On May 28, 2015, at the close of the Yukon Legislative Assembly’s spring session, NDP Leader Liz Hanson asks who’s to blame for Yukon’s second year of economic recession? Premier Darrell Pasloski and Minister of Highways and Public Works Scott Kent respond.

**Question re: Economic outlook**

**Ms. Hanson:** Whereas anything that Midas touched turned to gold, this Yukon Party government has a gaze like Medusa. Anything they look upon turns to stone.

For the past four years, this government has undermined Yukon’s wealth of land, people and resources. They have watched record federal transfers circle the drain without strategic reinvestments to diversify and strengthen Yukon’s local economy. We were once leaders in economic growth, but since this Premier came to power, year over year, GDP growth has fallen. Yukoners are now dealing with a Yukon Party-made recession.

Provinces and territories around us big and small, including other resource-based economies, are growing while Yukon’s economy is the only one in Canada that has shrunk for two years in a row.

Does the Premier realize that his government is responsible for this poor economic performance?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** We continue to invest in this territory, not only for today but for the future, such as our record capital budget that will pass today. Creating jobs for Yukoners, keeping Yukoners here in the territory today, but building infrastructure that we will use for many years to come — infrastructure that members opposite will again vote against, like expanding our hospital, like the new seniors home, like building the new Salvation Army’s emergency shelter or the new Sarah Steele for enhanced alcohol and drug services, like the investments in roads, and
like the investments in bridges and aerodromes. We continue to make investments today to benefit the territory today, but get this territory ready for prosperity and success because of that vision that we see in the future.

**Ms. Hanson:** This government cannot run away from its track record. Yukon is the only jurisdiction with two consecutive years of negative GDP growth. We have been in this spring sitting for two months and the Premier has yet to make a coherent statement about the direction of Yukon’s economy.

Indeed, his government does spend millions after millions of federal transfers with no clear plan and without consulting Yukoners. The consequences are clear — cost overruns, delays and gross mismanagement — yet the Yukon Party government is so out of touch that, as recently as this past Monday, they said, with a straight face, that the F.H. Collins replacement is on time and on budget. Which time? Which budget? Yukoners deserve better.

When will the Premier admit his responsibility for taking Yukon into recession?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** With respect to the F.H. Collins construction project — one of the many construction projects that this government is managing — I have mentioned in debate on a number of occasions that 75 percent of the employees — up until the middle of April — were local employees. There are local benefits to subcontractors as well as vendors. One of the interesting things, though, when it comes to looking back in history — and I know there are a number of new Yukoners who have moved to the Yukon since 2003, when the Yukon Party first came to power. When the NDP first assumed office in 1997, there were just under 800 jobs in the mining industry here in the territory. When they left office, that number had shrunk down to about 25 percent of that — just over 200 jobs. When the Yukon Party took office in 2003, it was still at that 200-job level, and it peaked in 2011 to well over 1,200 jobs.

This is one of the industries that the Leader of the Official Opposition has demonstrated during this sitting that she certainly does not understand. That has been affirmed by industry individuals in the community. As important as the mining industry is to the territory, just a little bit of a trip down memory lane will show how devastating the NDP government was to that industry during their years in power and how positive the Yukon Party influence has been for the mining industry.

**Ms. Hanson:** History will show that the Yukon NDP does know the value of having strong, community-based strategic plans to strengthen and diversify the economy. After all, it was the NDP that established the Yukon Mining Advisory Board and the small business investment tax credit. This Yukon Party government prefers to rely on ever-increasing federal transfer monies instead of taking leadership on their own. Though the Premier says that he will make Yukon a net contributor to Canada, his actions have led to the erosion of Yukon’s economic independence. The percentage of own-source revenue has dropped significantly under this government. This government does not have regional economic development plans in place, and it does not work with all sectors of our economy. The Premier may have put on boots at the beginning of this Sitting, but it is anyone’s guess as to where he is headed. When will the Premier get serious about regional economic development and pull the territory out of the recession it is in?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** On the Leader of the NDP’s assertions on own-source revenues, she is absolutely wrong. It appears that facts are irrelevant.

