



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 3

2nd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, April 25, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2017 Spring Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Deputy Premier Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Pauline Frost	Vuntut Gwitchin	Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Highways and Public Works; the Public Service Commission
Hon. Jeanie Dendys	Mountainview	Minister of Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board; Women's Directorate

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Stacey Hassard	Leader of the Official Opposition Pelly-Nisutlin	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Liz Hanson	Leader of the Third Party Whitehorse Centre
Kate White	Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, April 25, 2017 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Earth Day

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an important annual event, Earth Day, on April 22. It is celebrated across the globe. The international theme of this year's Earth Day is "Environmental and Climate Literacy."

Earth Day organizers aim to build a global citizenry fluent in the concepts of climate change and awareness of its unprecedented threat to our planet. Northerners are very familiar with the threats caused by climate change and we are uniquely vulnerable to its impacts. In Yukon alone, the average temperature has increased by two degrees Celsius over the last 50 years and continues to rise. These warm temperatures have a significant impact on Yukon's infrastructure, traditional ways of living and ecological systems. Thawing permafrost shifts the ground beneath us, challenging the integrity of our buildings and roads.

Biomass areas of distinct plant and animal species are changing. This is causing things like southern species to migrate north, increasing the risk of invasive species entering the Yukon, and caribou and salmon migration patterns to shifting, impacting availability and access to traditional food sources.

Climate change is melting our sea ice and causing unprecedented changes in our seasons.

We can see through our spring thaw earlier this year a direct correlation to climate change. It is also melting our glaciers at a record pace. We have recently learned how dramatic and unexpected the impact of glacier melt can be in our own backyards. It has been widely reported that the Kaskawulsh Glacier in the Kluane National Park has retreated so much that its melting water is now running in the opposite direction. It is now flowing south toward the Pacific Ocean, when it used to flow north into the Slims River on its way to the Bering Sea. The term for this phenomenon is calling "stream capture" or "river piracy". This is when a river drainage system or watershed diverts from its own bed to one of the nearby streams.

Some scientists are saying that this is the first documented case of river piracy due to climate change that has occurred in modern times. This event shows us the effects climate change can suddenly have, significantly altering our way of life in the world at any time.

Celebrating Earth Day and reflecting on the reality of climate change is important. We need to be aware; we need to think about and celebrate our natural environment. We need to honour the earth, our land, by taking action to heal the damage already done and to prevent future destruction. As Minister of Environment, part of the mandate entrusted to me is to address the realities of climate change, so that Yukoners see a healthy environment with sustainable wildlife populations and opportunities to enjoy the wilderness as fundamental to the social and economic well-being of our territory.

Our current government hears the needs of Yukoners and it understands how vital it is to the stewardship of the environment. We are working toward reducing Yukon's carbon footprint by expanding the use of renewable energy sources and reducing our energy use overall. We are collaborating across the Government of Yukon, First Nation governments and communities to integrate climate change risk assessments in our policies, processes and projects so that we remain resilient. We are hopeful that the work we do now to address the impact of climate change will help provide Yukoners with a sustainable, happy and prosperous place to call home now and into the future.

Our natural environment deserves our care and appreciation for everything it provides. Today, I encourage us all to give thanks for the gifts of our land and to celebrate Earth Day with all of Yukon as we call this our beautiful home.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to and celebrate Earth Day, which is a wonderful opportunity for us to celebrate the beauty in our surroundings here in the Yukon. It is an opportunity to reflect on the choices we have made as individuals and as a community to get where we are today in terms of reducing, reusing and recycling — those three important "Rs" that we are taught from a young age and continue to instill in our children today. It is an opportunity to think to the future and what more we can do to lay solid groundwork for generations of Yukoners to come so that they may enjoy the Earth and all it has to offer as we do today.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on the importance of continuing the work of the previous government to work toward achieving greener construction and retrofitting schools and other government buildings to limit carbon emissions. The plan to cut emissions by a measurable means was not only one that would result in much needed repairs and upgrades to outdated buildings that contribute to the majority of Yukon's emissions, but would be results-based and achieve the goal of lower emissions.

I would encourage the current government to build upon this plan, which, by creating jobs, works toward cutting emissions in an achievable and measureable way for generations of Yukoners to benefit from in years to come.

This year, the theme for Earth Day is "EarthPLAY". Parents are encouraged to focus on getting their children outdoors as much as possible to play. It is no secret that

outdoor play leads to healthier kids and, in turn, healthier adults.

I would like to thank all those Yukoners who are making a conscientious effort to recycle and limit their waste. Not only are you doing your part in your community by diverting your waste from the landfill, but you are teaching your children and others good habits to carry on and live by.

Our schools are doing a wonderful job teaching our children the importance of recycling, composting and diverting waste. Workplaces are also incorporating these important habits and our communities are increasingly raising awareness. I would like to thank Yukoners for embracing the importance of reducing waste and encourage them to continue to find ways to do more for our Earth.

Mr. Speaker, I'm always fascinated by this Native American proverb that I read many years ago: "We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

Ms. Hanson: On behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus, I rise to pay tribute to Earth Day, which took place this past Saturday and is celebrated around the world.

I don't want to repeat the eloquent words of my colleagues in this House but I did want to take a moment to acknowledge the Yukon Conservation Society, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Yukon and Zero Waste Yukon, which organized an outreach campaign to encourage people to take action for the Earth during this yearly celebration.

Choosing active modes of transportation, carpooling, buying local or reducing the waste that we send to the landfill are just a few examples of how we individually can make a difference, but on Earth Day, and every day of the year, it's also important to remember that protecting our environment is also a collective responsibility. Governments have a critical role to play to ensure that sustainability is more than a buzzword, but rather the way our society is organized — a society based on the knowledge that the beauty and the bounty of our Earth demands our respectful stewardship.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of Education Week

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Education Week, which runs from April 24 to 28 this year. I'm speaking this afternoon on behalf of the Yukon government and the Third Party.

This year's theme is "Canada 150: Stories of the Yukon and Yukon First Nations", which celebrates education and recognizes the histories of Canada and Yukon First Nations. Long before Confederation, Yukon First Nations lived and thrived in this special land that we call home. Education has been part of both Yukon and Yukon First Nation histories as the people who lived here leaned on the land and learned there in their communities and in schools.

Today we continue to support and celebrate learning in many spaces and places in the Yukon. The fifth annual Yukon Robotics Challenge is taking place today, inspiring grade 6 and 7 students to use creativity, collaboration, communication

and critical thinking to accomplish complicated tasks in a fun and hands-on way. Many thanks go out to the educators and volunteers across the territory who help make experiential learning opportunities like this available to Yukon students.

Also this week, the 49th Rotary Music Festival is currently in progress, providing Yukon musicians and dancers of all ages with an opportunity to learn, receive professional adjudication and perform their art. We thank the Rotary Club of Whitehorse, the Rotary Music Festival board of directors, and the staff, volunteers, sponsors and participants who make this special community event possible. I know I said that kind of quickly, but it's the 49th Rotary Music Festival. That's an extraordinary task — an extraordinary accomplishment for those young musicians who have all passed through that process and for the Rotary Club of Whitehorse, which has put it on for many, many years.

Lifelong learning requires partners in education. Learning happens at home, in class, in communities and on the land, due in part to the collaboration and contributions of many, including: parents and families, school councils, including the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees and the Catholic Education Association of Yukon; the staff of the Education department — from the dedicated staff at each of our schools to the many people working behind the scenes at the main building and in the schools to support Yukon education; Yukon First Nation governments, elders, and communities are also partners; and the French community, the franco-yukonnaise, the francophone school board and the Canadian Parents for French are also partners; the educators and staff at Yukon College and the service providers for advanced education, who provide learning pathways and training opportunities for adult learners and job seekers. I encourage my colleagues and the public to find out more about Education Week events on the Department of Education website or by connecting with their local school. There are lots of activities happening throughout the territory at the individual school level.

At the heart of all of our work together is the learning journey of each of our students. You, the learners of the Yukon, are why we do what we do, and your success is our success.

Thank you. Merci beaucoup. Shaw nithän.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to celebrate Education Week in Yukon. Canada's 150th anniversary of Confederation means 150 years of education in this country. This year, the theme of Education Week is "Canada 150: Stories of Yukon and Yukon First Nations".

I am proud to speak today about the history of education in our territory and the path we take forward. It is the job of parents, teachers and, indeed, all community members to provide our students with the knowledge and history of our past and guide them through the present to ensure healthy, successful futures and lives.

The Yukon government over the past number of years has worked on ensuring First Nation content and history has been

rolled into the Yukon curriculum. This inclusion of the history of residential schools in Yukon allows students a better understanding of our territory and how we came to be the Yukon we know today. By educating current and future generations of Yukon youth, we are contributing to the healing process and to a better understanding of each other. Education has been redesigned and reinvigorated over many years, and this still continues as we learn new methods and incorporate new ideas. The network of public, private, culture, language and religion-based educations allow parents to place their children into a stream of schooling that they see as best fitting the needs of their child.

In recent years, by placing emphasis on the trades for our youth, we are seeing an increase in young people obtaining successful and gainful employment in areas where they can thrive in a hands-on environment. By providing support and guidance for our students pursuing post-secondary education in the territory and across Canada, we are seeing Yukon students succeed, with many remaining and returning home to work, play and raise a family. Experiential learning programs have been incredibly successful over the years in enabling students to follow their passions. They have pursued knowledge through experiencing the outdoors, sports, music, drama, culture and arts.

I welcome the addition of more Yukon-specific content and more focus on our First Nation history and traditions. I also look forward to seeing how students will develop within this new curriculum. I remain hopeful that the government moves at a reasonable pace to ensure that the changes they plan on making to student assessment have the support of students, parents and educators. I encourage parents and students to engage themselves in these changes and lend their voices and opinions to the government to ensure they have a say in the future of education in Yukon.

I would also like to give thanks to the teachers, school administrators and parents for all of the contributions that they made to ensure their children have the building blocks they need for successful futures.

To those organizers of events throughout the week, I wish you all great success and offer my thanks for your contributions to Education Week. As we raise Yukon's future generations, let us continue to focus on an amazing education system that will give them the best possible chance. Through a commitment to lifelong learning, we will succeed.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, it is with great love that I see three people who I love very much in my life: my mom is here today, Rhoda Istchenko; my sister Harmony Istchenko; and my nephew Rowan Istchenko. I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker — I told them I was re-elected and I still had a job. I'm not sure if they're just checking up on me, but it's great to see them in the House today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 5, entitled *Act to Amend the Human Rights Act and the Vital Statistics Act* —

Speaker: Order. We have a few more procedural matters to go through here. Thank you, minister. We'll be with you in a short few minutes.

Once again, are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 5: Act to Amend the Human Rights Act and the Vital Statistics Act (2017) — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. Frost: I knew that you were going to skip through those other things, so here I am — similar to what you did yesterday. I guess I was ahead of that.

Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 5, entitled *Act to Amend the Human Rights Act and the Vital Statistics Act (2017)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Health and Social Services that Bill No. 5, entitled *Act to Amend the Human Rights Act and the Vital Statistics Act (2017)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 5 agreed to

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to:

(1) immediately use the protected area provisions provided for in the *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act* to designate and protect sensitive and damaged areas until a comprehensive ATV management plan is in place; and

(2) meet with stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan for the management of ATVs in the territory for tabling in the Fall Sitting of this Legislature.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to call witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation to appear in the Legislative Assembly to answer questions during the 2017 Spring Sitting.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to call witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation to appear in the Legislative Assembly to answer questions during the 2017 Spring Sitting.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to support the development of communications infrastructure in rural Yukon, including improving access to emergency services, by working with the private sector to expand cellular phone coverage to people without service in rural areas including Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, Fox Lake, Ibex Valley, Junction 37 and Mendenhall.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to complete and make public an economic analysis of the impacts that the creation of a statutory holiday for Aboriginal Day would have on Yukon, including but not limited to:

- (1) Yukon businesses;
- (2) municipal governments;
- (3) Yukon government and its corporations and agencies;
- (4) First Nation governments and their development corporations;
- (5) the Government of Canada; and
- (6) non-profit and non-governmental organizations.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Carbon tax

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has known since last December what the cost per tonne is going to be for the carbon tax. In fact the Premier's own press release announcing the carbon tax came attached with a document that states — and I quote: “The carbon price should start at a minimum of \$10 per tonne in 2018, and rise by \$10 per year to \$50 per tonne in 2022.” So it's clear that the Premier has all of the information that he needs to do an analysis of what the impacts will be on Yukon families and businesses.

With the carbon tax only eight months away from being implemented, will the Premier finally get to work and tell us what the cost of this carbon tax scheme is going to be on Yukon families?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise again today in the Legislative Assembly to speak to this issue. It is clear that the members opposite are struggling to understand a little bit of the background about the carbon pricing.

Carbon pricing is a federal tax. It will be collected by the federal government and it will be administered by the federal government. I'm surprised that the member opposite doesn't seem to be aware of this reality, especially when it is his government that originally committed Yukon and all of

Canada to this tax. In March 2016, the past government signed the Vancouver declaration, which outlined a national carbon-pricing system and they have committed basically to a carbon-pricing mechanism by doing so.

As we discussed yesterday in the Legislative Assembly, we're waiting to hear from Ottawa to provide information for the next logical steps so that, from a regional basis, we can start implementing how we can best deal with the federal pricing mechanism.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, leadership isn't about blaming others. Leadership isn't about making excuses. Signing on to this carbon tax scheme was the Premier's decision and his decision alone. The Premier has the information he needs to do this analysis of the impacts of this carbon tax scheme on Yukon families. He has delayed this Legislature by a record six months and has had plenty of time to get answers for these questions.

Will the Premier please show some leadership and tell Yukoners how much this carbon tax scheme is going to cost them?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the member opposite already relayed, we know how much it is going to cost at the pump — the federal pricing mechanism — but again, I am surprised that the member opposite doesn't seem to be aware of the reality that this is not my tax. This is a federal carbon-pricing mechanism. We can go over that over and over again in the Legislative Assembly. The Yukon Party can try to make it seem like we are implementing this carbon-pricing mechanism. It is not; it is a federal tax. But I will say that I believe in carbon pricing. I believe that it is the most effective way to deal with a global issue and we should all be concerned about that — absolutely. However, in March 2016, as I stated earlier, the past government did sign on to the Vancouver declaration, which outlined a national carbon-pricing system. That's not assigning any blame. That is just getting the facts out there in the Legislative Assembly.

Now, somewhere along the line, the former government began discussing an exemption. There is no such thing as an exemption. There never was an exemption. An exemption was never an option. No province or territory was ever offered an exemption.

These are all things that we know are true, and we, again, are looking forward to working with the opposition and working with the private sector when we get the information that we need from a federal carbon-pricing mechanism to make sure that 100 percent of that tax stays in the Yukon so that it is truly revenue neutral for Yukon businesses and Yukon families.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. The Premier says that there are no exemptions, but he didn't even bother to ask, so how would he know?

