and one of the questions I had that I'm not sure we'll be able to get answered is: In rural residential areas like Mount Sima where you have kind of mixed-use lots — so you have both the commercial property and a residence on that same property — in questions during Community Services the answer I was told was, no, someone who had a mixed-use lot couldn't access programs like this. I'm still trying to figure out if there are programs that they can access, but just that then there are people in, for example, the Mount Sima area who won't necessarily be able to qualify for this. I think it's important that there is this relationship-building exercise between the Yukon government and municipalities.

I think this is something that people have said that they are looking forward to on the weekend, and this is a good piece of business to work on. A lot of the questions that I have around domestic wells just really have to do with process and trying to understand the kinds of locations and the different departments that are in play. You have Community Services, Environment, Health and Social Services — just to name a couple. The legislation is under the Department of Justice. There are heaps and heaps of information, so when you are trying to decipher this as a layperson and trying to understand where you might be able to direct someone for help, it gets really complicated because, for one thing, you have to navigate the website and try to figure out where you're going and then who you can talk to or who you can send them to.

Part of the constant challenge, I think, for government is to make sure that we have that information easily accessible and that it is in a way that people can not only find it, but they can actually work with it. I had never actually looked for the

domestic water well program before, and to know that it is under Property Assessment and Taxation is an interesting thing, as opposed to having it right out and easy to find on its own.

My questions — which I don't think can actually get answered here. The questions that I would like to put into the universe right now are: What programs exist for people who have mixed-use property — a combination of industrial and residence? Is there the same similar financial support that they can access with the loans — the five-, 10-, or 15-year loans? I think that would be a benefit to people who don't have large businesses but still have a small commercial enterprise on their property.

I guess with that, Mr. Speaker, I will let the Minister of Justice speak, and I look forward to hearing what others have to say.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: It is a pleasure to rise here today in support of the motion. I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing it forward. It is a pleasure to see this program moving forward and being extended into municipalities. I thank the Member for Watson Lake for acknowledging the fact that there was legislation brought forward last fall, which I had the honour of bringing forward to change the legislative structure through the addition of Bill No. 80, the *Domestic Water Well Program Amendments Act*, which amended the *Assessment and Taxation Act* and *Municipal Act* to provide a mechanism to extend the rural domestic water well program and provide property owners in all participating Yukon municipalities with the opportunity to access the successful rural water well program.

As a few of my colleagues have noted, the estimate is that there are more than 500 properties that could be eligible to take advantage of this new drinking water option for their homes and, of course, that would be estimated over the life of the program in terms of who might be eligible to apply. The annual amount would be subject to appropriations in the Legislature and, as members may know, this year the government has allocated \$400,000 for the municipal portion of the program, which is an increase on top of the previously existing allocation of \$800,000 in the rural component.

The way that the program has been structured is that, partway through the year, by mid-summer, if one part of the program was fully used and there was remaining money in the other part partway through the summer, there would be the ability for the remaining funds in either the municipal portion or the rural portion to be used for other properties within the one that had fully expended the amount allocated for it, but structured with lines between the two parts of the programs to ensure that the first opportunity in each part of the program goes to either rural or municipal property owners, as the case may be.

The rural well program, since 2004 when it was implemented — and I was pleased to play a role in implementing it. It was suggested to me by constituents. Through the support of the ministers of the day and the caucus of the day, it was implemented and put in place. As members

are probably familiar, it was based on the long-running rural electrification program in terms of its structure — that being that it allows property owners to borrow money. It then ensures that the money is recovered to the public purse through the application of a local improvement charge that is set, through regulation, and applied annually on property owners' tax bills.

As with the electrification program, property owners can borrow no more than 25 percent of the total assessed value of their property. This program also works in conjunction with the rural electrification program, so someone can't have borrowed more than 25 percent of the assessed value of their property through both programs.

Of course, the intention of that is that it has been a very successful model in ensuring security of repayment, not allowing someone to take on too large of a burden of loans owed to the government, and also ensuring that government is providing some degree of cost control, so the total amounts borrowed under the program are spread among a number of people rather than on single large projects.

For that reason as well, the rural well program has a cap on it of a maximum of \$50,000 that can be borrowed under the program and, through the application of the 25 percent cap and the \$50,000 cap, it is intended to prevent too much money going into individual projects or people becoming overextended.

Since 2004, the successful rural water well program has provided nearly 250 families in rural Yukon with loans to develop drinking water sources through the construction of private wells. In the 2013-14 fiscal year, 30 projects were funded, for a total of \$728,607. For the last fiscal year, I don't have the final amounts, but I know that, as of the information I had a few months ago, there were 20 projects underway in that fiscal year.

The legislation that was passed unanimously by this House last fall was following consultation that occurred during my time as Minister of Community Services with all Yukon municipalities regarding four options that I wrote to them about, asking for their input on their preferred option.

Government went with the option that was preferred by municipalities, and the legislation was then tabled and passed in this Assembly last fall. Through the continued efforts of the current Minister of Community Services, it has gone forward to the point where municipalities have indicated that they are prepared to sign on to the agreements to participate, which is a key requirement of the legislation. It is something that we look forward to seeing proceed this year and seeing Yukon families, including my constituents in Hidden Valley and MacPherson, have the opportunity to apply under the municipal domestic water well program and hopefully see their applications being successful and wells put in that will benefit them and their families while providing them up to 15 years to repay the loans at Bank of Canada's prime interest rate.

It should be noted and emphasized that, just as with the rural water well portion of the program, the structure of this program is on a cost-recovery basis. The administrative

charge of \$500 that I know one member of the Official Opposition made mention of — and, if I heard correctly, I believe he misunderstood or mistakenly recalled the reason for that \$500 administrative fee. I would again draw the member's attention, and the attention of anyone else who is interested, back to November 17, 2014, when I noted to the House on that date on page 5123 in Hansard that the administrative charge was: "...a request that came specifically from municipalities. Our suggestion — and frankly the Yukon government's preference — would be simply to offer the program directly to residents of municipalities. We see the municipality itself also deriving the benefit, not only from having satisfied citizens who are able to access government support for increasing their property value, but it does add to the tax base of a municipality without a direct cost to them..."

Again, we understand the reason the municipalities did want the administrative fee. We did agree to put that in place, but members should understand that it is not a fee that the government is charging property owners for accessing the program. It is a fee that, based on the concerns and requests of municipalities, we agreed to add into the total cost. That additional \$500 is ultimately an additional cost to property owners, which, as I noted, was not our preference, but we believe that if that was what was required to get municipalities comfortable with and in agreement with offering the program, then it was certainly better than residents not having the option of accessing the program.

Again, briefly quoting what I said on November 27 in this Assembly in reference to the administrative fee — and I quote: "...our preference to keep it as low as possible for property owners because that cost would be directly added on to the amount that the property owners would have to borrow..."

I will not go on at great length, as I know there are other members who would like to speak to this. I would like to again thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this forward and thank my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, for continuing the work on this.

I would like to also note that I do have to correct the Member for Copperbelt South, who appeared to be under misimpression in her comments that the program that was created in 2004 was simply renaming an existing program. That is absolutely incorrect. When we created the program, there was no well program in place for Yukon citizens to access. What the member may be confused in thinking about was a program that, I believe, had been about a decade before, but I would have to check the exact dates that it operated. Yukon Housing Corporation had at one point offered a loan program to allow people to drill a well on their property. That program was a good example of what not to do because the repayment rate on those loans was quite poor. Also, if people drilled a well and did not reach water, they were not required to repay the loan and so there were a number of wells drilled throughout the territory that went to the exact depth that the loan would pay for and, if water hadn't been reached, people simply walked away from it and they didn't have to pay anything for that.

The structure of this program is one where it maintains the responsibility and the risk held by property owners. They decide how far they wish to drill the well. They decide what instructions to give the well driller. This is simply a financing program and, rather than putting the risk on their fellow taxpayers or the public purse, people do, under this program, reap the benefits of a successful well-drilling experience but also maintain the risk that, if they do not reach water, they will be responsible for those costs.

That is one of the reasons why, as appears to have been partially noted by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King in referencing information on the website, there is a very sincere attempt by staff of Property Assessment and Taxation to ensure that Yukoners considering using the program give full consideration to the risks entailed in that, enter with their eyes open and recognize that this does not guarantee they will have water at the end of it, but it has, for more Yukoners who have accessed the program, resulted in them successfully drilling a well, providing water for their families and covering the equipment required to treat that water if there is treatment required to ensure water quality.

Again, it's over \$5.4 million that has been expended of Yukon government money under this program in support of helping nearly 250 families in Yukon, and the number of course will grow. This program has been successful in providing water to Yukon citizens and reducing their costs for accessing water well services.

With that I will conclude my remarks, but I do want to, before I sit down, thank all of the staff of Department of Community Services who were involved in proceeding with this policy work. The timelines for consultation with municipalities, developing the legislation last fall and moving forward with these regulations have been quite tight, and staff did an excellent job in getting that work done. I very sincerely appreciate that work that they did.