We continue to see the growth as a percentage of our budget of own-source revenues over the past 10 years, and that is because of the leadership of this Yukon Party. We continue to invest in schools. We continue to invest in new hospitals and upgrading hospitals — Canada’s first MRI north of 60. We continue to have the vision to look at new generation hydro. We continue to build seniors’ residences, invest in home care and invest in fibre optics to expand our IT sectors. We are putting $5.5 million back in the pockets of Yukon taxpayers. All Yukon taxpayers in 2015 will see a reduction in their taxes. We are investing in an increase in the Yukon child tax benefit.

While the NDP were busy making plans, they were overseeing the exodus of thousands of Yukoners during their last time in government — who had to leave this territory to find a job somewhere else. We are focused on growing the private sector, creating prosperity for Yukon families.
On May 28, 2015, MLAs Robert Hawkins (Yellowknife Centre) and Wendy Bisaro (Frame Lake) made statements about the advisability of hydraulic fracturing in the Northwest Territories. Fracking has been a highly contentious issue in the NWT, with projects currently underway in the Sahtu Region, but in the absence of a complete regulatory structure.

Mr. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, more now than ever, there are curious choices before all of us, choices that will pretty much define us as we go forward. It’s like sowing a seed into the future every step we take. A future we hold for ourselves and our children. If not our children’s future, then who? Who do we secure this future for? Right before us, not unlike yesterday and certainly not unlike tomorrow, we must be faced with choices that have to be made by ourselves because we have been the ones we have been waiting for. We need the change that we promised we’d bring. We certainly need the strength and courage and willingness to ask the tough questions that, unfortunately, and sometimes with great courage, need to be asked. Do we have the strength within ourselves? I believe we do. We should be defined by this opportunity that stands here today. What opportunity is that? Let us be known as the Assembly that has the courage, the willingness, the strength to ask: Should hydraulic fracturing happen in our territory? It doesn’t take a lot of courage to ask that. It takes enormous courage to stand by that. They’re more than just words on paper. They are about our future, the future for ourselves, the future for our friends, the future for our families. Some will stand by and lean on old decisions, the NEB’s policy and direction under their watch. If we do it their way, why did we fight so hard for devolution? These rules are of the old regime. I thought we were working to untie those shackles. We wanted to go forward in our own way. The LP hardly would tell us the past is a foreign country. They do things differently there and I thought that’s why we were fighting for devolution. I’m calling for a one-year educational pause on hydraulic fracturing because we need to ask the right questions. It’s not about how we should do regulations on fracturing but whether we should be fracturing no matter what conditions. We will never be Alberta and nor should we try. We have a great and powerful region called the Sahtu. That region needs opportunities, and before them these are the types they have. Are we giving them the support they need? We must give them their chances. As I said, why are we doing this? We have the courage to do it for the right reasons. More than words, let’s stand by them through actions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins.

Ms. Bisaro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been quiet on the fracking front the last few weeks, but about a month ago it was anything but quiet. Industry, Tourism and Investment had started their public engagement sessions on fracking regulations and many of our residents were expressing their opinions. “You’ve got the cart before the horse,” many said. “We don’t want fracking,” or “We want to discuss if we should frack, we don’t want to discuss the regulations,” were some other comments. In response, the Minister told residents that the meetings were not to discuss the merits of fracking, that it was not the time for that. It was time to consider regulations. Mr. Ramsay reiterated that yesterday in his statement, “This work and dialogue is not about deciding if hydraulic fracturing will take place in the NWT.” It is clear to me that the government is forging ahead with fracking regardless. They have every intention to open the NWT up to development at any cost, and the concerns of residents do not seem to matter. As I have said before, a conversation about fracking needs to happen, a conversation about if fracking should happen, how it should happen, when and where it should happen. That conversation has never