Yesterday the Premier told Yukoners that they will feel the pinch at the gas pumps due to this carbon tax scheme, so clearly he knows his carbon tax is going to increase costs for Yukoners. If he is so proud of this carbon tax scheme, why won't he be up-front and tell us today: How much more will we be paying for our fuel at the pumps, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the member opposite told us how much we are going to be paying at the pumps, so he already knows. This is an interesting game we're playing here in the Legislative Assembly. As well, I am not sure how he knows that I didn't ask for an exemption. We went to Ottawa and we asked: "Are there any exemptions?" They said very clearly, "No, there is not". This is a global phenomenon that needs regional development. It's interesting that the member opposite believes that he knows all of the conversations that we had.

Again, we believe in the carbon-pricing mechanism. Yukoners are going to get the deal that we promised, which is a revenue-neutral tax, collected by the federal government and returned to Yukoners. He knows what the price is going to be at the pumps, but keeps on asking what the price is going to be at the pumps.

The federally imposed carbon-pricing model will not increase the tax burden to Yukoners. As I have said over and over again, this is a federal tax and it will be collected by the federal government. We appreciate that Yukoners are interested in knowing how this will work and when we get the information from Ottawa, we will absolutely engage with Yukoners and we will move forward for their federal pricing mechanism.

I don't know what else he wants me to say, other than we will wait until the actual designs based on the annex and also on the pan-Canadian framework, which his government signed, comes in.

Question re: Liberal Party ethical standards

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, during the 2016 territorial election, a candidate for the Liberal Party was discovered to have been using inappropriate tactics to get vulnerable people to vote. The Chief Electoral Officer looked into the issue, found that there had been violations of the *Elections Act*, and that candidate has since been charged by the RCMP. When the media discovered and reported on this issue, the Liberal Party admitted that their candidate had "made a mistake" but the Liberal leader said that she was well-intentioned and genuine in her desire to help vulnerable people vote.

Does the Premier believe that being supposedly well-intentioned and genuine is an excuse for breaking the law?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What I do believe in is "innocent until proven guilty".

I don't know how much more to say to the member opposite. I appreciate his concerns about the democratic process and I appreciate his concerns on election rules and procedures. We're very aware that the RCMP has conducted an investigation in this matter and they are going to be proceeding with that. Unless the member opposite knows something that I don't, no charges have been laid and, until that time, it's in the courts. I really don't know what else to say, other than innocent until proven guilty, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, for Yukoners to have confidence in the Premier, they need to understand his judgment. When the Liberal Party learned that their candidate had "made a mistake" and broken the law the Liberal leader

chose to defend her, saying she was well-intentioned and genuine. When the Chief Electoral Officer found that the candidate had violated the act and referred the matter to the RCMP, the Leader of the NDP called for the Liberals to ditch the candidate, but the Liberal leader chose to maintain his firm support.

Mr. Speaker, when the Liberal leader learned that his candidate had, in the words of his campaign chair, made a mistake and violated the *Elections Act*, he chose to ignore calls for her dismissal. The question is very simple: Why?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Just to clarify, charges were laid. I'm sorry. But again, at the same time, the investigation is still going on and is in front of the courts — is what I meant to say in the first supplementary.

So, you know, to answer the member opposite's question, this is a team. We'll stick by the team when we're moving through an election or when we're moving through a five-year mandate. We're going to be a team and we're going to stick by a team — again, innocent until proven guilty.

I was on the record yesterday and I'll repeat it again that we do know that Ms. Goepfel is appointed to the Assessment Review Board and that was reviewed by our government in December 2016. We are following the principle, again, of innocent until proven guilty and we will maintain that. I know that the member opposite would be very interested in making sure that we follow the rules of the *Elections Act* and we commit to do so. But at this time, there's really nothing more to report, other than we're going to wait to see how the court comes out at the end. We'll make a decision as far as Ms. Goepfel's appointment to the Assessment Review Board, based upon the decisions of the court. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, this issue is no doubt embarrassing for the Liberal leader. Yukoners have a right to understand how he sees the world and how much tolerance he has for ethical lapses inside the Liberal Party team.

He knew that one of his campaign star candidates had broken the law, yet he chose to defend her and refused to kick her off his team. Since that time, Yukoners have learned how serious that violation was. The RCMP has charged that Liberal candidate with three very serious offences under the *Elections Act* and the punishment will soon be decided by a territorial judge.

In light of this, Mr. Speaker, does the Premier now regret his decision to defend the candidate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'll just say that the member opposite is wrong. Charges have not been laid — I mean, have not been put through the court. We're still waiting for that determination so he might want to check Hansard as far as his supplementary. There's no embarrassment over here, Mr. Speaker. We're going to wait to see the courts come to the end and if charges are going to be laid, we'll move forward from there. But again, we have no information to gain here in the Legislative Assembly and we'll wait for the courts to do their due diligence.

Thank you to the member opposite for this question.

Question re: Joint labour management committees

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Premier. Last week, the Yukon Employees' Union withdrew from all joint labour management committees with the government. They did so because so many government representatives on these committees don't have the power to take action, as they are on temporary or acting assignments.

The union reports — and the government has acknowledged — that there are at least 11 deputy or assistant deputy ministers and 17 directors who are in acting positions. We do understand that a transition in government does not happen overnight but, after nearly six months in power, we have yet to see how this government manages the public service differently than their predecessor.

Will the Premier outline how his government's management of the public service will differ from that of the previous government?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her question. This government will manage the civil service well. That is the answer to the member opposite's question. You are right. The president of the Yukon Employees' Union did reach out to us. He has issued a news release — really, a cry for help — and after years of neglect and problems, he came to me. I met with the president of the union. We had a cordial, productive first meeting. I have talked with him several times since then. As a matter of fact, I have spoken to the president of the union more than I have spoken to my son in the last couple of days. I have spoken to him again and again. We are having great talks, and I have every confidence that we are going to be able to meet an amicable resolution to the issue of these important committees, which deal with health and safety issues and return to work. It is important work and we want to make sure they work. We are working with the union and we will get that working.

Ms. Hanson: You know, it is kind of unfortunate that it took six months. We do know that the minister did meet and speak with the president of the YEU last week, and that is a good thing, but it should not just happen because of their dissatisfaction becoming a news story. In fact, as the minister alluded to, this is a long-standing issue, an issue I raised with the minister in December. In 2013, the government conducted an audit of its staffing practices, and the conclusions were far from glowing. One of the most troubling findings was that non-competitive hirings far outnumber competitive ones across the Yukon government. We are talking about 60 percent of 1,900 staffing actions for the audited year. That leads to perceptions of favouritism and perceptions of a system that is not based on merit. It leads to a demoralized public service.

So here is a good starting point for the minister: Will the minister commit to reducing the number of non-competitive hires in the public service and report on the progress made during the Fall Sitting of this Legislature?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for her question. There was a review done of the situation in 2013. There were 15 recommendations. I had a conversation with

the head of the Public Service Commission this morning, and 14 of those recommendations have been acted upon and answered to the satisfaction of the auditors who actually conducted that review. The 15th one is still outstanding. It has to do with security clearances and that type of thing. It's a fairly complicated matter, and we are looking into that throughout the civil service. But that is not where the work ends, Mr. Speaker — with one review that the previous government was forced into. This problem that I have inherited — I am going to work with the civil service and my Public Service Commissioner and the members opposite and the president of the union and the president of the YTA to fix it — to fix the issues that we have inherited. This review process that happened in 2013 was one review. I have committed to keeping that review process incremental and on a regular basis. That is what we are going to do. This is not something that is going to be fixed overnight.

It's not going to be fixed in 140 days. This is a problem we have inherited; it's throughout the civil service. There has been a lack of oversight and we're going to change that.

Ms. Hanson: It was an audit, not a review — an audit of staffing — and his response should make it clear that the tabling of this response requested in this second supplementary should be an easy task for this minister.

Like any business or organization, the government sometimes needs to take extra staff on to cover for holidays or to handle a seasonal peak in activity. Auxiliary-on-call staff can help those needs, but we have all heard stories of people who have worked full-time for years as auxiliaries on call without getting a secure position within government. This makes planning for the future nearly impossible for auxiliary-on-call employees, whether that means buying a car, starting a family or taking on a mortgage.

Mr. Speaker, what will this government do to make sure that people who have been auxiliary on call for months or years, people whose work is critical — I'm not just talking about the seasonal ones, but those who are critical for government operations — are treated with respect and given the permanent status they deserve?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for her question. It's a good one. This government respects the civil service. We respect the people who work for us. They do hard work. They do valuable work. There's more to come on this file. The Premier, the Minister of Finance, has signalled that we want to actually get to the true cost of government and we're going to do that. Stay tuned — there will be more coming out this week.

Question re: Carbon tax

Mr. Kent: I want to follow up with the Premier on his carbon tax scheme.

Yesterday, we established that the Premier's plans for the carbon tax mean that tourists who visit here will be forced to pay more to visit the territory. In fact, the Premier has bragged to local media about this fact. This tax on tourism will make it more expensive for people to visit the Yukon. Since he was so excited by this tourism tax, will the Premier tell us how much

more expensive it will be for people to visit Yukon as a result of his carbon tax scheme?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It feels like Groundhog Day in here, and if we're going to hear the exact same thing, I'm just going to continue to stay on my side of the dialogue, I guess.

I'm happy to speak to this. It's clear that the members opposite are struggling to understand whose tax this is. The carbon tax is a federal carbon tax. It will be collected by the federal government. It will be administered by the federal government. I'm surprised that the member opposite does not seem to be aware of this reality, especially when it was his government that originally committed Yukon and Canada to the tax.

Every jurisdiction in Canada will have an opportunity to decide how to implement a federal carbon-pricing mechanism. We're no different, and we will engage with the opposition if they are interested in helping to design how we're going to make sure that this remains revenue neutral and also how the federal government commits to our annex, making sure that we implement the tax where we can actually make a difference but not impede businesses. We've said that from the get-go. We have a plan to work with the businesses, to work with stakeholders. The Yukon Party's plan was to put their head in the sand and talk about an exemption during the election campaign. That exemption doesn't exist.

I answered the question earlier from the Leader of the Official Opposition as to whether or not we ever asked for an exemption. We inquired about it. The answer is "no", and we will get back to the member opposite as soon as possible to give more details.

Mr. Kent: Considering the Premier has been in government for almost six months and had four trips to Ottawa, he certainly doesn't know very much about the carbon tax scheme and what it's going to cost. I take it that the answer to my question is that he doesn't know what the cost to tourists will be as a result of his carbon tax scheme.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has promised it will do evidence-based decision-making. However, yesterday we learned that the government signed on to this scheme without any analysis or evidence about the financial impacts on Yukoners and their families.

Why did the Premier not make a decision based on evidence?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am perplexed as to the question, as it was the Yukon Party that signed on to the Vancouver protocol. Now the Vancouver protocol committed this government to many things, including a carbon-pricing mechanism. So I guess I could ask the same question of his party. When they signed onto the Vancouver protocol, did they know the implications of the carbon-pricing mechanism? Did they know what it was going to cost the tourism industry? Did they know what it was going to cost Yukon businesses? No. They signed on and, during the election, their plan was to call for an exemption after signing on to the Vancouver protocol.

Mr. Speaker, we've done a lot of work and we showcased that yesterday. We've talked about how, in this government,

we're doing a whole-of-government approach. It won't just be one department. We're going to be working with Finance, we're going to be working with Environment, and we are going to be working with Community Services. We will engage with Yukoners. The members opposite know exactly how much this is going to cost. We don't have a lot of options here as far as different types of mechanisms — cap and trade, and these types of things — but we're looking into all of those options. It's going to be the federal backstop. Members opposite know it's going to the federal backstop. They also know how that's going to increment from 2018 on. They also know that there'll be analysis in 2020 to make sure that the intent of the carbon-pricing mechanism is kept whole. I would love to give them some more information. They've read the annex — more details to come — and that will include Yukoners as far as how —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So what we've established here during my questioning today is that the Premier has no idea how much the carbon tax is going to cost Yukoners and he has not made any decision based on evidence. Earlier today, the Premier said that he does support carbon pricing, or his carbon tax scheme, for the simple fact that he believes it is good for the environment.

So can the Premier tell us how much his carbon tax scheme will reduce Yukon's emissions by?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the question. I do appreciate the concern of the Yukon Party when it comes to the carbon-pricing mechanism. Anything that is going to increase costs — I understand it, but I don't think they're understanding the concept of revenue neutral. This carbon-pricing mechanism — and I'll repeat it again — is revenue neutral.

As far as what the cost will be — well, at the pump it has been already decided from the federal backstop how much money it's going to cost at the pump. We have committed to making sure that it is revenue neutral, so that money is going to come back to Yukon businesses and Yukon individuals.

If the members opposite would like me to, in a silo, make a decision on how that's going to work — well, I don't have the expertise myself personally to do that, so I'm going to rely on the business community to give me information as to how they want to help with this rebate program — more details to come on that. But we are happy to be on the right side of history when it comes to man-made climate change. We're happy to be on the right side of history when it comes to doing our part to make sure that the Yukon is not only just following along, but is at the leading edge when it comes to new technologies in the environment — new technologies to get us off of fossil fuels.

There is money to be made in the green economy and it's too bad the Yukon Party seems to be a little bit more on the fossil side.

Question re: Carbon tax

Mr. Istchenko: Thanks to the efforts of the previous government, along with other northern premiers — and I was

part of this file, Mr. Speaker — the Yukon was successful in negotiating language for a northern exemption to the carbon tax. However, even though getting an exemption for the Yukon was the right thing to do the Premier was more concerned with pleasing Ottawa so he signed on without even knowing the impacts. I wish the Premier would have shot for gold and not settled for silver here. Recently, the Premier of Nunavut has said that Nunavut is still in negotiations with Ottawa for an exemption to the carbon tax.

Can the Premier let us know and let Yukoners know if there are any negotiations that he is having with Ottawa for the same thing?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What I will let the member opposite know is that every one of the three territories is working on their annex. I hope the member opposite has read the annex for the Northwest Territories. It sounds like he might be a little bit confused as to what the other territories are looking for. They all will be using the federal backstop mechanism.

Again, the concept that the Yukon Party put forward was: “No, we’re going to get an exemption”, but no, the territories all believe that is not possible. It’s interesting that we’re going to continue to flog this horse, but fine. That’s fine. If we’re going to use all of your questions on the federal pricing mechanism, have at her.

Interestingly enough, when you talk about what the other territories are doing, they’re trying to take a look at the Vancouver protocol — the rules and regulations set off there. The annex that was done based on conversations that they’ve had and we’ve had from the pan-Canadian framework forward as to how we make sure that Yukon businesses and Northwest Territories businesses are not affected in those areas where they cannot be effective — where they’re not going to be able to reduce their emissions.