I would like to specifically acknowledge several staff members and, if I have missed anyone who was involved in this, I will also pass on my apology to them for that error on my part. I would like to acknowledge the work of Kelly Eby, Mark Evans-Ehrlich, Paul Moore, Charlene Beauchemin, Kelvin Leary, Shehnaz Ali and Lawrence Purdy, who did legislative drafting on the regulatory amendments that were required. Again, thank you to all who have been involved; apologies if I've missed someone who was involved in this work. I very sincerely appreciate — and I know a number of my constituents, who are looking forward to accessing the program, also very sincerely appreciate — the work of all the Community Services and Justice staff who have been involved in making this possible.

I would also like to thank municipalities that have been involved in this, and I particularly note and recognize the work of the Association of Yukon Communities and their involvement in this. With that, I will commend this motion to the House and look forward to seeing this program in municipalities made a reality very soon.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I would just like to take a couple of minutes to speak to Motion No. 970, and I would like to thank the Member for Watson Lake as well.

I think this is a great example of this government understanding the importance of water to Yukoners. A few years back, this government implemented the rural well program for residents living outside of municipal boundaries and, because of the success of this program the government had the vision to pursue this new program.

I would first like to take the opportunity to thank the Minister of Community Services as well as all the staff for the great work they've done and undertaken to bring this program forward, but I would also like to thank the previous minister for his dedicated work on this file. Over the course of two and a half years before this, the previous minister and I had discussed this, or a program similar to this, at quite great length. I do appreciate the work he did to bring this forward.

What is this program? It's an affordable and convenient way for Yukoners to have clean, safe drinking water in their homes where it may not be otherwise possible. Private homes within the Yukon government property-taxing authority are eligible, and the program is for drilling a new underground well, installation of a surface water well or improvements to an existing well as long as it is used for domestic use. It's important to note as well that this work must be done by a registered service provider and that this program is not available for any components related to the hauling of bulk water.

As the Minister of Community Services mentioned earlier, the Tintina subdivision is in the town boundaries of the Town of Faro. It is just one example, but a good example, of where this program may be very beneficial.

Currently the Town of Faro has a forced water main system, which is great unless you live on the other side of the river in the Tintina subdivision. Unfortunately, they are not able to share in this luxury. Currently the residents of the Tintina subdivision have to haul their water themselves. Now some may consider that this is a fairly minor inconvenience, but trust me, Mr. Speaker, when it is 40 below and you are trying to haul your water in a 200-gallon tank in the back of a pickup, you quickly realize that it is not merely a minor inconvenience.

In Teslin, the water is delivered from house to house by way of the town's water truck, but surprisingly there are a lot of residents who would prefer a different method of having their water and most would rather have a well. This program would give many of those residents the opportunity to have their own well. As well, the cost savings to the Village of Teslin by not having to drive to as many houses and deliver as much water is a great cost-savings to the town, as well as a reduction in greenhouse gases, if the truck doesn't have to run eight hours a day, six days a week. I guess in my mind, it's a win-win situation there.

I look forward to attending the AYC AGM this weekend in Haines Junction. I will be happy to be in attendance to witness the signing of these agreements between the municipalities and the Minister of Community Services. I

would like to again thank all those who have been instrumental in bringing this program to fruition and I look forward to seeing this motion come to a vote and I hope to see it pass with the full support of this House.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I wasn't going to say a huge amount until I listened to many of the speakers and found that, from the opposition, there were a number of inaccuracies. I thought I would go back a little bit in history too, as I spent a little bit of time in municipal politics and I can give you a little bit of history to this process.

Some years ago — I believe I was even president of the Association of Yukon Communities at the time — municipalities entered into an agreement with the territorial government where rural well drilling in our own communities could be done. The difficulty was that it had to be financed by the municipality and the municipality was 100-percent responsible for collecting any fees or return on their investment through taxes. This didn't upset too many communities very much until we realized that any money we borrowed from the territorial government to work on that program was reflected as part of the municipal debt. If you are a very small community here in the territory, a couple of wells drilled at \$30,000 would exhaust your municipal debt, so we quickly realized that, other than the City of Whitehorse and perhaps Watson Lake or Dawson City, no one else was really effectively included in the program. It was at that time we began discussions with the then Minister of Community Services to enact a program similar to what we have today.

I have to tell you that a couple of elections have happened — well, one territorial election has happened since then — and I was really happy to see this group continue on from the past government to enact the changes necessary to legislation to bring in this piece of legislation. Especially for the small communities, this was a very important step.

It was interesting — when I listened to the Member for Copperbelt South, it sounded like the member opposes future development of rural residential lots in the territory simply because of the difficulty in setbacks required for municipal wells. Then I heard again from one other member opposite about the various difficulties in locating a well and also the difficulties of finding the information on the Internet. Mr. Speaker, let me be the first to tell you that I'm a technological troglodyte. I have absolutely no skills whatsoever. In fact, I have to get my two-year-old grandson to show me how to take pictures with a cellphone. However, when I heard the member opposite say how difficult it was to locate this problem, I went to Google — I know that — and I put in what I wanted to look at. I wanted to look at Yukon water wells. Lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, there it came — all the information you would need to apply for a water well in Yukon. I didn't have to go through — I can't remember which department she said — municipal services. I didn't have to go anywhere. I went on the Internet, told them what I wanted, and there it was: Yukon government. I have to congratulate Community Services for making it so easy to find this information on the Internet.

I also heard, Mr. Speaker — and I have to laugh at this one — about the many disagreements with municipalities and the terrible relationship between Yukon government and municipalities. I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, disagreement is okay. Disagreement is not only okay. In many instances, it forces people to think, it forces people to compromise — I guess I answered my own question there when I said it forces people to think. Now I understand why the members opposite disagree with any kind of conflict with municipalities or First Nations or whatever. It forces you to think and to look at alternatives. I think that's one of the great things that some of these disagreements have resulted in. They have resulted in compromises; they have resulted in very innovative solutions to problems that we've had. In fact when I was recently reading the latest Conference Board of Canada report, they said, not only is it okay to disagree — they were doing this in evaluation of agreements with First Nations across the country — they said it's okay also to disagree with First Nations, as well as with municipalities. In fact, Mr. Speaker — and I take this directly from the Conference Board of Canada, the rest of Canada — looks to Yukon as an example of how relationships should work.

I look at that as a kind of impartial evaluation of the system, and I know the Member for Mayo-Tatchun doesn't agree with me and maybe that's a good thing. It will force him to think once in a while.

Anyway, it was great to see an authority such as the Conference Board of Canada saying it was okay to disagree, it's okay to think, and it's okay to use a little humour once in a while. I've realized that's impossible for the Leader of the Official Opposition to do, but it's okay to do that as well.

I congratulate the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this motion forward. I agree that the Member for Klondike has shown a turn of humour every once in a while and I appreciate that. I think it's a good thing.

I congratulate the Member for Watson Lake for bringing this motion forward and I congratulate not only the minister but also all of the communities that are involved in this, because I think this is something that will enhance the services available in many of the communities in the territory and it can only be good in the long term.

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

Ms. McLeod: This has been a very interesting discussion that we've had this afternoon. Frankly, I was little bit disappointed to hear some of the comments from the Member for Copperbelt South. Perhaps I need to remind her that I live in Watson Lake and I drink the water, and I don't have too many surprises about the water down there.

It bears repeating, I think, in some cases, a little bit of information about drinking water if you'll just bear with me.

The Yukon government has a long history of investment in drinking water, in supply and delivery, and in making sure that Yukoners are afforded quality drinking water that is consistent with the Canadian drinking water standards.

Much of this continual upgrading of our water systems is paid for in part through the gas tax fund or Building Canada. I just want to go through a little bit of the investments that government has made with various other entities, being municipalities or First Nation governments.

The gas tax fund has been accessed for key drinking water projects. One of these is with the Selkirk First Nation, which accessed \$233,820 to continue construction of the small-diameter piped water system to provide clean drinking water to residents, and that was in 2007.

The Kluane First Nation: \$81,160 to relocate a house in order to protect the well head for the community well, which was their main water source, and \$12,376 to install new water distribution lines from the community well to community buildings. Of course, this is ongoing.

The Liard First Nation: \$87,000 to evaluate landfill sites at its Albert Creek subdivision and to train Liard First Nation citizens to water quality monitoring, and this is ongoing. Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation: \$331,408 to build a shed to house their water truck, and that was in 2010. In 2011, the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun: \$535,000 to install a geothermal heating system and central water supply components for their new government house. Phase 2 of this project saw an additional contribution of \$491,666. The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation: \$487,091 to purchase a new water truck and sewer truck to provide essential services for sewer and water delivery in Old Crow. That was as recently as 2012.

The City of Whitehorse: \$3.4 million to develop new groundwater wells in Riverdale as part of the Selkirk well development to provide drinking water that meets regulations. The sum of \$1.8 million was approved to construct a backup well and a new well in southeast Riverdale, and \$7.4 million was approved in 2010 to replace the water station building, chlorination facility — and included the decommissioning of the old Selkirk pumphouse; \$25,391 was used to install year-round water sampling stations in three locations that would collect information on bacterial matter in the water; \$28,000 was used to replace water cross-connections and bleeders in 250 homes to update the systems and prevent freezing and overflow into the sewage system; \$160,000 was used to make improvements to the Crestview pumphouse, ensuring efficient water distribution. Ground temperature monitoring stations were installed at the cost of \$18,713. This notifies the city when water service freeze protection should be turned on or off and ensures continuous access to the potable water supply. Whitehorse also used \$440,000 to upgrade underground water infrastructure as well as other road infrastructure on Hanson Street; \$30,000 was approved for design consultation of water metre systems for the City of Whitehorse; \$3.3 million was approved to upgrade the Porter Creek reservoir to meet current and future needs.