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been had and many residents are now and have been asking for it. There must be a thorough investigation of the practice of fracking to educate people, to comfort people, to weigh all the pros and cons of the practice. The highhanded “we know best” approach of Minister and Cabinet is not reassuring anybody. I’m not even sure if the investors are reassured. We have a lull in fracking exploration and development applications in the Sahtu. Let’s use the time wisely and do the much-needed consultation with our people. The Minister said yesterday that he’s committed to allowing more time. Let’s be sure that we use that time for the right purpose, to consult on and review the practice of fracking. I am not against development, much as it may sound as though I am. I am against any development that has not been thoroughly thought out, a development where the risks and benefits are unknown. That’s where we are today: a Minister intent on development without thorough examination of the pros and cons inherent in fracking development. Maybe the Minister has seen enough, heard enough to be convinced of the benefits of fracking, but many others in our territory have not. It is only just and fair that they be given the opportunity to get educated, as well, and then have a hand in any development decisions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. ●

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*On June 2, 2015, Nunavut Premier Peter Taptuna addressed the Legislative Assembly about the role of government in the regulatory process, and particularly about the Nunavut Planning Commission and Baffinland Iron Mines.*

**Hon. Peter Taptuna:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon, colleagues, Nunavummiut, and Kuglukturmiut.

Mr. Speaker, as we begin this new session, I would like to take this opportunity to speak about regulatory processes in Nunavut and our role as a government. The process is clear: The regulatory responsibility rests with the institutions of public government and not the Nunavut government. However, we as a government are absolutely within our right to make recommendations about improving that process. There have been numerous correspondences back and forth between our institutions of
public government, the regional Inuit organizations, and federal and territorial governments.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of discussion and speculation out there on a recent letter of correspondence between my office and the federal government regarding Nunavut Planning Commission and Baffinland Iron Mines.

Mr. Speaker, there is no miscommunication or misunderstanding. There are three main themes that have been emerging over the last few months. Each institution of public government needs to act in a fair, transparent, responsible way through a process that is consistent. The institutions of public government must also be adequately funded. As well, we must continue to advocate for responsible economic development in our territory to provide our people with a future.

Recently, I recommended that the federal government conduct an audit of the Nunavut Planning Commission. This recommendation is in response to a letter sent by the Planning Commission to Minister Valcourt at Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. The recommendation is well within our jurisdiction as a government. This issue is not about allowing or not allowing a conformity licence, which is the Nunavut Planning Commission's responsibility. It is about the Nunavut Planning Commission removing the plan amendment as a feasible option for Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation when Baffinland simply asked for a clarification on the amendment process. The amendment process is clearly outlined as a responsibility for the Nunavut Planning Commission within the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement under Article 11.6. It concerns me that the first and second amendment to the Nunavut Baffin Regional Land Use Plan did not need prior budgetary approval and so it raises questions as to why this is now required for the Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, that sentiment is echoed in the recommendation put forth by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association. Like the Government of Nunavut, it raises issues that do not allow proponents to make amendment and proceed in a timely and reasonable manner.

Mr. Speaker, it appears to be contrary to provisions set out in the land claims agreement. The Planning Commission further identified a chronic lack of funds that don't allow them to complete necessary reviews in an appropriate timeframe. They appear to continue to take this underfunded position, even with the 25 percent increase they received as a result of the settlement between Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and Canada. Funding issues aside, no institution should be using this as a crutch for not being able to complete proper assessments within a reasonable timeline. Nunavutmiut deserve an institution that has clear and consistent practices in place where economic development is not stalled because of inconsistent rules and funding shortages.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to see the Nunavut Planning Commission adequately funded. We need to know where they stand. I would like to see the Nunavut Land Use Plan completed so that every proponent has an opportunity to follow an established process that lays out a clear set of guidelines that are transparent and fair, not a process that changes and isn't consistent. Every community deserves the opportunity to have active development in their jurisdiction and a process that does not put hundreds of jobs, millions of dollars in wages and benefits, and the potential for other future projects at risk. The role of this government is to increase economic viability of this territory and provide our people with the means to put food on the table, and we can't afford to have our fragile economy stalled. We are also very respectful of the need to develop Nunavut in the most environmentally sound and responsible way. Our ecosystems must remain healthy.

Mr. Speaker, I along with the Members of this House want to ensure that development is responsible, people have jobs, and our institutions are able to carry out their mandate. •