We are committing — I guess to Ottawa as well — but more importantly to the environment — more importantly to a modern way of thinking about how to get off of our reliance on fossil fuels. We’re committed to it and we’re committed to making sure that Yukoners are in the process when we get to that time and that will be within the next month or so.

Mr. Istchenko: I’m just here asking questions for Yukoners, Mr. Speaker. The most asked question to me is what’s this going to look like.

Life in the north is expensive. The Premier’s carbon scheme will raise the cost of food, groceries, clothing and gas. I believe that prior to the election the now Premier said the price of diapers are going up. The Premier has claimed that Yukoners are going to get a rebate to get some of the money back, but has provided no details.

Can the Premier describe to this House what his rebate will look like? How frequently will Yukoners receive the rebate cheque? Will all Yukoners receive the same amount of rebate? How much paperwork will Yukoners have to go through to get their rebate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The last supplementary is a good question and those details have not been worked out yet because we still have to engage with businesses and Yukoners after we finalize Ottawa’s part of this, which is analyzing the

annex as I went over — analyzing the annex based upon the pan-Canadian framework, which is based upon the Vancouver protocol which the previous government signed on to which is based upon the Paris agreements.

Interestingly enough, my most asked question when I went door to door wasn’t necessarily whether or not we’re going to get an exemption because Yukoners are smarter than that.

Yukoners have been paying attention from the federal government when they said there are no exemptions. The biggest question that I was getting was: We know what your plan is; it’s to do a revenue neutral — giving the money back to Yukoners and to Yukon businesses. What we don’t know is what the Yukon Party’s plan is.

So I pose the question back to the Yukon Party: What would they do? Knowing that there isn’t an exemption; knowing full well what the regulations are — the federal backstop — how would they do it? We haven’t heard anything from them as far as what their plan would have been. We didn’t hear it during the election campaign. They lost the election campaign based upon this — based upon not having a plan — and now here we are. It seems like we’re still in the election campaign, talking about a federal carbon-pricing mechanism.

We have a plan and we will be engaging with Yukoners to make sure that this is revenue neutral to Yukoners and to Yukon businesses. But at the same time — and I’ll reiterate this — we believe in carbon-pricing mechanism as the best mechanism to combat global warming.

Mr. Istchenko: I’m going to fundamentally disagree with the Premier. I have talked to many placer miners in the Klondike area about this carbon tax and they’re very, very confused. They don’t know if they’re going to be able to hire as many people.

Can the Premier tell us how he intends to track how much extra Yukoners pay as a result of the carbon tax so we can ensure that they get everything back?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the question when it comes to placer miners. I had many conversations out in the goldfields during the election campaign about, what exactly is this going to look like? The concept that you cannot have an electric D9 CAT came up; the concept of making sure that we’re not penalized for growing businesses — it’s really important and we had that conversation. The conversation went along the line that we’re going to establish those areas that we can reduce emissions for placer miners. I have friends who are placer mining with a small camp — two to three members. They’ve changed to solar arrays for their camps, saving up to \$800 a month in fuel costs. This is exactly what we’re talking about. This is about placer miners also wanting to give back and wanting to make sure that they’re doing all that they can in those areas that they can. So we’re working with the placer miners. We’re going to make sure that we do that.

Now, with the opposition, when they were the government, their plan, again, was to say “no” and stick their heads in the sand. In that case, all of that placer miner money

that would have gone toward this carbon-pricing mechanism would have gone to Ottawa and Ottawa would have decided how to then take that money back and distribute it into the Yukon. So those are the two options that placer miners who were paying attention to the election campaign had to consider between the Yukon Party and the Liberal Party. I guess the results are here. We're in government.

Again, we're working with the placer miners. Excellent question — good concerns. We want to make sure that they're not penalized in those areas where they cannot reduce their emissions but actually have incentives to go forward.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

CONSIDERATION OF SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 26(2), that consideration of a motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, if not concluded today, will take place on Wednesday, April 26, 2017.

NOTICE OF OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, April 26, 2017, should consideration of a motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be concluded today. They are Motion No. 6, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, and Motion No. 9, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South.

Ms. Hanson: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, April 26, 2017, should consideration of a motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be concluded today. They are Motion No. 2, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre, and Motion No. 5, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADDRESS IN REPLY TO THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Motion No. 11 — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, moved by Mr. Gallina; adjourned debate, the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, you may or may not recall that yesterday in the afternoon I was speaking about how much of my career had been focused on the public interest. I spoke a little bit about my work with the Law Society of the Yukon, the Federation of Law Societies of

Canada, and I was about to say Yukon school councils — belonging to F.H. Collins, where I served for two years, one as co-chair — you may or may not recall that. I will go forward from there.

The 2011 throne speech, the last one delivered in this House by the Yukon Party, made numerous references to “my government”. Almost every sentence began with that phrase. The deliberate language you heard last Thursday from the Yukon Liberal throne speech made reference to “your government”. This illustrates a fundamental difference. This government works for Yukoners in the public interest — a fact that we will not forget. That does not mean that we can please all Yukoners all of the time, but we have promised to listen and make decisions based on evidence — a topic that came up earlier today.

Evidence is something that I know a little bit about. For almost 25 years here in the territory, I have had a litigation practice that focused on criminal and regulatory prosecutions, administrative law, labour law and child protection cases. Consideration of evidence was a daily concern. Detours from that practice included developing materials and training Yukon justices of the peace, working with the team that developed the Domestic Violence Treatment Option Court and serving a five-year term as Yukon Ombudsman and Information and Privacy Commissioner — an officer of this House. All of those roles required a deep understanding and daily assessment of evidence.

Sound decisions are based on solid, knowable evidence — evidence that provides the basis for decision-making and is communicated in support of a decision fosters greater transparency, accountability and understanding. Even if you ultimately don't agree with the decision, communicating how decisions are made and what facts are taken into account in making them is the responsibility of government. It will foster transparency and will allow the public to understand how we're working for them.

You may recall yesterday that I was giving reasons as to how I got here or why I decided to take this road, and I mentioned two of them. The third reason I decided to pursue this form of public service now is that I know that women bring a unique perspective and need a greater voice in politics.

The team of Liberal candidates in the fall of 2016 approached gender equity, something that has never been done in the Yukon before. Three female MLAs were elected to the Liberal caucus, two were elected to the Yukon Party caucus and — something that we should all strive for — a completely female caucus for the NDP.

I must say that I am truly disappointed with the Official Opposition's decision to silence the women in their party by deciding to only introduce one response to the throne speech. I was very much looking forward to hearing from the perspective of the honourable member from Watson Lake and former Speaker of this House, taking into account her experience here. I was particularly disappointed not to hear at this time from the Honourable Member for Porter Creek North and former Commissioner for the Yukon. She is a very well-respected leader in the aboriginal and wider Yukon

community, and her voice should be heard. The decision to introduce only one reply to the throne speech has also had the effect of silencing one of the Third Party members on this topic.

In my profession as a lawyer, your reputation is everything. It precedes you, people judge you by it, and they react to you based on it. Earning the trust of my peers, superiors, clients and the public has always guided my work. My career has been dedicated to fairness, equality, collaboration, and respect for all people. My work has often focused on finding real solutions, improving government processes and instigating change. I will continue to do this as an elected member of this Legislative Assembly, representing Riverdale South as the Minister of Justice and Attorney General for the territory and as Minister of Education. This is a true privilege.

As I was writing this address, I was thinking about all the things and experiences that I've had over the past several months that I'm thankful for. I'm thankful for all of my neighbours in Riverdale South and for many new friends like Jeff Wolosewich and Colleen Grandy, who gave up precious family time and energy to help me and believed in me even before they really knew me. I will not let them down.

You heard about this team yesterday. I'm thankful for the very experienced, diverse and talented team of colleagues. Their dedication, commitment and work ethic is second to none. They are working every day, all day, for Yukoners. I'm thankful to the people of the Vuntut Gwitchin, who welcomed some of our team into the warmth of their homes and their community.

They generously shared their pride of culture, their wonderful food — including caribou head soup — and their spectacular land with us. It was a truly great learning experience.

I'm thankful for the hundreds of public servants who have worked so hard during the past months to teach me about their jobs, the programs they run and the services they provide. I'm thankful for the singer who stands outside my office window on an irregular basis and brings joy by sharing her talent with all of those who can hear her. I am thankful for the LGBTQ-two-spirit individuals who bravely shared their stories with us. I'm thankful for our indigenous courtworkers and the lawyers and staff at Legal Aid who face access-to-justice issues on a regular basis but keep going strong to help their clients. I'm thankful for Yukon students who show up to school every day, excited about learning — those with whom I have shared pancakes, moose stew and the Commissioner's Canada 150 sugar cookies. I'm thankful for all of the women who put their names forward and worked so hard in the election. I am very thankful to those of you who are here, my sisters on this journey.

At every table, dinner table, campfire, ball field or coffee shop here in the territory, ideas happen — ideas for community development, economic growth and entrepreneurial innovation. Your government is asking to hear those ideas. We believe that one of the roles of government is

to listen, to understand and to facilitate the growth of those ideas.

Our caucus has met with literally thousands of people since the election and commit to: improve transparency in government, operations and finances; a legislature that incorporates First Nation values and culture; and a caucus that is respectful, accountable and responsive to Yukoners.

As your new Minister of Justice and Attorney General, I have been mandated by the Premier to work with my colleagues and community partners to expand crime prevention through environmental design with all interested rural and remote communities. There is a tremendous example of that having already taken place with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, so it's not just rural and remote communities that are valued and benefitting from this. In fact, several Whitehorse and other larger communities will do so as well.

I'm going to work with the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and community partners to improve services for victims of violence and sexualized violence. I have been told to develop alternative correctional therapeutic environments for individuals with disabilities, mental health and addiction problems. We will be engaging with Yukon First Nations to develop culturally relevant programming for offenders.

Another piece of my mandate includes working with the Law Society of Yukon to introduce legislation to update the *Legal Profession Act* to improve access to legal services and protect the public interest. This is a task — and they all are — but this one in particular is very important to me because I wrote the letter to the Yukon Party government in 2004 as the then-president of the law society seeking those very changes. Unfortunately the modernization of those laws in the interest of the Yukon public were never a priority for that government. We'll make that change this year.

I'll be working with the Women's Directorate minister and the Health and Social Services minister to review legislation, policies and practices to make sure that they do not discriminate against LGBTQ-two-spirit communities or individuals. I'll also work with the Women's Directorate and the Health and Social Services department and ministers and other colleagues to make sure that all of the work that is required to make the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls meaningful and successful. In fact, Mr. Speaker, work on all of these initiatives has already begun in this department and others.

I take a moment to emphasize that because many of the questions we've had in the last couple of days indicate that for six months, we haven't really been doing anything. The truth is that the Yukon Party members, having been previously in government, know exactly how much work is done outside of sitting in this House, and the preparation and the work of government is in both places. So the work on all of those initiatives has already started.

Yesterday, the Leader of the Third Party mentioned the Auditor General's report on corrections. I agree with her and the work is already being done. In fact, I understand that all but one recommendation has been completed, but I'm

confirming that and I will get back to her on it because it's a valid and important question.

Challenges in the Department of Education are abundant because our children and their futures are something that concerns us all. This government's goals for education are all designed to enhance educational achievements for all Yukon students. A key element is the new curriculum. We will soon be implementing the student-centred curriculum, which is Yukon's version of the revised British Columbia kindergarten to grade 12 curriculum. That curriculum focuses on skills development and experiential learning while maintaining academic standards and improving graduation rates. We are committed to providing a school system that incorporates local and First Nation content and that is responsive to the needs of all students. Students must see themselves in their school's activities and learning. The government supports the First Nations Education Commission in their efforts to realize their vision of education — something I'm very excited to work on over this mandate.

The continued planning and construction of the French first language high school will occur through 2017 to 2018. School resources, teacher-hiring practices and assessments and student assessments are all issues that will be addressed in the near future.

Increasing collaboration between schools, parents, families and students is critical to student success, and efforts to enhance such opportunities will be a focus. Positive, flexible and experiential learning environments are the goal so that every student can reach their potential and have a successful future that they dream of.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that for every problem, there is a solution when you tackle it with an open mind, hard work and integrity. Indira Gandhi, when she was Prime Minister of India, related that her grandfather once told her: "There are two kinds of people: those who do the work and those who take the credit. Try to be in the first group, as there is far less competition there." I look forward to us all working for Yukoners and together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker for this opportunity.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Mr. Speaker, honourable members, friends, people of the Yukon — Jeanie Dendys [*Member spoke in First Nation language. Text unavailable.*]

I am Jeanie Dendys. I am a member of the Tahltan Nation and I come from the Wolf Clan. I am proud to say I come from [*Member spoke in First Nation language. Text unavailable.*] people from Telegraph Creek, BC.

Tahltan people are matrilineal people, which is why I always introduce myself as Tahltan first. I am also Norwegian on my dad's side. My ancestry comes from other places; however, I was born and raised in the Yukon. In fact I was born right across the river at the Whitehorse General Hospital and so I really do consider myself a part of this land. That's a really important point to make here today.

The Yukon Territory that we all so proudly call home and that we so proudly — all of us in this House — represent, is on the traditional territory of the Yukon First Nation people.

We stand today on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and I thank them for allowing us to do so.

It was a very short time ago when treaties were entered into by our government and Canada. In fact, it was 10 years ago for the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and 15 years ago for the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. In my mind, that's when official permission was given for us to share this land. With those treaties in mind, I encourage each and every one of us to always remember our history and current relationships when we acknowledge the traditional territories.

There are many people who I have to thank today and I wish that I could see them all here. I'm going to imagine them all here. I acknowledge the support of all these great people who believed in my ability to do this job on behalf of all Yukoners. Today I will take the time to thank them properly and give them the respect that they really do deserve. I would like to go back in time a bit though, first to remember my mom, Thelma Norby. She was and is the reason I exist. She was my first and most important teacher. For those of you who knew her, you knew her to be determined, strong, hard-working and very, very kind. She was always willing to help and she never discriminated. She never shied away from a challenge. She was truly courageous, which she demonstrated by her perseverance when she became a widow in her thirties with eight children. This was prior to meeting my dad. She instilled all of those really important traits in me and I'm proud of that.

My dad was a heavy-equipment operator and a placer miner. I shared that story a week or so ago in Dawson and they were shocked that I had the first 12 years of my life on a placer claim every summer in Clear Creek. My dad helped to build every major road and highway in the Yukon, which helped to create the connections that we all enjoy today.

Both my parents, Thelma and Vern Norby have passed on now; however, they walk with me each and every day. They were proud Yukoners. I know that they would have been extremely proud of me for stepping into a role of leadership. You see, I was raised to serve. My mother always taught me that it was never about how much you can take, it was about how much you can give. She taught me about service to others and about doing what you can to make our world a better place to live. This is the most important thing you can do. She taught me that you live your life to become the best elder you can be. That's a huge responsibility for all of us.