In the Village of Teslin: \$61,200 for new water tanks at the recreation complex. The Town of Faro: \$40,851 to improve the energy efficiency and reliability of the water system by replacing the water pump motor in well house No. 1 with a variable frequency drive motor. The Town of Faro

used \$14,129 to purchase an efficient variable-frequency drive motor for pumphouse No. 3 to pump raw water to the pumphouse for the distribution of drinking water.

In the City of Dawson, \$1.7 million is for two projects to improve its well intake system and two HVAC systems in its water distribution pumphouse chlorination room. The GUDI assessment used \$53,383 to assess the impact of surface water impact on three drinking wells; \$57,281 was spent on a water quality program, which would optimize Dawson's drinking water supply and distribution; \$656,000 was approved to replace the piping in the water valve chamber; \$134,886 was used to upgrade burners in the pumphouse boilers; \$558,600 was used to cover design and engineering requirements for well upgrades; and in July 2014, \$1.7 million was approved to replace and upgrade drinking water wells. The Village of Mayo has accessed \$270,612 to rejuvenate its warm-water wells.

With the introduction of the Building Canada plan, Yukon was given another opportunity to prioritize projects and direct long-term funding for local governments to plan and deliver infrastructure across the country. To date, the total amount of Yukon projects approved under the Building Canada fund equals about \$265 million in eligible costs. Of this, \$182.9 million is being contributed by Canada, \$57.6 million by Yukon, and \$24.9 million from other sources. This money is used for investments in drinking water, waste water, local roads, solid waste and green energy infrastructure initiatives.

The Yukon infrastructure plan is currently being updated and will help guide the infrastructure investment for the Yukon for the next five years under the new Building Canada fund. Safe drinking water will continue to be a key priority. The following investments have been made in drinking water under the Building Canada fund: \$2.5 million with an additional \$700,000 from Yukon was provided for the water treatment plant that opened in 2010 at Army Beach in Marsh Lake; \$1.5 million in Ross River for a new water treatment system and fill point that was commissioned in late 2012, providing residents with drinking water that meets national standards. In 2013, a \$580,000 upgrade was made to the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations water treatment facility, which was originally built in 1970 in the Takhini River subdivision. This facility provides residents with drinking water that meets national standards; \$990,000 for the Carcross-Tagish First Nation water treatment plant and fill point for local residents in Tagish. This facility came on-line in 2013 and provides residents with water that meets national standards. \$9 million for the Village of Haines Junction — and this will fully replace the 1970s-era infrastructure with an upgraded water treatment system, piped distribution, a new reservoir and pump system that will provide residents with access to drinking water that meets national standards. I believe this project is complete.

We go on and on and on and, of course, in my own home community, the Yukon government has been working with the Town of Watson Lake to provide — I think over the last two years — in the neighbourhood of \$7.5 million to replace the

water and sewer lines and, of course, extend those water and sewer lines. That is part of Canada's aging infrastructure that dates from before some folks here were born. I won't mention any names.

I am happy to say that this year, the Government of Yukon is contributing through Building Canada in excess of \$5 million to refurbish and rebuild the water treatment plant in Watson Lake, for which we are quite happy.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, the investment by Yukon has been extensive, long-lasting and continuous. Every year, more work is being done. I was a little disappointed to hear from the Member for Copperbelt South when she suggested that the impetus for this motion was in regard to Watson Lake — really, this is about providing safe water for all Yukoners throughout the territory.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Moorcroft: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yea, nil nay.

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

Motion No. 970 agreed to

Motion No. 972

Clerk: Motion No. 972, standing in the name of Mr. Elias.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to improve Yukon's regulatory regime and infrastructure so that Yukon is well-positioned to benefit when the mineral industry emerges from the current downturn by:

(1) working with Yukon First Nations, Yukoners and industry on the mine licensing improvement initiative and a mineral development strategy for Yukon;

(2) investing in mine training through organizations like the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining;

(3) working with the Yukon Mining Alliance to highlight Yukon's investment potential for resources; and

(4) investing in new and existing transportation and energy infrastructure to help support economic development.

Mr. Elias: The global mineral sector is experiencing a downturn and industry has been telling all governments to take this time to prepare for when they are ready to grow again. I rise today to speak in support of Motion No. 972, urging the Government of Yukon to improve Yukon's regulatory regime and infrastructure so that Yukon is well-positioned to benefit when the mineral industry emerges from the current downturn by: (1) working with Yukon First Nations, Yukoners and industry on the mine licensing improvement initiative and a mineral development strategy for Yukon; (2) investing in mine training through organizations like the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining; (3) working with the Yukon Mining Alliance to highlight Yukon's investment potential for resources; and (4) investing in new and existing transportation and energy infrastructure to help support economic development.

This motion speaks to how the Yukon government can do our part to position Yukon as a leader in the mineral sector. The recent Fraser Institute report ranked Yukon number one in global mineral potential. It's up to us to do the work to make sure that we can take advantage of this standing once it rebounds.

This motion speaks to a number of key areas we can work on to improve our standing in industry. I would like to begin by highlighting some key points with regard to the mine licensing improvement initiative. The Yukon government is leading a cooperative effort with assessors, regulators, First Nations and industry to improve the timelines, clarity, transparency and effectiveness of the mine licensing system. This work will establish common standards, simplify processes and clarify the roles of regulatory agencies so as to provide certainty for companies that want to do business in the Yukon.

We are actively seeking First Nations' views on how they want to be involved in decisions regarding mining activity and on how they derive benefits from mining. It's very important to note that the proposed changes in no way lessen environmental protections or oversight of mining activity but instead improve the regulatory systems and their ability to ensure environmental standards are met.

Yukon government has established a working group with First Nations to develop an agenda for this initiative as well as other mining-related issues of joint concern. Yukon maintains its top-10 standing for mining attractiveness worldwide. Through cooperative efforts like these, we continue to seek to improve this standing.

Clearer and simpler processes will mean that licences will be easier to assess, interpret and enforce, and more time can be spent on carrying out mining operations, ensuring licence conditions are respected and protecting our lands and waters.

The *Waters Act* and regulations have not been updated to reflect the post-devolution responsibilities of the Yukon government and the applicable processes and responsibilities of the Yukon government under the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*. As a result, there is a redundancy in the licensing process due to the broad mandate of the Water Board and lack of specific regulations or policy direction to guide it in its deliberations on water licensing. The Water Board, the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board, First Nations, industry and the departments of ECO, EMR and Environment are engaged in a multi-faceted strategy to update regulations, policies and processes by December 2015. There appears to be a high degree of interest and commitment to the initiative by the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board and the Water Board.

Some of the key improvements anticipated under the mine licence improvement initiative include: clarity on roles and responsibilities among departments and between the Water Board, Energy, Mines and Resources, and the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board; regulatory and/or policy changes to address overlaps between the water and quartz licensing process and management of these licences, including amending water regulations and quartz regulations, developing water quality and effluent discharge standards and/or methodologies, clarifying water licence requirements including post-mine closure, development of standards for the design, construction, operation and maintenance of works related to the use of water or the deposit of waste, development of a Yukon-based acid rock drainage and metal leaching guideline, determination of formalized processes and procedures around reclamation, closure and security requirements; and work to clarify and codify First Nation participation in major mine management and formalize government consultation processes with First Nations on major mines, enhance First Nations' access to the benefits of quartz mining projects through appropriate policy or regulatory measures.

With regard to the mine licensing improvement initiative, a couple final points are: the mine licensing improvement initiative has Yukon's Water Board, Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board and numerous government departments meeting to determine such ways to better coordinate the regulatory process, with the main goal being to reduce overlap and duplication during the mine licensing process.

When complete, this initiative will provide more certainty for companies wanting to do business in the Yukon. This initiative will help ensure that Yukon's management systems around exploration and development are comprehensive, responsive and predictable for all parties involved. This will help boost industry's confidence and revitalize the mining sector in the territory.

Moving on to the mineral development strategy, a top priority for government is to ensure we are setting a strong vision for our mineral industry and to demonstrate that we are listening to the people and companies who do business and

live in the Yukon. Yukon government is developing a mineral development strategy that will help ensure Yukon is competitive and well-positioned on the global stage for mineral investment. The purpose of the strategy is to set goals and identify actions government will do to create an attractive investment climate, regulator certainty and strong First Nation relations.

The strategy will also emphasize the importance of geoscience, infrastructure, business climate and the environment. The strategy will provide the context for the mine licensing improvement initiative that will improve Yukon's regulatory system. First Nations have a significant role in both initiatives. The strategy will be developed through a multi-step process that includes early engagement with First Nations, the mineral industry and stakeholders, followed by consultation on the draft.

The mineral development strategy will set a course for achieving a revitalized mineral industry in the Yukon. This strategy is part of Yukon government's overall goal to ensure Yukon is competitive on the global stage for investment. We will also be looking at the 2014 Fraser Institute and what other jurisdictions are doing to provide input into the strategy. A multi-step process is envisioned and some of them include early engagement, meeting one-on-one with key representatives of First Nations, mineral industry and stakeholders, industry groups, and conservation groups to obtain background information and identify initial issues for the strategy.