I'm a granddaughter to two of the greatest elders of my time, the late Grace and George Edzerza — both Tahltan but also very proud Yukoners. They contributed a great deal to Yukon. Those of you who knew my grandfather knew him for his wisdom, his strength, his determination, and his deep commitment to Liberal values. To say that he had strong political views would be a very huge understatement of his passion. My grandmother on the other hand was our strong, yet gentle matriarch. She was truly the backbone of our family, the real boss of the Edzerza family.

Today I would certainly be remiss if I didn't take my opportunity to really remember and pay tribute to my Uncle

John Edzerza. He was my mentor and I miss him every single day. John gave many years of his life to politics in the Yukon and contributed many insights and advancements to our beautiful territory. He is deeply missed by all and especially by me and I know many others.

I know my Uncle John would have supported my decision to take on this responsibility and would have encouraged me to work hard on behalf of all Yukoners. He was always a voice for the less fortunate, especially the most vulnerable — for those who struggled with social issues, particularly those living in poverty and those struggling with addictions and mental health issues. John always had good advice for those who wanted to listen. He always said, “Don’t judge a person unless you’ve walked a mile in their moccasins.” He said this to me many times. In other words, you don’t know what it is to live the life of that person, what experiences have made up their life and why they are the way they are. His teaching was one of tolerance and seeking understanding to the extent we can ever understand another person’s perspective.

As my stories demonstrate, I have had many great role models in my life and high expectations to live up to. Family is the most important thing in life. I carry many titles that provide names for my roles; however, my most cherished title is “Mom” to my amazing sons.

My son Colin came into my life when he was five years old, and he has been my wonderful, kind son ever since then. Colin is a journeyman electrician. He is also a very talented athlete. He played competitive hockey from a very young age and represented Yukon during the 2007 Canada Winter Games. He recently played for the Huskies and won the Coy Cup for the Yukon, so I am really proud of that. My younger son Jedrik, equally wonderful and kind, will be graduating from Vanier high school next month and will go on to post-secondary education. Jedrik is also a talented athlete. He participates in a diverse range of sports, from volleyball to Dena games. He represented the Yukon during the last two Arctic Winter Games and won a bronze medal in Fairbanks and then two gold medals in Greenland. He will represent Yukon at the upcoming North American Indigenous Games. I truly believe that your greatest responsibility in life is raising your children to the best of your ability, and I consider my sons my greatest achievement. They are the reason I strive to be better and to make our community healthier, safer and more vibrant.

I am also a sister to 11 brothers and sisters and an auntie to 62 nieces and nephews. Having the youngest position in such a large family builds character. Believe me, I know how to build relationships, to negotiate, problem-solve and stand up for what I believe in. With those roles come huge responsibilities in life and they also hold the greatest blessings a person can have. My mother was the eldest of the Edzerza family of 18 and also had many nieces and nephews for whom she took full responsibility. I was also blessed with many mentors along the way, most of whom remain with me today. Many strong women blazed the way for all of us younger women to follow. I know that the path I forge today will set the stage for other young women and men to come.

I will mention a few of my mentors here today and people who I really look up to: Judy Gingell, Shirley Adamson, Margaret Joe, Audrey McLaughlin, Barbara Fred, Adeline Webber, our own Geraldine Van Bibber, Chief Doris Bill, Ione Christensen and the late Jean Gleason — all strong women who led the way for us in the territory.

Many other people also took the time to share their skills and experiences with me, for which I am deeply grateful. My campaign was supported by an amazing team of people. Again, I wish they were all here today. Many of them are managing different things in their lives. The first person I will mention is Gina Nagano. She put in absolutely endless hours supporting me to get to this place, and she believed in me so much. I had the pleasure of having Sheila Clark work on my campaign, and she was fierce. Anyone who knows Sheila knows what I mean. Victoria Fred and Mike Gladish — Mike Gladish and I were in a nomination race and he graciously stepped aside for me to take the nomination, and I am really grateful to him. He and his wife, Denise Chisholm, then went to work on my campaign and they worked right to the very last moment of the day on November 7th. I’m really so grateful for them. I also had Cherish Clarke, Karee Vallevand, Lana Selbee, Melissa Carlick, Thelma Asp, Conal Slobodin, Shayne Fairman, Kelly Fielder, Teresa Waugh, Loretta Dawson and many others. My son Jedrick said, “You’d better mention that we did the signs, Mom.”

All of these great people spent endless hours on the campaign trail with me. I will forever be indebted to each of them and I thank them for sacrificing their time and, again, for believing in me. I would like to truly thank the people of Mountainview — which includes Valleyview, Hillcrest, Granger and McIntyre — for placing your faith in me and casting a ballot to elect me as your Member of the Legislative Assembly. I’m here to serve you and to be your voice.

Mountainview was a tough battleground, but the inspiration and support that I gained from talking to my constituents one-on-one gave me the strength to endure. I’m proud to be part of this Liberal team and will do my part to make the team successful. Our leader, now Premier, attracted the talent that you see here today. I have to say that I absolutely love the work that I did for Kwanlin Dün. However, I knew, as others have said here in their speeches, that it was the next logical step into a political position. I really want to thank our Premier for putting his faith in me and making me a member of the Cabinet. I really truly appreciate that. Thank you.

During these past couple of months, I have worked closely with my departments and I’m so grateful for all of the effort demonstrated by our staff to ensure that I am fully up to speed on my areas of responsibility. We have incredible public servants who I have a great deal of respect for. I would like to thank Tourism and Culture’s Heritage branch staff, the Women’s Directorate, the Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board staff and the board members themselves for all of their efforts.

Tourism is an important part of our economy and I will work to promote the Yukon and the strategic development of tourism products and brand. I believe we have untapped potential for innovation and expression of hospitality as Yukon hosts the world. The multi-year tourism strategy development process will have a diversity of people engaged to ensure all creative ideas are included.

I would like to just speak a little bit on the question about carbon pricing yesterday. I have in fact met with many operators, organizations and associations in regard to tourism in the Yukon. We have not had any concerns about carbon pricing raised with me directly as the minister responsible. In fact, in January, I hosted a roundtable with Minister Chagger, the federal Minister of Small Business and Tourism, with our tourism industry. We did not have this question or concern raised with us.

That being said, we will, through our strategic planning and consultation process, be hosting sessions with industry and we will have open conversations with them. I have offered an open door to the industry to speak to me directly on matters that concern them. I will also offer that to each of the members opposite.

Our marketing work will remain active and well-supported as we work to extend the season, including winter tourism. We will host a winter tourism summit to contribute to new plans. Tourism and the vitality of our society depend on culture and heritage.

Yukon culture, and the preservation and expression of it through the arts, is part of our shared identity as Yukoners. First Nation culture is a fascination for many of our visitors and is fundamental to who we are as northerners and Yukoners. Our government plans to work with First Nations to preserve and respect First Nation culture, history and languages. We are also committed to supporting the development of First Nation tourism in the Yukon. Capturing and preserving our history and heritage resources is important for Yukon, Canada and the world. We have an internationally important contribution to make. What we have and what we will create have the power to attract interested people.

Destination Canada, our federal corporation responsible for marketing Canada to the world, is going through a rebranding process right now. It places Yukon as the third-highest potential for tourism growth in Canada. This is good news for the Yukon and truly opens the doors for more authentic cultural experiences to be developed and marketed in the Yukon. Adventurers, tourists, knowledge-seekers and others will come to the Yukon to learn and seek the inspiration that our amazing, beautiful landscapes have to share. Growing tourism and the knowledge economy contribute to a diversified and sustainable economic base for vibrant communities.

I was able to present awards at the TIA awards on Friday and it was really great to just have that opportunity to be with tourism providers and to acknowledge all of their accomplishments. I just wanted to mention that here today. I believe people want to visit a place where the governments are

committed to honouring treaties and protecting wild spaces and promoting fairness and equality.

Gender equality is another top priority for our government. The legislative changes proposed were outlined in the throne speech. The resources of the Women's Directorate, for which I am responsible, will form an important part of the team of public servants supporting this work. Gender-inclusive diversity analysis and advice will be provided in the development of legislation, policy, programs and services across government.

I am also leading the Yukon in the work of the federally appointed National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The first regional meetings were held in the Yukon. As a result of the high-quality dialogue, adjustments are being made to the way in which the national inquiry will continue with its work throughout the country.

Both men and women have been lost to violence. The issue is far too close to home, as we have been reminded by our recent deaths of one man and two women from our First Nation communities. My thoughts and prayers remain with the families and communities grieving their losses. Community safety and well-being of all our communities and our commitment to protect all of our citizens in the Yukon is a priority under our "vibrant communities" banner. As a team, we will work together to respond to community needs and lead inter-agency community-based planning and improved community life. I am confident we will be successful in recruiting the support of all Yukoners, including the members opposite, in the community plans and implementation leading to positive change.

Business owners — non-government and government employers — are important partners in supporting health and safety. In my role as Minister responsible for the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, I pledge to focus on prevention of workplace deaths and injuries. In cases where injuries occur, we will continue to improve our ability to respond to workers' needs, provide fair compensation and support return to work as soon as possible, when that is an option. This Friday, we will all participate in the Day of Mourning.

We are committed to responding to the unique needs of first responders suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. I intend to carry out my responsibilities while bringing life to our enduring Liberal priorities.

We have promised to be approachable, transparent and accountable in serving the Yukon people. We have promised active engagement of all Yukon communities, citizens and stakeholders of all kinds. Our people-centred approach will reach Yukoners of all ages and circumstances. For me, that commitment includes the most vulnerable individuals and families. Inclusiveness, equality and respect for diversity are all fundamental to the society we are building together.

We are committed to effective government-to-government relations with First Nations in implementing the land claims and self-government agreements and supporting

the path to self-determination of those First Nations without agreements.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has brought light to a path forward, and I will do what I can to support the intergovernmental commitments to implementation and reconciliation. We must work together to decolonize our legislation, policies, programs, services and practices.

Yukoners elected all of us because they trusted us enough to be their voice. Think about that for a moment.

It is truly an honour to be a voice for even one other person, let alone an entire territory of people who have put their faith in all of us. My intent, in this House, is to really listen and to understand all of the positions that each individual brings here. When you ask a question of me, I understand that you will be bringing that question on behalf of all Yukoners, which is an important responsibility that you have. When I answer your question, I will be speaking to all Yukoners. The deeper you think about this, the more meaningful it becomes.

As you all do, I see things in a certain way. I always look for equality, I always seek understanding and fairness. Relationships are important to me, and I believe that is what we are going to be doing in this House — building relationships with each other. Each day we will have a choice — to create a good dialogue that is truly grounded in respect. This is why I just have to say that I am saddened that we didn't get the opportunity to hear each person speak about why they are here and what motivates them.

This is my first Sitting of the Legislative Assembly. I was genuinely excited to hear from each of you. I have to just say that. Most of you have had your opportunity to give your first speech in the way that it was intended. For most of us, this is meaningful and a part of the process of the Legislative Assembly, so I am saddened that we didn't get the full experience of it in the way that you have had the chance.

I do not believe that it is the formality of the procedures that we follow in this House, our House, that somehow produces respect. It is the intent expressed through your words and your actions. When I speak to you, it is not just me. It is the voice of all Yukoners, and it is the voice of my ancestors expressed for the good of those who live now and will come in the future generations.

I see leadership as a position of service. I see leadership as a place of great responsibility. I intend to keep ego in check by working to stay humble and always acting out of kindness to others.

I can't say that every day in this House will be perfect, because nothing ever is — especially when we have so very much at stake. I will strive to be the best that I can be and to do the best job that I can. I can only do my best for the territory if each person in this House and all of our citizens take part in our democracy. I see our roles and responsibilities on each side of the House coming together like the body of an eagle connected to two wings, with each wing serving a purpose. The balance and harmony achieved between the wings allow for flight.

In closing, I would like to again thank all of you for listening and, again, I would have liked to hear from each of you.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, honourable members, friends, people of the Yukon, I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. First and foremost, I want to thank the residents of Porter Creek South for allowing me to represent you in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. I am humbled by your support.

It is a great honour to serve you and I vow to carry out my duties as your elected official with dedication, integrity and sincerity. I heard your thoughts, concerns and successes while canvassing door to door during the candidate-nomination process and during the campaign last fall.

Thank you for welcoming me into your living rooms and your kitchens in your homes during those 85 days I spent during the nomination and campaign process leading up to last year's election.

This process gave me an understanding of what an amazing and diverse group of people you are. You own and work for businesses that contribute to Yukon's private sector in many facets: mining and resource development, tourism, technology and service industries are all represented and even an MLA who is here with us today. I will state that no matter how testy it gets here, when I'm outside of the Legislative Assembly, I'll remember I work for you.

I learned of concerns with social programs, health and education, and also of the desire to foster good relationships with our First Nation governments in our territory. My commitment is to serve this community and tackle the issues that are important in our everyday lives. Providing a safe environment for your families to enjoy continued access to greenspaces are just a few promises I make to you. You can trust that work is well underway in conveying these messages to my colleagues within the Yukon government and to the elected officials with the City of Whitehorse. His Worship, Mayor Dan Curtis, and I had great conversations regarding traffic and road safety and we are now working to implement a strategy and a series of solutions that will meet the needs of the citizens of Porter Creek South once and for all.

I will continue to work in partnership with organizations such as the Porter Creek Community Association, Friends of McIntyre Creek, and school councils at both the high school and junior high.

My goal is to have solutions in place quickly into this mandate. In past discussions with a very experienced Canadian politician, I was reminded of the importance of my constituents. For the constituents of Porter Creek South, it is to you I owe this seat behind me. It is yours and I am indebted to you. My door is always open and I encourage you to reach out when needed.

A note of thanks also to the team of people who took time out of their busy schedules and lives to assist during the campaign: Brad, Lawrence, Jonathan, Chris, Don, Kim,

Henry, James, Kayla, Tim, Zara, and Celia, just to name a few. Thank you.

Each and every one of us has been granted the exceptional opportunity to sit here today in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. We have stories of what brought us to this point. There have been mentors along the way and people we are thankful for. I want to take this moment to recognize those people in my life. My mom, Johnena Lee was my first and continues to be my most significant mentor in my life. As a single mother in small-town Nova Scotia, she has shown me what it means to overcome adversity and persevere in the wake of a challenge. In 1974, she quietly had me baptized in the Catholic Church when it was considered unacceptable to do so as a single mother. She continued on in her career as a registered nurse and made sacrifices in her life to provide for me time and time and time again.

She has been an unwavering supporter. Regardless of the storm I created, she believed in me and pushed me to be a better person. She has shown me what it means to be dedicated and to give yourself to something you love and believe in. I will state to my colleagues, on this side and that side, that to this day she keeps tabs on all of us — you across the way, my colleagues here. You would be astounded. On the other side of the country, she could give you a bio on each and every one of you — a review and a criticism — and that includes me too.

As a nurse, she was recognized by her peers at the Nova Scotia nurses association as nurse of the year a number of years ago and also as palliative care nurse of the year that same year. Staying true to this dedication, she returned to work just six months after retiring and battling cancer last year. She just can't stop working.

At 10 years old, my stepdad, Jeff Lee, entered my life. He balances responsibilities as a parental figure with friendship and has always been a calm and steady supporter. Like my mom, he chose not to criticize me when making questionable choices earlier in my life and has always encouraged me to make better decisions.

My dad, Dr. N.G. Pillai, has an incredible work ethic. He entered medical school at age 19 and he continues to practice 58 years later. For this I have the utmost respect. Along with this, he taught me to stand up for what is right and to take action. I even respect that as he does it as a chief of staff and he does it when he is taking on the Liberal government in Nova Scotia.

My grandparents — Mary Lauchie MacLellan — had a profound impact on my life. My grandmother was a teacher in a one-room schoolhouse. She imprinted on me the value of lifelong learning. She was a kind soul who contributed greatly to family and community. She always stressed this importance to me.

My grandfather, during his life, worked in sectors that I stand here today proud to be responsible for: mining, agriculture and forestry. He was a hardrock miner in Nova Scotia, Quebec and Ontario and, later in his career, worked in forestry. Throughout his life, he and his family operated a

farm with dairy and beef cattle and the most incredible vegetable farm garden you have ever seen.

Our family lived off the land. I was often by his side working on the farm or in the woods. He understood the importance of taking a responsible, balanced approach to resource and development, a value I share by myself and with others here and with my colleagues in the Liberal government. I keep his helmet that he last wore as a hardrock miner in my office as a reminder to make decisions based on these balanced principles.

Father Stanley MacDonald was the man who took a chance and baptized me as an infant. This is when our friendship began. He was a boxer and a hockey player at St. Francis Xavier University and I looked up to him throughout my younger years. At just eight years old, he would bring me along on visits to the Coady International Institute. The Coady Institute uses a community-based approach to educate leaders from around the world in methods of addressing contemporary local challenges and opportunities. There are thousands of graduates and partners from 130 countries involved with the teaching at the Coady Institute. This experience first opened my eyes to a world of culture and diversity in community and the economy — topics I would have otherwise may not have been exposed to in a small town growing up in Nova Scotia.

Father MacDonald continues to be a good friend of mine. He travelled to the Yukon to preside over my wedding in Haines Junction a number of years ago. To this day, I seek guidance from him from time to time.

Lastly, my wife Delilah and our two boys Taylor and Calum — from the moment my wife and I met, she has believed in me — so much so that she sacrificed in her own life to support me in what I wished to pursue. Taylor and Calum offered continued patience at times when the duties of my work take me away from spending time with them. I urge the opposition — we can continue on with the political rhetoric that we're not working and that we didn't hit the ground running — but please, as former ministers across the way, understanding how much time you've taken away from your friends and family and for what my colleagues have done — challenge me on my ideology, challenge me on decisions I've made, challenge me on mistakes I'll make — don't challenge us or me on work ethic.

The expressed interest in my work and the responsibilities I have been privileged to accept — travel for work and nights away from our family, whether it be for city council, the campaign trail, or in this new role — all would not be possible without the level of support and understanding that Delilah and our boys offer me. I'm extremely grateful and appreciative. I don't know what else to say. When you have that level of support from someone — I'll just leave it at that.

I would like to put partisan politics aside for a few moments. Before the Legislative Assembly undoubtedly becomes more intense, I will express how happy I am to be here with each and every one of you. I have the utmost respect for the Leader of the Third Party and Member for Whitehorse Centre. I commend her on the strength that she has shown us

over the last number of months. Her husband Doug was my friend and mentored me to be a better person.

The Member for Takhini-King continues to show us the importance of authenticity and commitment to constituents.

The Leader of the Official Opposition and Member for Pelly-Nisutlin — I congratulate you for being selected as the interim leader. He has the ability to park politics, when appropriate, and has focused commitment to govern Yukon communities, and I respect that greatly. Thank you for your help and your guidance in the early couple of months.

The Member for Kluane has undying energy and commitment to his work and leadership within his community. Whether it be his time with the Canadian Rangers, volunteering to assist an elder, or lending a hand to a friend in Champagne or Klukshu, he is always willing to help.

The Member for Watson Lake also has a track record for her community commitment as a member of town council and her participation in the Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce. I am confident that she will hold my feet to the fire and not allow me to lose sight of the importance of the people in her riding.

The Member for Lake Laberge is the longest-serving member of this 34th Legislative Assembly. This is no small feat. He has experienced his political success through his undying commitment to his constituents. Also, I think back to a time when the member, based on his own values and prerogative, made a tough decision to leave the party and sit by himself. I do not believe anybody here, other than he who experienced it, could understand the strength it would take to make that decision. I remember the conversation we had in the parking lot here, and I commended him for that. That is something that nobody can ever take away from him — standing for what he believed in — and I respect that immensely.

I commend the Member for Copperbelt South for his work as the previous Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. He has been a tireless advocate for the resource sector. At every meeting that my associates and I have had, whether it be at PDAC or Roundup, we have commended him on his work, and commended him and his colleagues on the foundation that was laid here in the Yukon. I do not think we would be here seeing the success we are having now if it wasn't for him.

The Member for Porter Creek North is a class act who has a phenomenal professional career to date: Chancellor of Yukon College, Commissioner of Yukon Territory and an esteemed member of the Order of Canada. I still remember the first time I ever met you — how nervous I was. We sat in the atrium in the Haines Junction convention centre. It was 2009, at the Association of Yukon Communities' first meeting. I remember the table we sat at. I remember you had an orange juice and I had a coffee. I remember how excited I was to be sitting with you, thinking, "Man, I have made it. I am sitting with Commissioner Van Bibber." I have listened to you and watched you, and you absolutely have always been a class act — having the opportunity to see you in action as a chancellor.

I am proud to be here and, when not here, to work for you as your MLA. As for the team I stand with in our Liberal government — I could not feel more blessed. This is an exceptional group of individuals with accomplishments too great to list here today. I am appreciative every day to have been given this opportunity. They keep me focused, motivated and energized in our pursuit to provide Yukoners with a different approach to governing. From the moment we began, this caucus has worked long, day after day, despite what the opposition has been saying about the time we have taken to get to work and call a session. I know the former government officials understand the same time commitment and the time it took away from their families. We all understand the amount of work happening when the House is not in session — hours upon hours.

Premier Silver has granted me the privilege of also representing this new Liberal government with responsibilities as your Deputy Premier, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, Minister of Economic Development and Minister responsible for Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation. This role at times will be challenging, but I'm moving forward to accomplishing the tasks laid out in my mandate letter in a methodical and informed manner.

The grouping of these portfolios allows me to support a number of this Liberal government's priorities. The overarching theme of my work will be to grow, strengthen and diversify the economy in a way that balances development with environmental stewardship to benefit all Yukoners now and in the future. On this journey, we will work alongside our First Nation and federal and municipal counterparts in achieving our goals. We will engage with the business community to build capacity. We will listen to the people of this territory and we will be their voice. We have been working hard to lay early groundwork for achieving our goals.

I want to thank my colleagues at Yukon College — who I spent about 10 years with — for helping to shape my perspective in starting to learn. I'm excited to work with them at the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining. I want to thank the leadership at Northern Vision Development and my colleagues there. That gave me an opportunity to branch out and understand and take a leadership role in the private sector, and I think that will help me in my decision-making here — understanding that it's not just about government but the important role the private sector plays in our economy. I would also like to thank Chief Steve Smith and the council of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations for giving me the opportunity to be their executive director — to be supportive of my decisions to enter territorial politics and, probably most importantly, to have become great, great friends of mine. Whether it be from the time in post-secondary education, the time in the private sector, or working with a self-governing First Nation, all of those elements and experiences I will take into account in my decision-making in this role.

On day one, we inherited a government that was faced with the lowest GDP in the country. There were broken relationships. There were disputes over land use and land planning. There was uncertainty in the resource sector due to

Bill S-6. The support for Bill S-6 by the previous government caused deep divides between the Yukon Party government of the day, First Nation governments and the resource sector. There was a gap in energy infrastructure as we looked to our future and financial instability. There were plenty of ideas left by our predecessors on how to proceed — some very, very good ones — but there was no social licence. There was a lack of trust, and trust doesn't come easy. Trust is earned and it is built over time. What we intend to do in this government is build that trust.

The first step in doing so was bringing together the self-governing Yukon First Nations in signing a memorandum of understanding on mining, agreeing to work together in a respectful and collaborative manner on processes related to mining in the Yukon. By bringing everyone together at a single table to collaboratively work on improvements to all aspects of mineral exploration and development, we can bring an added level of certainty to resource investors. I have no doubt that more of the world's top gold mineral producers will see the Yukon as a favourable place to invest.

We are currently developing the work plan and prioritizing topics that we will be addressing at the MOU table. I want to stop and just thank the chiefs who signed the MOU with us. They signed the MOU because they were willing to put trust in us and that's the trust of my colleagues sitting next to me — that's why. They will challenge us and we will challenge them, and we will continue to communicate and work and seek guidance from industry so all parties involved in this can get by the stumbling blocks that we've seen in the past.

Early in our mandate we committed additional support for mineral exploration and we promised continued improvements to resource roads in the Klondike region, as we stated yesterday.

Infrastructure is important for the mining industry and we are working hard to support companies in realizing their needs where possible. We have initiated conversations aimed at building agreements with affected First Nations in working toward the Yukon Resource Gateway project, and we are looking to identify federal infrastructure funds for the Stewart-Keno transmission line.

Beyond mining, we are focused on growing Yukon's agricultural sector in a way that not only improves food security at home, but grows the industry beyond our borders. We'll enter into discussions in securing the successor agreement to the Growing Forward 2 program. I look forward to meeting with my federal, provincial and territorial counterparts in July to finalize this agreement.

Our forestry sector is set to expand with robust growth in biomass, supported by the implementation of the biomass energy strategy, which carries on the good work of our predecessors across the way. We have met with First Nations and industry proponents interested in biomass opportunities. This is one way we realize our commitment to increasing the availability of renewable energy solutions while reducing the reliance on non-renewable sources. We will focus on our off-grid communities, which rely on diesel to power their needs.

We are working with other levels of government, First Nations and communities to move this forward. We will focus on smaller renewable energy investments and develop local, renewable and clean energy technologies.

We want Yukoners to be part of the solution. This will support innovation and diversification in our energy sector.

We will look to support and grow our existing tech sector and knowledge-based economy. Working toward redundancy and connectivity for our territory is one way we will realize this. We are currently reviewing two potential routes and we will make an evidence-based decision that meets the needs of Yukoners in a responsible manner.

When it comes to the oil and gas sector, we will continue to explore opportunities outside of the Whitehorse Trough and without fracking. My colleagues and I will not make decisions without having done our due diligence. This includes the relevant data, completing risk assessments and moving through proper consultation so that we can make informed decisions that will benefit Yukoners in an environmentally responsible manner.

My colleagues and I are focused on building vibrant, healthy communities through the creation of economic conditions that allow Yukoners to thrive. We are investing in our people, our businesses and our industries to diversify the economy by creating new opportunities in key areas such as mining, tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, green energy and information technology.

We are committed to working collaboratively with all levels of government — First Nations, municipal, federal and neighbouring jurisdictions as well as communities, businesses and Yukoners to ensure Yukon is a great place to do business and invest. I would like to invite Yukon businesses, First Nations and their development corporations, and all MLAs to discuss these ideas and opportunities in their communities. It is these commitments and investments that will lead our Liberal government to success.

I truly state to the members across the way that when the Assembly gets more intense and we begin to have more challenging conversations, when those subside — please — I have had good discussions with almost everybody across the way and, at the end of the day, I understand what happens. I have watched politics for a long time, but at the end of the day, my focus is to get things done. I know how hard you all work for your constituents, so please, no matter what or how tough the conversations get, when we walk outside, if there is something we have to work on together, let's do it.

My colleagues and I have been granted this incredible opportunity to serve in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. As I outlined, the residents of Porter Creek South enabled me to earn this seat. I am endlessly grateful, not only for the support of my constituents, but also for the opportunity to address the concerns of my community and the important priorities of our Liberal government.

The 85 days I spent campaigning prior to the election were the most dedicated and tireless days of my life, and every day since taking office has been much the same. I look forward to serving this term as an elected official with our

Liberal government, embracing a new way of governing with the same reliable, steadfast dedication that I have had since the start of my commitment to the people of Porter Creek South.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am very honoured to rise today to speak to the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. I would like to begin like all of my colleagues by acknowledging that we are on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

I am incredibly honoured to be elected as the MLA for Klondike for another term. Dawson is my home and I represent the Klondike region with great pride. I am honoured to represent the Klondike and I will do so to the fullest of my abilities.

It is a true privilege to learn from the Yukon First Nation people, and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have shared traditional knowledge and practices with me that have shaped who I am as a Yukoner. When I moved to the Yukon, I did so as a schoolteacher. Like so many others, I moved to the north for the promise of a job and immediately fell in love with the Yukon.

I worked first in Whitehorse and then moved to Dawson, where I discovered a sense of belonging in the Klondike Valley. Arriving in Dawson in 1998, I quickly got involved with the tight-knit community, volunteering for many community organizations. Everyone in Dawson volunteers. Everyone in the Yukon volunteers. It's just one of those proud things. I volunteered for the Dawson City fire department, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, White Ribbon Dawson and the Dawson City Music Festival, among others. I coached. When I was teaching math at Robert Service School, my community provided me with endless opportunities to learn so very much.

I am so very grateful for all that I have learned and to be part of such a unique community. My job takes me here to Whitehorse, but I live in Dawson and Dawson is never far from my mind and is always in my heart. It goes without saying that it's quite a feeling to go from being the lone member of the Third Party to the Premier's office. A very key issue in our campaign, and one that was very important to me as an MLA for the rural area of Yukon, is our commitment to Yukon communities. All communities matter to this government. Our government will work directly with communities to support local solutions for local problems.

Throughout the campaign, we used the slogan "Be heard". We will be available to all Yukoners. Regardless of who you voted for, it is now our responsibility to govern on behalf of the entire territory. We are committed to ethical, responsible and accountable government.

Thank you to the residents of Dawson for continuing to have confidence and electing me for a second time. I worked hard as the lone Liberal MLA and you had better believe that I'm going to work even harder as the Premier.