Another step is document preparation, development of background documents and seeking Cabinet approval of a draft of the strategy for consultation. When consultation is conducted with First Nations, industry, stakeholder and public consultation on the draft strategy and opportunities for general public consultation will focus around a website. To finalize the strategy, we will review consultation, prepare the final mineral development strategy and develop an implementation plan — and obviously it will come to Cabinet for approval.

With regard to the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, Yukon College created a five-year program plan for the development of the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining to integrate and house mining, exploration, relevant industry and trades training programs within the territory. Participants in the development of the plan include the mining industry, Yukon Education, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, CanNor, the Yukon Mine Training Association and several Yukon First Nations. Yukon government approved \$5.832 million in operation and maintenance funding over a period of five years to March 31, 2018 to support the administration of program delivery for the Centre for Northern Innovation programs and courses.

The Yukon government has also matched the Government of Canada's contribution of \$5.6 million in capital funds to undertake the planning and construction of a new facility at the Whitehorse campus, as well as renovations to the existing welding shop, the purchase of related equipment, vehicles, accommodation units and curriculum.

Yukon Education entered into an agreement to provide \$1.1 million to support Yukon College in its purchase of a mobile trades trailer for industrial trade instruction throughout Yukon communities. CanNor contributed \$722,723 toward this purchase. This funding is included in the capital funding noted above. A memorandum of understanding concerning the capital support for Yukon College's Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining project was entered into between Yukon College, Yukon government and CanNor. The total capital dollars contributed by both governments is \$11.2 million, with a contribution of \$100,000 from Yukon College.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, Yukon government signed an MOU with the Government of Alaska to foster cooperation in mine training development and strategies between Alaska and Yukon. As a result, some courses are being delivered at the Delta Junction mine training centre in Delta Junction, Alaska.

With respect to capital activities, the college awarded the architectural design for the trades training facility to a Yukon firm, and a Yukon firm won the bid as the general contractor for the construction of the facility. A local construction company was also awarded the contract to renovate the college's existing welding shop. Both these capital projects are progressing and meet the college's workplans.

It's important to go over what the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining courses include. They include the introduction to underground mining. On completion of this course, participants will have mastered the fundamentals of the core competencies required for an entry-level miner. Students will also understand the basic safety procedures in an underground setting and know the reasons why these procedures are required.

Heavy equipment technician is a dual-credit course. On completion of this course, participants will have the necessary theoretical trade knowledge which, together with hands-on shop experience, will enable students to go on to train for employment as capable and knowledgeable apprentices and entry-level workers in the trade. Participants will also acquire safety skills and the ability to apply mathematical concepts to the heavy equipment field.

The heavy equipment technician pre-employment course is a course where participants will be able to demonstrate competencies in job safety skills and awareness of workplace hazards and will have acquired skills and knowledge to make a successful transition to an entry-level position in the workforce and complete theoretical requirements for level one of the heavy equipment technician apprenticeship. There's also an opportunity for successful participants to challenge the heavy equipment technician apprenticeship level one exam.

With regard to the geological technology course, the objectives of this diploma program are to provide students with: a solid background in the different types of mineral extraction, surface mining, underground mining and an understanding of the advantages and challenges presented by each; a comprehensive introduction to different mineral deposit types and their characteristic geophysical, geochemical and alteration signatures; an introduction to the different data sets originating from exploration programs; mill

testing and an understanding of how to use that data to inform future decisions; an understanding of the regulatory and legal framework surrounding exploration and mining, both in Yukon and around Canada; an introduction to the environmental impacts of the mining process; and a background in the common remediation strategies used following mine closure. This second-year diploma program consists of 13 courses, including a field trip to a mine site.

The pre-apprenticeship and skill employment course is a five-day course offered throughout the Yukon communities, and the Whitehorse campus will orient participants to the mining industry, the mining lifecycle and basic safety training. Participants must complete this short course before entering the underground or service mine training in Delta Junction. These course offerings will be delivered in cooperation with the Yukon Mine Training Association.

Finally, the environmental monitoring course — during the fiscal year, the college will be developing a curriculum for the environmental monitoring course that will be delivered in 2015 and 2016.

This work all builds on the recommendations that we have heard from industry and Yukoners. The government can succeed by working with all partners in the territory. I encourage everyone in this House to take the opportunity to provide their insight to this motion and to support this motion.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing this motion forward. I just want to say at the outset that I really found it interesting and appreciated the member's comments with respect to the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining. It brought to mind debates that occurred in this Legislative Assembly, and it reminded me of the fact that we talk about government and opposition, and sometimes you get the notion that the government never listens to opposition, but I can remember motions coming forward and debate in this Legislative Assembly — motions that came forward from our colleague in this House, the former Member for Mount Lorne, Steve Cardiff, who was a passionate trade unionist — metal banger, I think they called it, or sheet metal worker — who also served for many years on the board of governors at Yukon College. He had a strong, strong commitment to the establishment of a northern school of mining and presented an extensive debate in this Assembly, talking about the fact that, as I recall, the only real school in terms of the kind of scope we were looking at in the north was Haileybury in Ontario.

It's great and it's gratifying to see that sometimes one of the products of the discussions that occur in this Legislative Assembly when there is a receptive mind and there is some exchange in the Assembly — that things can move forward and that the debates that occur in here are not necessarily all futile. I know that Steve would have been very happy to see the evolution and the evolving nature of the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining because it really was something that he was very strongly committed to.

I noted that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin spoke about the fact that here's an opportunity — because there is a lull in

our economy and that industry has been telling government that now is the time to take the time to get it right. I think there is nothing that we would agree with more. I think that when we have the opportunity, then we should fully embrace the opportunities that are provided to us. I do think, though, that we need to ensure that we don't ignore real opportunities that are available to us — opportunities for fully cooperative and collaborative efforts.

The focus of the motion with respect to the first part of the motion focusing on a mine licensing improvement initiative and a mineral development strategy, certainly as described and when one reads — it appears to be a repeat of a cycle of piecemeal amendments or changes to the mining and regulatory regime in this Yukon Territory when there remains outstanding a fundamental obligation and opportunity to Yukon. I'm of course referring to those set out in First Nation final and self-government agreements and the devolution transfer agreement. I think it's really very important that we do set the context and an understanding that Yukon government is exercising the responsibilities, the provincial-like responsibilities, of a province that were formerly carried out by the federal government until the devolution transfer agreement was concluded, until it came in 2001 and until it came into effect in 2003. The current Yukon government was lucky, as they have been, just in terms of timing on numerous occasions, that the actual negotiations of the DTA and the body of it were actually done under an NDP government, then it was signed by a Liberal and then it came into effect under a Yukon Party. That's the way history and the cycles work in this territory.

You know, I think it's important to look at, in terms of the context, and to ground the opportunity that is here. The objective as set out in the devolution transfer agreement was to provide for the transfer from Canada to the Yukon government of the resources and responsibilities associated with the Northern Affairs program and to do so in a manner that respects the protection provided by the Constitution of Canada for any existing aboriginal treaty or other rights of the aboriginal peoples Canada and that is consistent with self-government agreements and any existing fiduciary duties or obligations of the Crown to the aboriginal peoples of Canada.

The devolution transfer agreement — it's important to realize that it was the First Nations governments. First Nations objected strenuously to the transfer of the provincial-like responsibilities to the territorial government prior to the conclusion of land claims agreements. So when I say that in order to facilitate the moving forward of the evolution of the Government of Yukon at the same time — or in parallel to what was happening at the negotiations table — previous governments invited First Nations to be part of that agreement. You see that reference in a listing of all of the First Nations that were in the preamble where it says that the negotiation of this agreement was guided by the principles established in the devolution protocol accord of September 1998, which was again — this was something that the NDP government of the day did — in order to ensure that there would be a basis for being able to move forward without

rancour; with a common understanding that all governments were on the same page. That was signed by Canada, the Yukon government, the Council of Yukon First Nations on behalf of its members, the Kwanlin Dun First Nation, and the Kaska Tribal Council on behalf of the Ross River Dena and the Kaska Dena Council.

So when I said that there are opportunities that are embedded in this devolution agreement, I am quite serious about it, because we sometimes get off on to the tangent of, well, there are settled First Nations and non-settled First Nations, but when it comes to the kinds of fundamental relationships with respect to the resource sector and the resource legislation, which is fundamentally what we are talking about when we talk about the devolution transfer agreement, we see that we have significant opportunities here. The devolution transfer agreement also speaks to it in section 2 when it talks about the transfer of responsibilities. Again, that transfer of responsibilities went from Canada to the Yukon government.

In that section 2.27 of the devolution transfer agreement, it refers to an appendix in the devolution transfer agreement that contains an agreement between the Yukon government and the First Nations that are parties to the agreements which sets out cooperative working arrangements in respect of the development of a workplan and preparation of successor territorial legislation pertaining to the administration and control of public land and administration and control of rights in respect of waters — all matters that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin encapsulated in his reference to the work that is being in part addressed by the piecemeal approach that is being proposed by the government in its mine licensing improvement initiative and mineral development strategy. It is not talking about the fundamental piece here — and that the Yukon government, in 2.28, shall consult with First Nations and settlement land in the Yukon pursuant to a transboundary agreement. So that is where the Kaska Dena fit into the overall architecture of this agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I referenced the fact that there was going to be — in the appendix which talks about these Yukon government and First Nation agreements is where we see the obligation that the Government of Yukon took on.

This is why it's so important. We've heard so much over the last few years about the concerns expressed by First Nations that, somehow, the Government of Yukon is attempting to go around that. That's why I'm taking the time and setting the context before I get into the meat of the discussion here.

We need to understand that the government — and it's not the government of the day; it's the Yukon territorial government; it's this government; it's all Yukon governments, whatever their political stripe — agreed to establish cooperative — this is in 1.1 of that Appendix B — working arrangements in respect to the development of a workplan and the preparation of successor resource legislation. That was really important, and this where we've seen also, over the last couple of years, First Nations coming back time and time again to the Yukon government to remind them of the fact that

there is an acknowledgement of the respected authority and jurisdiction of the Yukon government, pursuant to the *Yukon Act* and the Yukon First Nations, as set out in Yukon First Nation final agreements and self-government agreements in respect of certain natural resource management. So the Yukon government and First Nations recognize that there may be benefits realized from working together to develop, where appropriate, compatible common natural resource management and legislative regimes.

What a nice idea. Wouldn't it be great to think that we had that, as opposed to forcing people into having separate ones?

Then the obligation in section 4, which speaks to the successor resource legislation working group — this is section 4 of the appendix. It says that the Yukon government and First Nations that are parties to this agreement — and I've already named which they are, which is everybody — shall — not may, but shall — create a successor resource legislation working group, consisting of representatives of the Yukon and the First Nations.

That's the context and why First Nations and why Yukoners look to the government to do more than this piecemeal approach. To date what we're seeing — it's sort of like an ostrich-like pose, because every time there's a suggestion coming forward, whether it's with Bill No. 66 or any other of these — the 2008 amendments to the *Quartz Mining Act* or this approach on mine licensing and yet another strategy — there's a sort of wilful ignorance of the commitment that has been set out in the devolution transfer agreement.

Instead of starting the Yukon on a new path to a modernized mining regime, which was contemplated — this is what was contemplated — what the Yukon government did is it passed mirror legislation. The federal government had this legislation — some of it for eons — and in 2003 the idea was that Yukon would, and did, pass mirror legislation mirroring federal legislation. The idea was that the Government of Yukon, in partnership — in collaboration pursuant to the DTA — with First Nations, would develop modern resource regimes in our territory. Instead of doing that in the area of developing a modernized mining regime for the territory, what we are seeing is the Government of Yukon continuing to bring forward these stop-gap, band-aid solutions like the mine licensing improvement initiative and this mineral development strategy.

In following the December 2012 appeals court decision with respect to the Ross River Dena Council, Yukon First Nation governments — and actually prior to that, but for sure after that — offered to work with the Yukon government to use that decision as an opportunity to finally modernize Yukon's mining regime. Perhaps it's timely to remind members here of the numerous efforts to engage Yukon in fulfilling its obligation, in fulfilling the obligations that Yukon government took on when it became a part of the devolution transfer agreement.

I suppose it shouldn't surprise me, but when you look back to January of 2014, the four First Nations wrote to the

Government of Yukon — to the Premier — with respect to the outcome of that Ross River Dena Council decision — Ross River Dena Council versus the Government of Yukon. They said — and I quote: "Beyond doubt, the antiquated Yukon mining legislation must be replaced. It is time to modernize the Yukon mining acts and bring them into conformity with our final agreements and constitutional recognition of aboriginal rights and title. This must be a collaborative effort among all governments in Yukon, and we expect affected First Nations to play an important role in developing and implementing modern mining legislation." That was a letter of January 14, 2013 — barely a month after the Ross River decision.

After that there was a letter from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation in July of 2013. In that letter they referenced the letter that the four First Nations had written to the Premier in which they had asked the Premier — and I quote: "...to start the process of modernizing Yukon's outdated mining laws to make them consistent with the Final Agreements." The chief of the day wrote — and I quote: "I reiterate that we are ready to work towards a modern mining regime that respects our Agreements and satisfies industry needs for certainty and administrative ease. I ask you, as premier, to: put successor legislation on the agenda with a precise time frame; instruct your officials to commence work on replacement mining acts; and give your officials the mandate they need to carry out this task effectively."

Meanwhile, First Nations were doing a considerable amount of work with respect to their own reviews and their own preparatory work for successor mining legislation, and it's unfortunate that the Government of Yukon has chosen not to engage with First Nations because they have demonstrated time and time again a willingness to work with the Government of Yukon on these matters and, failing that, what the First Nations have said is that there is a common theme running through the government's approach to this, which is an inconsistency between present Yukon government policies and legislation and First Nation final agreements, and they have noted that what they think or what they believe and describe and have described to me as the Yukon government's — in quotes — "containment policy". Whether it's mining or *Wildlife Act* amendments, the Yukon government, from their perspective, continues to act like final agreements didn't really change anything. If anything, by now in 2015 — if the government doesn't get it, the public gets it, industry gets it. Things have changed fundamentally pursuant to these agreements and pursuant to the common law.

I have said this before — that final agreements fundamentally changed the relationship between Yukon First Nations and public government in this territory. We anticipated that First Nation governments and Yukon government would govern together, but it's unfortunate that the territorial government continues to pursue policies that treat final agreements as separate from and irrelevant to everyday governments. That's the reality that we're facing. That's how the perception of containment or sidelining of final agreements — so that they don't affect Yukon

government policy and legislation. That's how that perception has evolved and it's really contrary to the spirit of the final agreements and, I would argue, contrary to the spirit of the devolution transfer agreement.

The First Nations have made it clear that they believe that Yukon's current mining legislation is inconsistent with their final agreements. They have raised questions. They have made it clear that they believe that the current mining legislation is inconsistent with Yukon First Nation final agreements and argue that that's why the devolution transfer agreement obligates the Yukon government to work with First Nations to create new mining laws, successor legislation — not piecemeal amendments to existing legislation, but a fundamental rethink. Given that the ground has shifted, there is a new relationship here based and grounded on what we agreed to — Yukon government, First Nation governments agreed to — both in the final agreements and in the DTA.

First Nations have not been silent nor have they been irrational or impolite in how they've raised these issues. They have been persistent. They've written to the Premier, as I've said numerous times. They have referred to the response of the Yukon government with respect to the Ross River Dena Council, calling it a band-aid consultation. They have said repeatedly that Yukon government has an obligation to start working on successor legislation, but they're told by officials — officials don't make these things up, Mr. Speaker. They are given direction by their political leaders.

If Yukon officials are saying they do not have a mandate to start working on successor legislation, that means that this government is resisting its obligation to fulfill what it committed to, refusing to do what they took on, both in the devolution transfer agreement and the final agreements.

Mr. Speaker, you can see how you get a generalized concern, and it's a good thing, in some ways. As the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin said, you have some time to work on this. I think there is some fundamental rethinking that needs to be done here.

In July of 2013, the First Nations asked the government again to commit to developing successor legislation in cooperation with Yukon First Nations. That was July 31. They asked in that letter for a meeting with the then deputy minister. He said he couldn't because he had no mandate. They were reluctant to meet with the First Nations as a group. My goodness — we only meet one-on-one? We don't meet with groups of First Nations, but we will meet collectively with industry groups?

On August 26, there was a further letter to the Government of Yukon, reminding the minister that Yukon had not responded to First Nations' requests for meeting on successor legislation. On August 29, 2013, First Nations met with government officials and made it very clear that many problems cannot be fixed without successor legislation. On September 6, 2013, there was a meeting with government officials, with First Nation officials, asking officials to seek successor legislation mandate. They were told by the senior official of the day that there is no political appetite for a new mining law.

That's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker. We're still there, two years later — no political appetite to fulfill the commitments set out in the devolution transfer agreement and final agreements.

The difficulty of this government refusing to take its obligations seriously is that the stars are not aligning behind them; the stars are aligning behind First Nations. The last thing we need is to see more litigation in this territory. Why don't we do it correctly? Why don't we sit down and actually make it happen?

First Nations are aware that on any number of issues, the current Yukon government's interpretation and implementation approach — interpretation of final agreements; interpretation of the devolution agreement — is flawed, whether it's on the Peel watershed planning process and the Yukon government's failure to respect the land use planning process set out in chapter 11 or it's the Ross River case, showing that their mining legislation was inconsistent with the common law duty to consult. We can go into wildlife management and the *Wildlife Act*, but you know, it doesn't have to be like that. We certainly don't need to be fostering or pushing a situation where First Nations are feeling that they are at least, at minimum, being disrespected.

From a First Nation perspective, I don't think they have been hesitant to try to communicate with the government that mining laws are broken. Yukon's outdated mining legislation, from their perspective, gives mining interests priority over surface property rights and aboriginal and treaty rights. From their perspective, current Yukon mining legislation is inconsistent with their final agreements and that the current Yukon mining legislation violates the common law duty to consult and accommodate aboriginal peoples. From their perspective and their understanding of what they entered into, in terms of agreements with the Yukon government, they are obliged to continue to push for all-new mining legislation and they are concerned that so far Yukon has refused to work with First Nations on a new system.