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to the members of my community who so greatly contributed to my campaign: Jody Beaumont, Mark Wickham — they both led

an incredible team of volunteers — too many to list. Some highlights of great people who worked tirelessly every day were: Bonnie Duffie, Ashley Doiron, Ricky Mawunganidze, Jack Duncan, Megan Waterman, Cara MacAdam, Viki Paulins and Evelyn Pollock. There were many more as well. I have never felt so much encouragement and support, so I want to thank them all for all their time and effort. To Laura Cabott, who ran the election campaign for the Liberal Party, and to Devon Bailey, who served as our president, thank you very, very much for your hours and hours of time. To the candidates who ran under the Liberal banner in the last election who were not successful, thank you very much for being part of the team. To former leaders of the Liberal Party — Jack Cable, Pat Duncan, Arthur Mitchell and Darius Elias — I would like to thank you all for being the leaders before me. I have learned something from each of you along the way. To our federal Member of Parliament Larry Bagnell, I want to send out my appreciation for all the help you have given me throughout the years. To our former Senator Ione Chistensen, thank you for your guidance.

To all my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly — all honourable members on both sides of the Legislative Assembly, and of course my team here in the Yukon Liberal government as well — thank you for all your dedication. I could spend a lot of time talking about you all — and I have — but I do want to do a special shout-out to a good friend of mine and now a colleague in this Chamber, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. We have been friends for a long time and I'm glad you came to me so many years ago about running for office. I was complaining one day, and I believe the quote was: "So what are you going to do about it?" It's a very special memory for today.

To my opponents in the 2016 election campaign, Mr. Jay Farr and Mr. Brad Whitelaw, thank you for letting your names stand for public office. You are both role models in our community and I want to thank you for putting your names forward. I'm very proud to consider both of you as friends of mine as well.

This is the second time that I have had a chance to do this. Back in 2011, I was a first-time member representing Klondike and I'm extremely grateful today to the people of Klondike for letting me have this seat in the Legislative Assembly. We don't own them. We just occupy them.

I'm also very grateful that Yukoners have chosen our government to work with them over the next couple of years to build a stronger Yukon. I'm incredibly proud of the people who sit with me on this side of this House. They are new to the House, but they bring a tremendous amount of experience and they're all leaders in their own way. They bring a wealth of knowledge that I rely on day in and day out, and Yukoners can rest assured that they are putting their knowledgebase to good use every day. They have already been working — ever since we were sworn in December 3, 2016.

It is very interesting to hear some of the members opposite talking about getting down to work, implying that we have to be in this Chamber to get anything done. Being here in the room, as everybody in this Assembly knows, is only part

of the job. There have been a lot of hours meeting with constituents, business groups, NGOs and other levels of government. We have responded to hundreds of letters, built a budget, brought several pieces of new legislation and addressed the concerning financial situation left by the previous government. We have done it right and we have taken the time to do it right. We're proud of the work that we have done over the last few months.

By the same token, it's very interesting that all members of the Official Opposition — after raising such a fuss about getting down to business and getting to work — chose not to do the work of the day today or yesterday and simply abdicated any responsibilities to reply to the Speech from the Throne. To my colleague, the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, it is a great opportunity — for all the public servants who are listening today — to share who we are as individuals and what motivated us to be here. I hope that the members opposite give us that opportunity at some point, because this is a very political response — not talking — and one that has not matched in their boasting in recent weeks about being eager to get to work. Day one — they made a conscious decision to largely boycott the proceedings of the House.

We've seen lots of former governments on the federal level being more interested in gamesmanship than getting down to work, and the results are certain and they're terminal. I'll give the Yukon Party some free advice: voters in the Yukon rejected that game-playing approach in November 2016. The Yukon Party lost the election because of this type of behaviour. Voters rejected it. This kind of stunt plays well when voters are not engaged and when there is not an active media. Neither of those apply here in the Yukon. Voters are engaged. They pay attention. They know what's going on in their communities. We have some of the highest voter turnouts in Canada. We have an active media as well, and I'm sure that they will be taking note of the approach of the Yukon Party today and yesterday in this Chamber — simply refusing to do the work that the public elected them to do. I can only hope that they change their ways of thinking and actually contribute as we go through this legislative session.

It's quite a contrast to the approach taken by the NDP in this Chamber and also their approach since the last election. The Third Party has consistently signalled their willingness to work on priorities that we share and has also laid out other areas they think we should be doing more work on as well. It has not gone unnoticed by this government, and I'm sure it has not gone unnoticed by the general public. I believe that when you have the confidence in your convictions, you can stand behind the issues of the day and talk about them in the Legislative Assembly.

The opportunity is there and it will continue to be there for all members opposite to contribute to the dialogue in the Legislative Assembly and to work together with this government. It's unfortunate that only the NDP at this point is willing to take up on that opportunity and that offer, but I'll continue to put it out there. The Yukon Party is refusing to maximize a voice for those who elected them. It's very

disappointing. It's too bad, and the result is that the views of their constituents are held back. My mother was a Liberal and my dad was a Tory. I know that the good people of the Yukon here who are Conservatives would like to hear the issues of the day being debated and would like to hear the members who they elected in this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, from the limited participation of the Official Opposition, there were some comments I would like to respond to. I believe it was the interim leader of the opposition who referenced a prolonged search for senior government officials and somehow made the leap that this is something that we created. I just want to point out that in 2015 alone, 11 Yukon government departments saw one or more new deputy heads appointed. Five of these departments saw nine acting deputy heads appointed. If the member opposite is concerned about government's inability to — and I'm quoting here — “get senior managers in place in a timely fashion”, I think he needs to look at the mirror a little bit more. The member also said that contracts were being held up because of the budget being delayed — again, wrong. The warrant was issued to ensure contracts would be let and could be let — not as quickly as we would have liked that done, but again, we're new and next year we will have that change in place. Again, contracts are being let every day. Rome was not built in a day and it will take some time for us to unravel 14 years of a previous Yukon Party government.

I was disappointed to hear the member opposite attack the character of members of the government as well — just totally uncalled for.

Members opposite mentioned tax cuts. I would urge them to stay tuned. He also said that the former government had a strong record of taking action to improve our business climate. The Conference Board of Canada said that we had the bleakest economic outlook of any place in Canada last year. Under the Yukon Party government, our economy shrunk two years in a row, so these are conflicting statements.

The members opposite mentioned the offshore oil and gas ban. We let the Government of Canada know that we disagreed on their approach to this issue. We also mentioned unilateral actions by Canada. We agreed that it was a unilateral action by Canada, but it was also the Yukon Party that wrote the book on unilateral actions. If we look at Bill S-6, for example, that unilateral action has resulted in another court challenge that we are working to resolve. Does the member opposite now want to speak?

He said there was no money for medical travel — again, wrong. Finally, he accused us of abandoning negotiations on carbon tax exemptions. We heard that a little bit today. It is impossible to abandon something that has not happened. There was no negotiation for an exemption — quite the opposite, in fact. The Yukon Party signed the Vancouver declaration and was involved in carbon tax negotiations.

It is not necessarily my plan to blame the Yukon Party for everything, but if they cannot change for the sake of better governance, then I will take my father's advice and never start a fight, but always end them. We are going to move on and we are going to look for more positive work that the government

is doing to serve Yukoners. I would like to speak about that today.

All members of Cabinet were given mandate letters and they are posted on our government's website. They outline the priorities of each of the ministers and their individual departments. Last week, the Speech from the Throne set a new tone for governance and presented those individual mandates in a larger context for our priorities. The speech is about listening to Yukoners. It is about working with them. It sets out the agenda for upcoming years. Our government is working with all Yukoners to make their lives better. We are focused on creating jobs, strengthening and diversifying the economy and protecting the environment. We are working collaboratively, government to government, to establish that all communities in the Yukon can continue to grow and thrive.

As we move forward, we will make responsible investments in programs and services that lead to healthy, productive and happy lives for all Yukoners. These priorities are drawn from hundreds of conversations with Yukoners. They are based on an understanding of what is important to Yukoners. I would like to go through some of those priorities. First of all, we are taking a one-government approach and breaking down the silos between different departments of government. While individual issues have lead ministers or lead departments, they will be addressed in a collaborative manner with input from many voices.

On aboriginal relations, our government is committed to improving relations with First Nation governments across the Yukon. We are working collaboratively with Yukon First Nations and businesses to promote Yukon as a stable, profitable place to do business that honours the commitments of our land claim agreements.

We want our First Nation communities to be healthy and prosperous and we are working to foster traditional knowledge and culture in partnership with First Nation governments. One of our very first acts as a new government was to establish National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday so that Yukoners can pause to acknowledge the importance of our relationship with our first peoples.

I want to recognize the economic strength of First Nations. We'll work with them and all Yukoners to diversify and strengthen our economy, protect the environment and improve the quality of life. I do want to give a shout-out to the NDP for their commitment to this statutory holiday in the 33rd Legislative Assembly.

In the Executive Council Office, our government is committed to working with First Nations on shared priorities. We will lead efforts when it comes to responding to the truth and reconciliation report. We will be a strong voice for Yukon with our federal, provincial and territorial colleagues.

In finance, our government is committed to strengthening and diversifying the Yukon's economy to make a better life for all Yukoners. We are working within the fiscal constraints created by the past government's management, but we have a responsible, long-term plan that will help create jobs and improve the quality of life for all Yukoners while protecting our environment. We are investing in our people, in our

businesses and in our industries to diversify the economy by creating new opportunities in key areas such as mining, tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, green energy and information technology.

On economic development, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is committed to the development of a diverse, prosperous, strong economy that benefits the lives of all Yukoners. We are focused on creating jobs for a skilled workforce, increasing investment opportunities and protecting the environment. We are working collaboratively with First Nations and communities to ensure that all communities in the Yukon will continue to thrive and grow. We are working on improved regulatory certainty so that Yukon is seen as a competitive place to invest. We are continuing to work with local governments and businesses to promote Yukon as a great place to do business.

On energy, mines and resources, our government is working toward a stronger economy for the benefit of all Yukoners, while continuing to be leaders when it comes to the environment. Our top priority remains economic diversification and innovation when it comes to Yukon's natural resources sector. We are increasing the availability of renewable energy sources while reducing the reliance on non-renewable sources, such as diesel, and lessening energy consumption. We are promoting our oil and gas industry and encouraging responsible resource development. We are working government-to-government with Yukon First Nation partners so that responsible resource development benefits all Yukoners.

With the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation, our government believes that renewable energy sources play an important part in strengthening our economy. That is why we are making an investment to support innovation and diversification in all energy sectors.

With regard to education, our government understands that responsible investment in education will achieve better outcomes for Yukon's social, economic and community goals. We are committed to working with parents, teachers, and other educational partners, including First Nations, to ensure Yukon students acquire the skills that they need for happy, healthy, productive futures.

We will improve Yukon's education system by updating our curriculum, better reflecting First Nation culture and ensuring all Yukoners have access to the education that they deserve.

From our justice system, our government is working to make lives better for all Yukoners and that is why one of the first pieces of legislation entrenches non-discrimination for the LGBTQ2S community. This is long overdue.

We also want to ensure that our communities are safe for all Yukoners. Our government is committed to working with police, with justice stakeholders and with First Nations to ensure that our justice system is balanced. We are promoting victims' rights while providing rehabilitation that reduces reoffending and addresses the needs for those suffering from mental health issues and addictions. It will make sure that our laws meet acceptable standards for equality, fairness and

respect for the rule of law. It's about making lives better for all Yukoners.

With regard to our environment, the environment remains top of mind for our government as we move forward with a plan to build on a prosperous and well-defined economy. We are working to lessen our carbon footprint while expanding the use of renewable energy sources. We know that a healthy environment means protecting our wildlife populations and our wilderness and that a healthy environment and prosperous economy go hand in hand. We are committed also to protecting the Peel watershed.

For our health care system, our government is committed to improving the health and well-being of all Yukoners. In our first month in office, we negotiated a deal with the Government of Canada for an additional \$6.2 million for home care and \$5.2 million for mental health services for families in Yukon and for youth. We are making changes so that Yukoners of all ages can live healthy and happy lives.

We are investing responsibly in our health care system to provide better hospital infrastructure, better supports and communities, and supports for those who are on the front line providing us with quality health care.

On our housing needs, our government understands that adequate and affordable housing is an important part of healthy communities. We are working with the Yukon Housing Corporation board, First Nations and community partners to implement the housing action plan. We will work to access Yukon's fair share of new federal housing funding. Our plan will increase affordable housing options across the territory.

On community services, the health and the happiness of Yukon communities is a priority for our government. We are committed to working with our partners to find community-based solutions for improving the quality of life for Yukoners. We will make responsible investments in community infrastructure and work collaboratively to increase affordable housing options across the territory.

On French language services, our government recognizes the contributions of French Yukoners. We are committed to working with the francophone community to promote and provide more government services in French with a focus on emergency and mental health services. We are also moving forward on the construction of a French first language high school to meet the needs of Yukon's francophone students.

At our liquor corporation, our government will work with the Yukon Liquor Board, business community and Yukoners to assess whether the current *Liquor Act* meets our needs when it comes to economic opportunities and social responsibility.

On infrastructure and highways and public parks, our government is making investments that support economic activities and diversification.

We are working with local businesses and First Nations to make targeted investments in important industries such as innovation, science and IT. Our government is bringing forward changes that will increase the ability of local businesses and First Nations to secure government contracts.

We want Yukoners working on Yukon projects. This is an area that needs a great deal of attention. We are reducing barriers for Yukoners who are accessing government services.

Respecting our public service — our government believes in our professional, skilled, and merit-based public service. We are making sure that Yukon public service is open, transparent and inclusive when it comes to hiring practices.

On tourism and culture, our government is committed to growing Yukon's tourism industry while protecting and promoting our rich heritage and history. We are working with First Nations and community organizations to make innovative investments that will lead to a strong economy and vibrant communities. Our government knows First Nation culture, knowledge and languages are an important part of our shared history. We are working together toward innovations and initiatives that attract more visitors to Yukon and educate them on what makes this territory great.

On the role of the Women's Directorate, the safety of Yukoners is a top priority to our government. We are committed to building safer communities by increasing efforts to reduce violence against women. We are taking action to address the high incidence of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls across Canada. Our government is also reviewing legislation to ensure non-discrimination for our LGBTQ2S community.

Workers' compensation — our government recognizes the important contributions of first responders who keep our communities safe. We are committed to making changes to the *Workers' Compensation Act* to address the need for those first responders who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Mr. Speaker, this is the road map forward for our one-government approach. As I mentioned, we have been working diligently since our swearing-in on December 3rd on all manner of things. For example, we are making strategic investments in healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities. So far, we have many accomplishments to point to: negotiating \$11.4 million in federal funding to support critical home care needs and mental health initiatives for Yukoners; securing an additional \$25.6 million for health care through the territorial health investment fund; awarding historic resources; funding two projects supporting the preservation and the revitalization of Yukon First Nation languages and oral history; launching a new website to share information about research and monitoring, conducted by or in partnership with the Yukon government; negotiating a new agreement with Canada that increases funding for French language services; and making free take-home Naloxone available across the territory as part of a national effort to address opioid overdoses.