The Yukon government has refused to work with First Nations on this new system. All of the First Nations' efforts to resolve these issues through negotiations have not succeeded. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? Why is it? What common sense is missing here? Why is there reluctance and why is there an unwillingness to simply enter into the discussions that they agreed to do?

Again, going back to October 2013, chiefs asked the Premier to instruct senior officials to work directly with Yukon First Nations' senior officials to develop a collaborative process for creating modern mining legislation.

From their perspective, new legislation would support a successful industry while respecting final agreements and aboriginal rights and reducing conflicts between miners, Yukon government and First Nations. It's a sign of a mature relationship when people work together to develop mandates, because then you know you're on the same page. It's unfortunate this government has refused to do so.

So we're up to November 19, 2013. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation wrote to the Government of Yukon

with respect — and this was still dealing with Bill No. 66. They used that opportunity — and I'm quoting: "... we'd like to also remind you of your commitment in the devolution transfer agreement to use the successor resource legislation working group or develop other cooperative working arrangements, as may be agreed for the development of successor resource legislation..."

They view these various piecemeal pieces as successor legislation and they say that this is subject to the cooperative arrangement set out in Appendix B of the devolution transfer agreement. You can see increasingly the frustration that's developing within First Nation communities. It's also not just in the devolution transfer agreement, but there's also reference in that letter to section 13.5.4 of Yukon self-government agreements. The interlocking and the relationship between final agreements, self-government agreements and the devolution transfer agreement cannot be overlooked.

The Premier did respond to First Nations on November 22 or so of 2013. Well, he actually did it in a letter to the editor, which he called "the responsibility of well-managed resource development is ours". Now, if you want to develop a cooperative and collaborative relationship, it's kind of not such a good idea to take a position like that publicly — like it's all ours and not yours and oops, we just demonstrated yet again that we don't understand that we have a partnership; we have a mutual relationship here.

In response to that, First Nations — it certainly got their attention — and they raised a number of points, not the least of which is that, in that letter the Premier published in the media, it made not one reference to Yukon First Nation governments nor their final agreement rights nor aboriginal rights. I'm quoting here from a letter dated November 28 — and it says: "... we therefore assume that you do not believe that you, as the Premier of Yukon, have any responsibility to factor such rights and interest into the responsible development of resources."

Now I'm going to be very interested, and I'm continually interested, to hear how the Premier responds to that, because I would hope that he would assert that, in fact, he does understand and fully believes and wants to act upon the fact that he does have a responsibility to factor First Nation rights and interests into any of these discussions.

They further went on to say that First Nations struggle to understand how any government can persist in ignoring its constitutional and legal obligations, and yet purport to act responsibly.

The First Nations' rebuttal to the Premier was canvassed in some depth and I will just cite a couple of key points that they raised. Many, many important issues were identified by the First Nations in their response to the Premier on November 28, but one that is particularly pertinent to the conversation here is the assertion by the Government of Yukon that Yukon fundamentally doesn't agree that new legislation is required because of inconsistencies with final or self-government agreements. As you can imagine, First Nations don't agree with that and, as they said in the letter of November 28, 2013: "We disagree", they said. As I said

earlier, the mirror legislation that Yukon just sort of put in place in 2003, are historical documents — and I'm quoting here — "...are historical documents grounded in laws first drafted in the early 20th century. They are deeply outdated and not in accord with our FA rights and SGA authority nor with contemporary law on comprehensive modern treaty interpretation or the Crown's constitutional and fiduciary obligations to First Nations. The QMA and the PMA are legislation made to fit in with YG's long-held position that it is a mining jurisdiction with unilateral Crown control and decision-making powers with respect to all lands; this is not now, nor has ever been, the situation in the Yukon Territory."

So they're concerned and expressed the concern that Yukon doesn't agree that the devolution transfer agreement obliges Yukon to enact successor resource mining legislation. Again Mr. Speaker, I quote: "We disagree". The First Nation is a party to the devolution transfer agreement — and I'm quoting again: "It is time for successor resource legislation, which was promised to Yukon First Nations in exchange for their support for the DTA, to proceed after more than a decade."

Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many people in this Legislative Assembly were around, but I can tell you it was a difficult struggle within the federal government, between the federal government and the Government of Yukon and First Nation governments. Both the Yukon government and the federal government wanted to see the devolution transfer agreement proceed.

I can tell you from the perspective of being in the federal government side, it was like two worlds — there was a northern affairs program that was trying to do devolution and push it as hard as it can and with the floor down — it was like there was a metal barrier between them — those people who were charged with the obligation for negotiations. The negotiations folks were saying you can't go there until you've satisfied First Nation issues with respect to land claims and self-government. So the compromise reached when the NDP government came in in the 1990s was to say: "Let's bring the First Nations to the table". They came, but it was a long, long process and there are many people upstairs in the Premier's office who will know the long history of how long it took before they finally go to that stage.

Given the importance of mining throughout First Nation traditional territory and the Yukon Territory, First Nations take the position that successor mining legislation should be the first priority for the successor resource legislation working group. I acknowledge that the government did forestry legislation — great — one piece in, what, 13 years? Such legislation was a principal term of the agreement to proceed with the devolution of natural resource powers to the Yukon.

"First Nations consider..." — and I am quoting here: "...a refusal to keep that promise as a breach of that agreement," and they give, by the letter they sent to the Premier, notice of that and they quote again the provision that I had put on the record earlier with respect to the promise in the DTA that, as soon as practical after the signing of the accord, Yukon and First Nations would establish that working

group to do — and further elaborate on — the work on the development and preparation of successor resource legislation.

The concern that First Nations have is that, by taking this kind of piecemeal approach, Yukon government is proposing changes to what was mirror legislation. Once you start doing that, it ceases to be mirror legislation by virtue of those changes that are being introduced bit by bit and becomes now successor legislation. That is the trigger that requires the promises of the DTA to be fulfilled before it can be passed.

The last point that I'll make from that letter of November 28 is that the First Nations expressed concern that taking the position that Yukon is not obliged to create mining successor resource legislation does not reflect well on Yukon undertaking its responsibilities in a way that respects the protection provided by the Constitution, or is consistent with self-government agreements. Successor resource legislation and providing the capacity and assistance to develop it was a hard promise that was used to entice First Nations into providing their support for devolution. I don't think that can be stressed too much.

Again, we have heard a whole series — the forgotten history here that First Nations — on the compromises that they made in order to move this territory forward; to move from intransigence, which we saw on both sides, to having a compromise that allowed us to move forward to getting the agreements that all sides wanted. We wanted devolution; we wanted final agreements; we wanted self-government, but we all did so with our eyes wide open and we made commitments. It is not enough to say: "Well that doesn't really apply to us; it just applies to them." That is not on.

The Council of Yukon First Nations, similarly, in December 2013, wrote to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources expressing their concerns with respect to the process and the importance of getting the successor legislation in place.

Similarly, on December 3, 2013, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations also identified — and I quote: "We seek confirmation that Yukon will commit to a much deeper and meaningful engagement process prior to implementing changes to the regulatory legislative regime for mining in the Yukon." They also go on to talk about the importance of — and I quote: "The amendments being proposed" — these were the amendments to the *Quartz Mining Act* — "are effectively creating successor legislation and should be following the process agreed to in the devolution transfer agreement. The intent of the agreement was clear. The Yukon made a commitment to work collaboratively with Yukon First Nations on developing new resource management legislation according to the process outlined in Appendix B of the devolution transfer agreement. The Yukon must act honourably and follow the process it agreed to under the devolution transfer agreement."

Finally, there is more, but in getting the point across in terms of the DTA, again, in April 2014, a First Nation wrote to the Government of Yukon asking them to move forward on this. As I said, we see that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin's

motion urging the government to take action, as he said — the motion talks about being well-positioned to benefit from mining, well we want to be able to be in a position to benefit from mining when Yukon's economy emerges from the current economic downturn.

I was pleased to see the government using the language of economic downturn because it seems that they have finally taken off those rose-coloured glasses and acknowledged that global mineral prices are affecting Yukon's mining industry — do affect it. Of course they haven't reconciled this with their previous narrative that they were responsible for the mining boom, but they are not responsible now for the current downturn. We know that it isn't only global commodity prices that have an effect on mining in this territory. There is clearly a responsibility that accrues from this government's actions over the past several years, which have done nothing to improve investment certainty in Yukon. The taking of a combative stance has led to court case after court case.

Not only that, but they have supported federal amendments to our made-in-Yukon assessment process — environmental and socio-economic assessment process — by both offering half of the unilateral amendments contained in Bill S-6 and providing their unwavering support for that same bill. As we know, that proposed legislation will have the effect of gutting Yukon's regulatory regime and does undermine the obligations to Yukon First Nation governments established under First Nation final agreements. In fact, First Nations have said they believe that the legislation so fundamentally undermines the constitutionally protected rights that they have openly said that, when this legislation passes, they will have little recourse — yet again, more litigation.

The Yukon Party's response to another major threat to certainty and to our assessment process in the Yukon is to continue with its ostrich-like approach and stick that head down in the sand and pretend that nothing is the matter.

Now that we are in a lull, we are in a good place to get ready for the next mining boom when the competing pressures would be so much more difficult to sort out. As I've said and outlined in, I think, sufficient detail for members opposite to grasp, the government does have an obligation to work with First Nations to develop new mining legislation pursuant to the devolution transfer agreement. We do know that the staking rush that we saw at the height of the staking rush made it clear that Yukon does need to overhaul its mining regime and coordinate these efforts with regional land use planning and resource planning, which would give First Nations and all Yukon citizens assurances that they will be respected.

This motion and the programs contained in it don't do very much to deal with the inconsistency, as I've said, between present Yukon government policies and legislation and the Yukon First Nation final agreements, and it's not for want of trying. The voices have been there.

The successor resource legislation working group is inactive, and that's telling. It's sort of like having, in the *Environment Act*, a provision that used to say, "There shall be a Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment" — and now it has gone from "shall" to "may". We don't even

have that because nobody amended the DTA. That agreement is still intact as it was signed off by the parties. It doesn't say "may"; it says it "shall" — we shall establish a successor resource legislation working group.

I quote: "The Working Group shall serve as the cooperative working arrangement between the ..." Yukon government "...and First Nations in respect of the development of successor resource legislation ... and its overall role shall be to make recommendations to the ..." Yukon "... and First Nations... in respect of such legislation ..."

This government seems to believe, for some reason, that any call to modernize our mining regime might have a negative impact on the Yukon's reputation as a place to invest in mineral exploration, but this ignores the fact that persistent conflict and lack of clarity about the process for reconciling aboriginal rights and title are eroding the government's ability to bring together different social, economic and cultural perspectives, values and interests, which is increasing perceived risk for investors.

I know the members opposite attend many industry meetings, and they know that investors are looking to invest their money and get a return on their investment. They do business in jurisdictions with very different mining regimes, including many that have been modernized, and they will be investing in places with modernized mining regimes more and more. What they're looking for is that jurisdictions that have been able to create better climates of certainty will be in a better position to attract investors. Those that are stuck in endless court battles are at a disadvantage.

It's not the members opposite only who deal and talk with the mining industry. Increasingly we've had members and senior members of the mining industry meeting with the Official Opposition, and they have expressed real frustration with the lack of willingness of this government to actually acknowledge the environment and the era that they're in and to begin to work with all parties to create that environment of certainty. Certainly they have been asking for that certainty. They would like to get this government to sit at the table with First Nations and work out a fair and productive solution that will benefit all Yukoners.

The Yukon government has clear obligations and opportunities that are set out in the First Nation final and self-government agreements, along with the DTA, to work in partnership with First Nations to develop modern successor resource mining legislation. Establishing clear rules and, in some cases, co-management regimes to address conflicting interests would bring a level of certainty that would benefit the mining industry.

Having sought and incorporated the views of all Yukoners — including First Nation governments, municipalities, economic sectors such as tourism, various elements of the mining sector, agriculture and citizens — would provide the social licence necessary for Yukon's mining industry to thrive for decades to come. Wouldn't it be nice to put in place a system that actually people supported and realized that they had a part of developing, and they were

part of developing a sustainable industry that everybody supported and you weren't coming in from different angles to attack? To me, that's possible. I think First Nations are saying it's possible. I know industry is saying it's possible.

When the Supreme Court confirmed in the Ross River Dena Council case that modernizing our mineral staking system is needed to honour our relationship with First Nations, it also made it clear that it's a smart economic decision. A modern mining resource development system that minimizes conflicts and provides certainty would create a sustainable business environment for mining in the Yukon. The Yukon seems to think that any attempt to modernize our mining laws and regulations is anti-mining, but the fact is that the opposite is true.

Thirty years ago, many people argued that environmental or regulatory efforts would lead to an end to industry, but industry has proven that it can thrive when good regulatory structures are put in place, and when they're enforced, and that these have the effect of creating incentives for industry to innovate.

It's sad when a government sort of hampers itself by its fear. Perhaps it's fear of what it doesn't know. If it would actually engage with both the industry and with First Nation governments, they would find that they're actually quite receptive to having clear and unambiguous expectations set out and are willing to work with people.

I think it's really clear that this government — that we can do better and we have to do better. This motion goes some way to recognizing that there are problems with Yukon's regulatory regime and infrastructure, yet it does nothing to address the fundamental problem. The fact is, their legislation is far past its expiry date and it doesn't reflect the modern mining realities. It doesn't reflect the modern constitution — no obligations or realities.

To ensure that Yukon lives up to the mutual commitments set out in the devolution transfer agreement, and that whatever strategy is developed in Yukon is truly done in cooperation with First Nation governments and industry in a collaborative way, I think it's really important that we do first things first. With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I move an amendment to this motion.

Amendment proposed

Ms. Hanson: I move:

THAT Motion No. 972 be amended by replacing the phrase "on the mine licensing improvement initiative and a mineral development strategy for Yukon;" with the phrase "to develop, pursuant to the devolution transfer agreement, successor resource legislation;"

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It is moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition:

THAT Motion No. 972 be amended by replacing the phrase "on the mine licensing improvement initiative and a mineral development strategy for Yukon;" with the phrase "to develop, pursuant to the devolution transfer agreement, successor resource legislation;"

Ms. Hanson: I certainly don't intend to speak for 20 minutes on the amendment. I think I have made the case for the necessity of this amendment. As I set out in my points that I raised this afternoon, the devolution transfer agreement is clear in setting out the obligations that Yukon government assumed when it received the provincial-like authorities — responsibilities — transferred to it pursuant to the devolution transfer agreement. It's similar to a number of other kinds of conditional arrangements that we have in agreements, as part of the quid pro quo of reaching agreement — that in order to achieve that agreement, the parties made some commitments to each other. One of the fundamental commitments that the Government of Yukon made to First Nation governments — and I referenced that in the outset in terms of identifying that this is not an issue of First Nations with final agreements versus First Nations without final agreements. All of them were named in the devolution transfer agreement. All of them participated in the discussions leading up to the actual devolution transfer agreement, and all of them share a common understanding that Yukon government would live up to that commitment it made in the devolution transfer agreement that is set out, as I said earlier, both in the preamble of the devolution transfer agreement, in the objectives of the devolution transfer agreement and in the specific provisions both in chapter 1 and Appendix B, which gives the details about how the successor resource legislation work would be conducted.

I always have the belief that if you have an issue or if you have a problem, then you deal with it. You don't try to hide from it or run away with it. Yes, it might be easier to try to peel away little bits and pieces at things, but if you have made a commitment to do something — if I enter into an agreement with you, Mr. Speaker, to do something, then I am obliged to fulfill that agreement. I believe, as governments, we have the same kind of obligation.

We entered into an agreement and we gave our undertaking, as government, that we would do this. If we had done it — if the Yukon government had done this — you wonder if we would have had the challenge that we had in 2012 with the Ross River Dena case, because keep in mind what I said with respect to the language that was used in there. It referenced not only the rights and obligations and responsibilities that flow from the First Nation final and self-government agreements, but basically it referenced the common law with respect to aboriginal rights and title.

The government, by taking this ostrich pose, has brought on, not only to itself but to all of us — to the citizens and to the industries that depend upon legislative certainty. They have brought upon this territory factors that have contributed to worsening the economic recession that this government has placed us in.

When I spoke at the outset, I said we have an opportunity that flows from the agreements we entered into. I think it's incumbent upon this government to seize that opportunity, and you seize that opportunity by fulfilling the obligation that you assumed when you entered into this agreement. It's a mature thing to do. It's what a government that actually understands

— and believes in respecting — the agreements that it enters into with other governments. It's what they would do. It's what we would do.

I heartily urge all Members of this Legislative Assembly to endorse the amendment to Motion No. 972, which will ensure that we, as Members of this Legislative Assembly, demonstrate that we do understand our obligations pursuant to the devolution transfer agreement, and that we will work to develop successor resource legislation — in this case, successor mining legislation.

Hon. Mr. Kent: It's indeed good timing, I guess, to speak to this amendment because it really shows again that the New Democratic Party, the Official Opposition, once again is not supportive of responsible resource development in this territory. They certainly don't support the mining industry, and I think factors that have led to this amendment being tabled here today — I guess I should say, at the outset, that we won't be supporting this amendment put forward by the Member for Whitehorse Centre. There have been a number of factors, going back to 2011, that have culminated in the amendment that has been put forward here today.

Again we saw, in 2011, the NDP put forward ideas in their platform to raise royalties — an idea that was rebuffed at the time by the Yukon Chamber of Mines in a press release that they issued during an election campaign — something I believe that is unprecedented for that organization to do. It has never done so in the past. They are an apolitical organization, of course. The Member for Whitehorse Centre can guffaw all she wants, but the Yukon Chamber of Mines prides itself on being apolitical and providing advocacy on behalf of their over-400 members — 400 individuals and businesses and mining companies that are active here in the territory.

We saw the attacks on the placer industry by the New Democrats in the 2011 election. We have seen attacks on free entry, which is something the industry needs to survive. I think, Mr. Speaker, it really shows that the NDP is out of touch with the mining industry and they are out of touch with what that industry needs to be successful.

Earlier this week, during Economic Development debate — and I am going to quote the Leader of the Official Opposition, because I think it is important. It leads to this amendment on a mining motion that was put forward by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin today. I think it is important to quote because it really shows that lack of understanding of the industry here and what the benefits of the mining industry are.