There are also several new or enhanced initiatives, including: planning a facility to view discoveries made over the years in the fossil-rich Klondike goldfields; funding the cultural centre component of the new Carcross/Tagish First Nation learning centre; implementing the plan to jointly manage the Conrad historic site with Carcross/Tagish First Nation; supporting community events across the territory to commemorate Canada's 150th birthday and the 75th

anniversary of the construction of the Alaska Highway; investing in solid-waste diversion and recycling programs and facilities across the territory; improving waste-water infrastructure in several Yukon communities; engaging Yukon partners, communities and First Nations in developing a broad, long-term strategy to drive growth in Yukon's tourism industry; hosting a summit to define opportunities and investment for sustained growth in the winter tourism market; and building a new francophone secondary school in Whitehorse; collaborating with the federal government on climate change preparedness and commitment to returning revenues on the federal price on carbon to Yukoners.

I will also mention that Yukon will be co-hosting the ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie with the federal government in June as part of Canada's 150th anniversary celebrations. We are taking a people-centred approach to wellness that helps Yukoners thrive. As a government, we have: introduced a Yukon version of the revised BC curriculum focusing in on skills development, hands-on learning and northern ways of knowing and doing; opened a temporary emergency shelter in partnership with Kwanlin Dün First Nation to provide needed shelter for vulnerable people; initiated a conversation on Housing First to end homelessness in Yukon with national experts, local NGOs, stakeholders and front-line government staff; shared a government perspective on women's economic empowerment at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women; introduced changes to the *Human Rights Act* to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender identification or gender expression and introduced changes to the *Vital Statistics Act* to represent the rights of LGBTQ2S Yukoners.

Other new and enhanced initiatives include: supporting full participation in the National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; making an enhanced and greater investment in programs for our young people and the youth groups that deliver them; increasing teachers and educational assistants in Yukon schools; and enhancing community addictions programs in eight communities. We are working with Yukon's legal community and other stakeholders to develop a new *Legal Profession Act* to improve access to legal services and protect the public interests.

We have also focused on building strong government-to-government relationships, fostering reconciliation. In this area, we have signed an intergovernmental declaration with Yukon First Nation chiefs as a foundation for a renewed relationship based on reconciliation, cooperation and collaboration. We have signed a memorandum of understanding on mining with Yukon First Nation chiefs to work together for a stronger economy. We have taken a collaborative approach with Yukon First Nation chiefs at this year's Yukon Days in Ottawa, jointly advocating for federal programs, services and funding for the Yukon. We have re-established the Yukon Advisory Committee to support work on murdered and missing indigenous women and girls to support our common work during the national inquiry and participated fully in the national inquiry as well.

Our last pillar is focused in on welding together a strong, diversified economy and a healthy environment. In that regard, we have approved amendments to allow work on a new open pit at the Minto mine, and showcased the collaboration with Yukon First Nations at the annual mineral exploration Roundup conference and with the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada annual conference.

We supported the first annual Arctic Indigenous Investment Conference in Whitehorse to advance economic growth through new relationships and partnerships. We've partnered with Kwanlin Dün First Nation to enable it to register leases on settlement land and in the Land Titles Office to allow development for housing and commercial development. We've concluded a new free trade deal that opens up new markets for Yukon products while retaining safeguards for local needs. We do appreciate the work that the Yukon Party has done previously to help in the signing of that deal.

We are also working on a new agreement with the federal government to support Yukon farmers and agricultural producers. The Member for Lake Laberge has done a lot of work in that capacity as well and I commend him on that. We are working with Yukon First Nations and the Chamber of Mines to restore confidence in the territory's development assessment process.

We have: signed the pan-Canadian accord to address and adapt to the impacts of climate change and support the shift to a cleaner, renewable economy; expanded programs for film development and production to give Yukon media producers access to local and national funding; launched a new website to share information about research and monitoring conducted by or in partnership with Yukon government; and signed a water management agreement with British Columbia to collaboratively manage shared water in the Mackenzie River Basin, specifically in the Liard River and its tributaries.

We're providing \$300,000 for resource road improvements for the Yukon placer mining industry. We are: increasing funding to \$1.6 million this year for mineral exploration; developing an open data repository to give entrepreneurs access to a wealth of research and the ability to use data in innovative ways; providing a new suite of e-services for Yukon businesses and organizations through the corporate online registry; engaging Yukon partners, communities and First Nations to develop a broad, long-term strategy to drive growth in Yukon's tourism industry; providing ongoing marketing funds directly aimed at consumers. We have: initiated a comprehensive visitor survey to help tourism businesses better understand the interests and expectations of visitors; hosted a summit to define opportunities to invest for sustained growth in winter tourism markets; developed a broad-based arts and culture policy to enhance growth in Yukon's cultural industries. We are collaborating with the federal government on climate change preparedness, focused on energy planning and working on smaller First Nation- and community-driven renewable energy projects.

So that's a lot of the stuff that has been happening. It speaks to the fact that when we're not in the Legislative Assembly, there are things that are happening in each department. Folks are working very, very hard on this side of government and, to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources' comments as well, the work ethic on both sides of this House should not be criticized. I think that everybody in this Legislative Assembly works extremely hard.

So there is a lot that is going on in the Yukon. Take a look in general at what's happening in the Yukon these days — especially this summer. Half of the world's largest gold producers are investing in Yukon mining properties. Barrick Gold has invested \$8.3 million in ATAC Resources at the east of Keno properties.

Newmont Mining is investing \$6 million this year in an exploration program at Goldstrike Resources' Plateau project east of Mayo. Victoria Gold is moving forward with its plans to mine in the Dublin Gulch area. Kudz Ze Kayah and Coffee Creek mining projects have entered into the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment process. There is a great deal happening in our economy and that bodes well for the future. We are not going to take credit for any of those. This is industry; this is the boom-and-bust industry. It's going to boom and it's going to bust. It's going to be cyclical. We need to prepare for production and we need to prepare for reclamation and we need to prepare for those years when there is not so much interest.

I do want to give credit to the former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources for all the work that he has done with the industry. He is very well-respected in the industry. I hope that we get an opportunity to work together.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the work that we've done in the first few months in office. I am very pleased to see the New Democrats are on board to work with us as we move forward into the future. Mr. Speaker, as I conclude my remarks today, I want to thank the Commissioner of Yukon for his work on the Speech from the Throne. We will not be distracted from the work at hand.

I commend this speech to the House. Thank you very much.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Gallina: Over the past two days, this House has heard some very personal and powerful speeches in reply to the Speech from the Throne. Some of the themes that I took from these speeches include family, tradition, culture, working collaboratively to find solutions, respect and respectful governance, reconciliation, inclusion, giving thanks, raising our children and the next generation, experience, passion, working to better the lives of all Yukoners, and leadership. These themes have shaped the values that we, the Liberal caucus, pride ourselves on. We have now opened up and shared with people what is most important to us and how we plan to conduct ourselves when we sit in this House with

members, engage with our constituents, work with departments and collaborate with governments.

On leadership, I would like to take a moment to recognize the Premier for bringing this team together. Our support for him and his leadership is evident in our presentations made here in this House.

We have had the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne. Each member has taken the time to reiterate their commitment and their position as a member of this Assembly. The Speech from the Throne sets the tone for this Legislative Assembly. It guides the business of this House and directs our path forward. Each member has responded by outlining their role in this Legislative Assembly and their personal goals over the coming weeks and months. I would like to thank those members opposite who respectfully listened to our speeches — namely those members for Porter Creek North and Whitehorse Centre, stalwarts of this House, who I believe listened to every one of the presentations.

We have set out four priorities to guide our government through the coming years. We will take a people-centred approach to wellness to help Yukoners thrive. We will make strategic investments that will contribute to healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities. By building and maintaining strong government-to-government relationships, we will foster reconciliation.

We will support a diverse, growing economy that will provide good jobs for Yukoners in an environmentally responsible way. We made these commitments to Yukoners last fall when we asked them to elect us as the new Yukon government. We will continue to reiterate these commitments because we will use these to guide our decision-making going forward.

Our people-centred approach is the cornerstone of this government. We will work to support programs and services to support the well-being of Yukoners of all ages. This includes newborn health and supporting midwifery in Yukon. It includes learning opportunities for school readiness and quality childcare, and it continues on to elder care, from the Whistle Bend care facility to exploring options for aging in place.

The wellness of Yukoners extends to safety as well. Today we introduced amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act* and changes that will be debated in this Assembly. The proposed changes will make our act one of the most progressive laws in this country. We have committed to participate in the inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls, as we believe this inquiry is an important look at the issue of violence against women and girls in our communities.

We believe that all communities matter. Communities are very important to our territory. We believe that community-led solutions are the best solutions for Yukoners. Whether for roads, infrastructure, programs or service, we believe our job as elected officials is to work with individual communities on their unique needs.

Government-to-government relationships are essential to the future of this territory. First Nations in Yukon are leading

the way in terms of self-governments and modern treaties. We must work with First Nation governments if we are to develop a successful future in this territory. We believe that our governments must work together, and to do so we must have a mutual respect and understanding.

Our fourth commitment is to support a diverse and growing economy. We will do so by respecting the environment and respecting Yukoners. We will do so by supporting education so that our students are ready to enter the workforce after graduation. We will work with the college to align training programs with the needs of employers. We will support all Yukon industries.

The mineral exploration industry is a key driver in the Yukon. We have seen some really positive announcements from this industry recently and will continue to support a responsible exploration and mining industry in this territory. We also support the diversification of Yukon's economy and we support a number of industries in this territory.

We are proud of our rich tourism industry and we will continue to support its growth and development.

I mentioned earlier in my remarks that I am here today because I have a desire to serve — a desire I know I share with all of my colleagues in this House. Yukoners want their government to serve them and we are here to do just that. Though the work is challenging and difficult decisions must be made, we must not forget that it is a privilege and an honour to sit in this House and to serve the people of Yukon. To do so responsibly involves listening to them, engaging their ideas and putting their voices into action.

As members of this Legislative Assembly, we give public voice to the diversity of our constituents who comprise this wonderful territory and it is our duty to speak to our constituents about the work that we do and the decisions that we make that affect their lives.

It has been, and continues to be, an honour to speak to our constituents, represent their interests and serve them in this House. Yukoners deserve no less.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I commend this motion to the House.

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. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Dendys: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 11 yea, six nay.

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

Motion No. 11 agreed to

Motion to engross Address in Reply to Speech from the Throne

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to the Commissioner in his capacity as Lieutenant Governor.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to the Commissioner in his capacity as Lieutenant Governor.

Motion agreed to

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 2: *National Aboriginal Day Act* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 2, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege and honour to once again speak to the bill I introduced just yesterday here in the House. Bill No. 2, the *National Aboriginal Day Act*, amends the *Employment Standards Act* by adding National Aboriginal Day as a general holiday in the Yukon.

The bill supports this government's priority to build inclusive, vibrant and proud Yukon communities. Recognizing and celebrating the rich heritage, culture and achievements of Yukon's aboriginal peoples is critical to that goal. Aboriginal peoples have long celebrated the summer solstice as it holds an important significance within many aboriginal cultures. Celebrating National Aboriginal Day on June 21st as a statutory holiday for all Yukoners contributes to reconciliation by allowing us all the opportunity to learn more about indigenous peoples and to participate in cultural events. We believe that all Yukoners benefit from a unified society that celebrates and shares in the culture of indigenous peoples.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide a little background on how we arrived at this important day.

On December 9, 2015, former NDP MLA Kevin Barr submitted a petition with more than 500 signatures to put forth Motion No. 1039 to make National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday in the Yukon. Yesterday, I stood in this House and thanked Mr. Barr and today again I would like to say thank you to him for bringing forward this petition.

On May 16, 2016, then-Minister of Community Services, the Hon. Currie Dixon, brought forward a motion which I believe was passed unanimously in this House to go out to the Yukon and to seek opinion on National Aboriginal Day. I thank him for bringing that forward and for the Yukon Party for bringing that forward. That amended motion was unanimously passed that day that urged the Yukon government to seek public input about the possibility about declaring National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday here in the Yukon.

Through a survey conducted by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, all Yukoners were invited to provide their comments on how and whether they might benefit or be affected by National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday. For two months, from May 16th to July 16th of 2016, the government sought input from all employers. This included local businesses and chambers of commerce. I know that the chambers were reached out to and we asked them to take the survey to all employers. This also included the public, First Nation governments and First Nation development corporations.

The survey was conducted in the summer so that all employers would have a strong sense of how a holiday in June might affect their businesses. In particular, the Yukon government wanted to hear from local businesses and labour organizations to understand what financial effects an additional statutory holiday might have on seasonal businesses or companies operating within a collective agreement.

We have posted the survey results on the Community Services website and, as people can tell from those survey results, we had over 1,400 Yukoners responding directly to the survey. I'm pleased to say that 88 percent of all respondents supported the creation of a statutory holiday to recognize National Aboriginal Day. Ninety percent of First Nation citizens and employees believed there would be benefits to National Aboriginal Day being a statutory holiday.

When asked how a statutory holiday on National Aboriginal Day would affect their businesses, 48.7 percent of employers and members of the business community felt they would be either only slightly affected or not at all. By the way, Mr. Speaker, 100 percent of First Nation governments already give their employees this day off with pay. As well, 26.9 percent of employers and members of the business community said they would be negatively affected through loss of profit and increased costs and 20.2 percent of employers and members of the business community felt that they would be positively affected by the holiday. Many employers said that they felt that the holiday would increase employee morale, profits, tourism and First Nation community support.

Mr. Speaker, I will let you know as well that after being sworn in, I did sit down with several of the chambers of commerce and we talked about National Aboriginal Day. All of them did express some concerns, but all of them also expressed support for National Aboriginal Day. They were all supportive of seeing National Aboriginal Day come here to this House. I found that to be a strong endorsement, Mr. Speaker.

We appreciate that this newest statutory holiday will have implications for local business operators to varying degrees. We realize that this new statutory holiday may have added payroll and operational costs for some businesses and organizations, including the Government of Yukon; however, we believe that the benefits of the holiday outweigh the challenges and we are happy to see that the majority of the public and business community agree. More than half of the survey respondents identified Yukoners' ability to celebrate, respect, acknowledge, understand and recognize First Nation history, culture and traditions as the reasons why they supported the creation of this new holiday. As well, Yukoners told us that the day would encourage spending and economic growth for the territorial economy and local businesses.

Mr. Speaker, we anticipate Yukon-wide benefits, such as increased revenue from tourism and recreational activities, as well as improved morale in the workforce. Our government is committed to building strong government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations to foster reconciliation and to advance a modern Yukon that is diverse and inclusive.