This is from debate on the Department of Economic Development earlier this week and this is from the Member for Whitehorse Centre, the Leader of the New Democratic Party and the Leader of the Official Opposition. I quote: "I have only seen the one example in action myself — at Minto — where once the mine is in operation — has been for some — but the actual procurement of everything from, I would say, toilet paper to lettuce to whatever comes in on big trucks, on pallets, from Outside, and nothing is sourced locally."

That certainly caught my attention during debate, and I reached out to individuals from the Minto mine — the second

time I've had to do that during this Sitting, based on words and actions from the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I think I have the floor. I listened intently to the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

For 2013, confirmed numbers of spending in Yukon, excluding wages — this is just by the Minto mine — \$47,131,266.17. Of course, this excludes wages.

For 2014 — \$39,022,763.43. For 2015 year to date — \$13,132,708.86. Of course, there are extenuating circumstances in 2014 and 2015 that have led to lesser amounts, but we're looking forward to a water use licence amendment coming hopefully quickly and to the Minto mine ramping back up.

I think everyone in this House would agree that's a lot of toilet paper and a lot of lettuce. It just shows a lack of understanding of what the industry needs to be successful by the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

When it comes to contributions by the Minto mine with respect to annual and cumulative total employee income by group, this is information for 2014. In Pelly Crossing, Minto spent almost \$500,000 on employee income. They have three contractors that spent \$91,000, close to \$155,000, and just a little over \$90,000, respectively, in the community of Pelly Crossing alone.

In Whitehorse, Minto mine spent just shy of \$3 million in employee income, and one of their contractors spent \$2.263 million — or an approximate amount. Then, overall in the Yukon — Minto, \$1.3 million; the three contractors, \$234,822 and change, and \$442,000 and change in employee income.

We can see the benefits of the industry. The Member for Whitehorse Centre, the Leader of the Official Opposition, doesn't understand what this industry means to this territory. We do. We know what it needs to thrive and prosper, and that is why, in the original motion that was brought forward by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, we recognize that working on mine licensing improvements and a mineral development strategy — which the member wants to remove from this motion in her amendment — is important work that needs to be carried out.

If we had been speaking about the original motion, I would have talked a little bit more about new and existing transportation and energy infrastructure and some of the legacy infrastructure projects that were developed for the Yukon mineral sector that all Yukoners benefit from today. Unfortunately, I will just speak to the amendment that has been put forward by the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Removing the mineral development strategy — perhaps if others had had the opportunity to speak during debate on the original motion, she would have become more informed about what we are trying to accomplish with the Yukon mineral development strategy and would not have been so quick to remove it from this motion put forward by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

The Yukon government is committed to the preparation of a mineral development strategy to help build a successful and sustainable mineral industry in Yukon that adheres to high

environmental standards and is engaged with First Nations in communities. The overall goal is to develop a comprehensive long-term plan to support mineral exploration and development in Yukon. If we are to take advantage of the opportunities these industries can provide, it's important to understand the challenges they face and what they need to operate successfully in Yukon.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, that is something the leader of the New Democrats does not understand, that last statement — what they need to operate successfully in the Yukon. For someone who aspires to be the Premier of this territory, thinking that zero dollars flow to local contractors and procurement individuals is quite something, and she should be ashamed of herself.

Mineral exploration and development activities are an important element of our economy. Many residents and Yukon businesses benefit from direct employment or spending on mineral exploration and mining. The mineral exploration and development sector provides good-paying jobs, supports local businesses and assists in financing infrastructure — I hear over there again the heckling. I know that, during the Member for Whitehorse Centre's long debate, while we couldn't control all the heckling on this side of the House, we were quite respectful in allowing her to finish. I'm speaking about the mineral development strategy which, in this amendment, the Member for Whitehorse Centre would have removed. That's what I'm trying to do; it is to give an outline of the mineral development strategy.

Let me just start from the top of that paragraph. Exploration and development activities are an important element of our economy. Many residents and Yukon businesses benefit from direct employment or spending on mineral exploration and mining. The mineral exploration and development sector provides good-paying jobs, supports local businesses, assists in financing infrastructure, such as our hydroelectric grid, and provides revenues to government through royalties, taxes and fees. This in turn helps fund programs and services that benefit all of us who live in this territory.

Again, we recognize that the industry is in a downturn, which means lower revenues and benefits for governments and fewer opportunities for our citizens. Fortunately, from past experience we know that things will improve and we want to be ready for that time. Again, I don't think it's any secret that I was the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in 2001 and 2002, which were very difficult times for the industry, but we have seen the rebound so we know that it's going to come back.

Exploration in those years bottomed out at \$7 million per season. It was tough. It was tough times to be the minister and I know that the Liberal government of the day — and I was a very proud member of that government — we worked hard at that time to ensure that we would be prepared for that rebound and we have seen that rebound. Under our Yukon Party watch, the numbers have come back and we have seen mines open and opportunities created for Yukoners in this important sector.

In the interim though, there is an opportunity for government to take a look at the state of our mineral and exploration industry and prepare for the future. Some of the potential key themes of the mineral development strategy are to enhance our competitive edge. This theme could include strategic investments in energy, transportation and communication infrastructure, as well as support for innovation in geoscience research that reduces risks for exploration companies. The second is to streamline Government of Yukon regulatory processes. Again, a lot of this is covered off in the mine licensing improvement initiative, but it could include clarifications, streamlining and the modernization of regulations and processes.

Enhancing First Nation engagement — what we are looking to potentially include here is improved Yukon First Nation engagement and participation on the promotion of community development. The development and maintenance of a skilled workforce could be achieved through training programs — mine training, as well as training at Yukon College. We want to promote environmental stewardship. It is something that is extremely important, not only to us as a government and other levels of government, including First Nations, but to companies as well. This theme could include ensuring safe and environmentally sound exploration and mining activity. It is important to ensure that Yukon's natural environment is maintained in a clean and healthy state, but also provide ways to minimize impacts due to climate change.

One of the other themes that is being considered in the mineral development strategy — and again, we are in the early engagement phase of this strategy right now, as mentioned by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. The theme is to provide framework information on mineral potential. This is building on the tremendous work of the Yukon Geological Survey. It could support a key role of government to provide regional information that allows governments to make informed decisions regarding land and resource management and to reduce the exploration risk for investors. We have seen recent examples of that — a recent partnership with the Kluane First Nation on some airborne geophysical work that was completed, I believe, in March of this year. I look forward to receiving an update from the folks at YGS with respect to that.

I know that I don't have a lot of time to speak to the entire early engagement document that we have put forward as part of the mineral development strategy, but I think the Member for Whitehorse Centre has once again missed the mark with what we are trying to achieve here today. It's Yukon Mining and Geology Week, as I think all members know, and we are excited to have the tributes here tomorrow to the Yukon Mining and Geology Week as well. There are three important contributors to the mineral success of this territory who have passed away in recent years. That will also be done tomorrow.

The original motion put forward by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin included the mine licensing improvement initiative and the mineral development strategy, which are extremely important aspects of what we're trying to achieve

here to ensure the long-term success of the Yukon mining industry.

The New Democrats do not support responsible resource development, whether it's mining, oil and gas, or any of the other natural resources that we have.

Mr. Speaker, there was a gentleman here today speaking at lunch from Resource Works, which is an organization from British Columbia. He left me and the Minister of Economic Development some cards that they've put forward. Again, this is British Columbia, but one of the cards says that, in 2015, opponents of B.C. jobs and prosperity vow to press their cause like never before. If our voice is not heard, non-majority views will prevail. Speak up for responsible resource use.

When he spoke at lunch, he mentioned that British Columbia could easily be replaced with Yukon, so how that would read is: in 2015, opponents of Yukon jobs and prosperity vow to press their cause like never before.

There are a number of interested Yukoners in resource development, and there are those who are concerned about resource development, but I think, as political parties and leaders and legislators in this Assembly, we owe it to Yukoners to understand the resource industry — something the NDP does not do. We owe it to Yukoners to advocate on behalf of them for jobs and prosperity and opportunities, something the NDP won't do.

It's very disappointing to see a major political party in this territory so anti-resource development. I think at one time in here earlier during this current Legislative Assembly, the 33rd Legislative Assembly, I mentioned that the NDP would have the mining industry turn out the lights. Unfortunately, they're the ones at the switch.

Mr. Silver: Of course, I don't have a lot of time here. I have about 20 minutes prepared, as far as speaking to the motion to begin with, and now we have an amendment on the floor, so again, even if I had more time, I wouldn't be able to take it. I just think it's interesting to see two different approaches from two different governments here. We have two different political parties.

What we have here from the Yukon Party is, after three and a half years of being in government, we're now talking about developing a mineral development strategy for the Yukon. That's interesting in itself, Mr. Speaker, and what we have with the NDP is an amendment put forward to cancel that, and to replace that with getting in there and changing legislation.

One would have to say there should be some changes made, but one would have to take a look at this current situation to determine what those changes should be. I would like to paint a picture here as to why there are two different political parties with two vastly different approaches to a sector of our economy that is extremely important.

The reason why we're debating this today is because our economy is not doing so well, Mr. Speaker. Our GDP — in 24 months — is the worst in Canada, and we have a Yukon Party government that maintains mining-specific policies, yet three

and a half years later into a mandate, now we're talking about a strategy.

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

Debate on Motion No. 972, and the amendment, accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.