Yukon is leading the way on many fronts: self-governance; modern treaties; strengthening our Yukon economy with the government-to-government relationships; and reconciliation initiatives. As well, there are several reasons on a social front where this has such a strong influence on the future of the territory. I think it's important that we continue to lead the way in recognizing and celebrating First Nation culture together as a community. Across Canada, jurisdictions have between six and 10 public statutory holidays embedded in their employment legislation. If we pass National Aboriginal Day, we will then have 10 and we will be joining the Northwest Territories, which has officially recognized National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday for the past 15 years, since 2002.

Coming together as a community to celebrate is a tangible way to support the revitalization of First Nation culture, which has benefits for all Yukoners and ultimately enhances Yukon society. Mr. Speaker, the creation of this new statutory holiday supports our government's people-centred approach to wellness. We recognize that there are costs to this holiday and we believe that it represents a strategic investment that will move Yukon toward building healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities.

I thank officials from various departments for their work on preparing this legislation and on conducting the survey. Again, that survey is available for all Yukoners to see the results. We put it up on our website yesterday when we tabled the legislation. I hope that this House can approve June 21 as a special day so that we can collectively recognize and

celebrate the culture, heritage and achievements of the indigenous peoples of Canada.

In Yukon, a statutory holiday for National Aboriginal Day will give Yukoners and visitors the opportunity to recognize and celebrate the contribution of indigenous peoples to the fabric of Canada. National Aboriginal Day activities offer an excellent opportunity to celebrate the First Nation heritage and culture that make Yukon the unique place that it is.

Finally, we believe that it is important that Yukoners have the opportunity to participate in the cultural events that take place throughout our territory. I am honoured to stand before you and present National Aboriginal Day in its second reading. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kent: It is my pleasure to rise today to speak at second reading with reference to this bill to create a National Aboriginal Day here in the Yukon. First of all, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the officials who provided the briefing this morning.

I thank the Government House Leader as well for organizing the various briefings that are to take place with the legislation and budget and various departments. I would also like to just quickly congratulate a couple of members on the other side, starting of course with the Premier, the MLA for Klondike. I believe he is the first Premier from that riding in our modern government, in our responsible government, so congratulations to him. We obviously worked together an awful lot over the past five years and I'll look forward to continuing to work with him in the years to come throughout this mandate.

I would also like to congratulate the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, the Minister of Community Services, on his election. There were some very close elections, I think, last time around, and he and I were both in a couple of them. So congratulations to you, and I know that you will do a great job of representing the constituents of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes as well as working as a minister. I'm pleased to be the critic for this department and others, and I look forward to back-and-forth with you on this bill and department business over the next while.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to start by outlining what our approach in the Yukon Party Official Opposition will be in responding to this bill at second reading. I'll start by providing some context and history. I know the minister provided some in his remarks, but perhaps I will provide a little bit more. Then I will outline some of the considerations that we as legislators should take into account as we decide on this matter, and finally, I'll explain where we sit on this issue at this point in debate on this bill.

The discussion on making National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday did not begin in the Yukon, nor will Yukon be the first jurisdiction to enact this as a statutory holiday, should this bill pass. In 2001, members of the 14th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories debated and passed the *National Aboriginal Day Act*, which made that territory the first jurisdiction in the country to mark June 21 as a statutory

holiday for National Aboriginal Day. June 21 was, of course, picked based on its cultural significance as summer solstice and as a day that many aboriginal groups traditionally celebrate their heritage.

Since that time, annual celebrations have grown and are held nationally on June 21 to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding achievements of aboriginal peoples across our country. These celebrations are not only for First Nation people, but all Canadians are encouraged to take the opportunity to participate in various ways. Here in the Yukon Territory, events are held right across this jurisdiction in just about every one of our communities.

With regard to the idea of National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday, credit, of course, must be given where it is due. The former NDP MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, Kevin Barr, deserves considerable credit in sparking this discussion. On November 2, 2015, he gave notice of a motion, Motion No. 1039, urging the Yukon government to declare National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday. Later that Sitting, on December 9, 2015, Mr. Barr called that motion for debate on private members' day. He spoke passionately and persuasively in favour of his motion and, regardless of where any of us sit on the issue, he deserved credit for bringing forward an issue upon which he held such strong beliefs. Indeed, several of his NDP colleagues also spoke in favour of the motion. The position of the NDP on this matter has been unequivocal and clear since the passage of that motion.

For our part, Yukon Party MLAs intervened in the debate on Mr. Barr's motion — Motion No. 1039 — with an amendment. That amendment sought to have the Yukon government consult Yukon First Nations, employers, employees and the general public about the possibility of creating this new statutory holiday. As Yukon Party MLAs explained at the time, the creation of a new statutory holiday does not come without considerable cost. That cost will be borne by employers like the Yukon government, other levels of government, such as municipalities, and perhaps most profoundly, by small- and medium-sized businesses. The Yukon Party argued that if this idea was to be considered, then it was only fair to let Yukon businesses and other employers have their say about what it would mean to their operations and livelihoods. We were pleased that all members who were present for the debate agreed, and the amendment passed unanimously. With that, the amended motion passed through the Yukon Legislative Assembly on December 9, 2015.

The record of debate and the tallies of voting show quite clearly the positions of the Yukon Party and the New Democratic Party. What is curious, though, is the conspicuous silence of the Leader of the Liberal Party. As Leader of the Third Party at the time, he did not speak on or even vote on Mr. Barr's motion. This means one of two things — either he had other priorities or he had not made up his mind. In fact, in the entire five years of the 33rd Legislative Sitting, the now-Premier never once raised the matter of whether or not National Aboriginal Day should be a statutory holiday — no

speeches, motions or questions, and not even a favourable vote on an otherwise unanimous —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Leader of the Third Party, on a point of order.

Ms. Hanson: I would just like to raise to the House that it is my understanding of the Standing Orders that it is inappropriate — not allowed — to comment on absences from this Legislative Assembly by members.

Speaker: Member for Copperbelt South, on the point of order.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order — I was merely stating the fact that the Leader of the Third Party at the time, the now-Premier, did not participate in a vote. I did not reference an absence from this House.

Speaker: I don't think I heard a reference to an absence from the House.

Ms. Hanson: That is correct, Mr. Speaker. It was certainly implied, and the member who made that statement is fully aware that the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party were in Paris at the climate change summit.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Thank you. On the specific point that the Leader of the Third Party made, subject to being corrected in Hansard, I did not hear a reference to an absence. I understand the Leader of the Third Party's point in any event.

Mr. Kent: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, even if we were to pass this bill as expeditiously as possible, we have only been given a few weeks to decide on it before the statutory holiday may come into effect. It would still only leave businesses, other levels of government and even the Yukon government just a few weeks to prepare. In our opinion, that is hardly fair warning for Yukon's large, medium and small businesses whose busy summer seasons have already begun.

It's hardly fair warning for the territory's municipalities, whose current budgets won't contemplate this new cost, and it's hardly fair warning to Yukon government departments, who will face additional costs as a result of this — that is, unless the government's budget already contemplates this cost, which would be evidence that the Liberal government views this debate and deliberation as a mere afterthought.

Either way, it is clear that the government, in an effort to honour a campaign commitment, has rushed this bill somewhat and has come to this decision without adequate consideration of the impacts on Yukoners. Furthermore, they have certainly not given members of the Assembly adequate information to consider in our deliberations of, again, following the passage of Motion No. 1039, which was amended by the Yukon Party to allow for consultation.

The Yukon government sought input on this matter in a consultation process that concluded in the summer of 2016. Several months ago, we requested a copy of the consultation

material and the responses from Yukoners from the minister. All we received was a letter saying that Yukoners were very positive — in favour — and that some increased administration costs were identified. The government refused to provide actual submissions from Yukon businesses or even a "what we heard" document at that time, which is standard practice following public consultations.

This lack of transparency makes it difficult for us as legislators to make an informed decision about whether to support this bill. We know that there are added costs for employers but we do not have any details at all on what those will be. Now we see that the minister has chosen to post a consultation summary online late yesterday. I do want to thank the Premier. I did speak to him prior to the throne speech last week and I mentioned my concerns with not being provided this information, and he must have had a conversation with his minister and the document did go online, as I said, late yesterday.

I should note that the document was only made available to us less than 24 hours ago, and the individual submissions from businesses have not been included. I think the full document would be interesting for us to take a look at, rather than just the summary. I'll repeat my request to the minister to provide that full consultation document prior to us going into Committee of the Whole so that we can consider the full context of this.

In his letter to us, the Minister of Community Services again indicated that he has had verbal discussions with members of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce. I also reached out to the chamber, and what I understand from them is that they urged the government to conduct an economic analysis of the impacts of creating a new statutory holiday. We agree that this would be beneficial. Again, I introduced a motion earlier today that asked for such an economic analysis to be conducted. I'm not sure whether or not that has been created. There are going to be costs associated, as I mentioned, but again, we've heard that some in the survey and others expect there to be benefits as well.

Such an economic analysis would answer some important questions: Will this hurt the growth prospects for businesses or their ability to hire new staff? Will it hinder their ability to create jobs? Will it make them consider laying staff off, or will it hurt their bottom line? Are there ways these impacts can be mitigated? The Liberal government's unwillingness to conduct any detailed analysis of this decision makes these questions difficult to answer.

We also don't know what issues Yukon municipalities have identified with this legislation. In most communities, the municipality is the leading employer. What does this mean for them? Can they afford the increased costs that will come with this new statutory holiday? Earlier this year, we heard from the Mayor of Whitehorse that this will cost the City of Whitehorse hundreds of thousands of dollars, in his estimation. Will it mean that they have to reduce services or raise taxes to deal with this shortfall? Again, these are questions that we can't answer without the benefit of a proper

economic analysis and cost analysis of what we're about to undertake.

Next, we don't know what impact this will have on Yukon's largest employer, the Yukon government. What will a new statutory holiday cost the Yukon government? Is this something that Yukon government has calculated? I know the Premier, at the time of this announcement, said that in discussions with Finance officials, it was felt that this was something the government could afford, but again, we don't know what the numbers of a new statutory holiday are and what that additional cost will be to the Yukon government. If they have done that costing, it would be helpful, I think, to table that for MLAs as well as the public to take a look at.

Mr. Speaker, there is a chance that the Yukon government knows the answers to these questions and simply, perhaps, isn't sharing the information with us. However, there is also a more disappointing possibility, and that's that they didn't do this work and they simply don't know, or that they haven't done any analysis on this decision at all and have completely abandoned the notion of evidence-based policy-making. If they do know any of the answers to these questions, they haven't shared them with MLAs and we would be eager to hear from them. If they don't know, or haven't sought the answers to these questions, then they should be very clear and honest with Yukoners. They should tell employers and employees, First Nation governments, municipalities and indeed all Yukoners that the impacts of this decision are not being taken into account and that their minds are made up, and that when it comes to this, no evidence or analysis will sway them. We hope this isn't the case, Mr. Speaker, but at this point, we simply don't have enough information to believe otherwise.

I want to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by outlining our party's position on this bill at this stage. We fully support National Aboriginal Day. We think it is incredibly important to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding achievements of aboriginal peoples both here in Yukon and across the entire country. We believe that here in the Yukon, the celebration of Yukon First Nations enriches the lives of all of our citizens. For this reason, we believe the Yukon government has an important role to play in taking part in this recognition and celebration.

During our time in government, we tried to ensure that recognizing First Nation heritage and culture, or celebrating the outstanding achievements of aboriginal peoples, wasn't something that was confined to a single day. It occurred throughout the year and throughout the lives of Yukoners, whether that was through the work of the Department of Tourism and Culture in helping Yukoners engage with First Nation culture and the resulting cultural resurgence that Yukon has experienced of late, or through the work done to help preserve and teach First Nation languages in Yukon communities and schools, or through our earnest support for the Aboriginal Employees Forum and the Aboriginal Employees Award of Honour that showcased the talents of individual aboriginal public servants, strengthened pride in the

public service and called attention to the good work of aboriginal employees in the Yukon public.

We believe that government can and should take action to help in this celebration and recognition. These are just a few examples, Mr. Speaker, but we know that there is more to be done. We would be happy to support the government in taking further action. Indeed, we would certainly support the Yukon government increasing its support for celebration, activities and events on National Aboriginal Day.

If the Liberal government has other ideas of ways that either the Yukon government or the Yukon Legislative Assembly can aid and support the celebration of National Aboriginal Day, we would be more than happy to engage and offer our support. However, the issue of creating a new statutory holiday is about more than just government action or spending. The creation of a new statutory holiday, however noble the cause, is something that will have real impacts on Yukon citizens, businesses and governments.

Because the Yukon government hasn't taken the time or done the work to understand what those impacts are, we are left with numerous unanswered questions that I will explore during Committee of the Whole. Some of the most pressing bear repeating. Why hasn't an economic analysis of this been done? Why did they refuse to share the results of the public consultation until very recently and why haven't they done a cost analysis for their own departments? We're eager to participate in the discussion about this issue, but it is difficult when so many of these questions are unanswered and so much is unknown.

While it is our hope that some of this information may come to light during examination in Committee of the Whole, we're worried that the Liberals simply haven't gathered or considered this necessary information. As legislators, we're compelled to make decisions based on the evidence provided to us and, at this point, it is apparent that much of that information is missing. Hopefully we learn more during Committee of the Whole.

We will be offering our support for this bill at second reading. Again, it is a very straightforward bill, and again, I look forward to getting into Committee of the Whole debate and see if we can identify some potential mitigation for, in particular, the small business and medium-sized business communities that will be affected.

The Klondike Placer Miners' Association, in a letter to the previous Minister of Community Services — which I understand was shared with the current minister as well — suggested that for them perhaps — they were very supportive of National Aboriginal Day being named a statutory holiday — there would be an opportunity to look at taking away one of the other statutory holidays that is celebrated during their operating season. I think there are some creative ideas that the business community has brought forward. I know that the government committed in their platform to eliminating small business tax and reducing the corporate tax as well. Perhaps that's a mitigation that could be enhanced to help protect the bottom line for businesses, but again, I will look forward to the debate in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker, just before I sit down, I should apologize to the Premier. It is correct. There was a trip to Paris for the climate change summit that he participated in and that is my oversight. I do apologize to the Premier for my statement earlier that said that he had not voted on this motion. Again, my apologies to the Premier, to the Member for Klondike, for that erroneous assertion that I made earlier during my second reading speech. I hope that he will accept my apology. Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you to the Member for Copperbelt South for that clarification.

Ms. Hanson: It is indeed a great honour to speak today to Bill No. 2, *National Aboriginal Day Act*.

Mr. Speaker, my only regret is that debate on this bill occurs on a day when Kevin Barr — who is, as people have acknowledged already is the former member of this Legislative Assembly for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes — is unable to be here to bear witness to the debate on this significant, if largely symbolic, step toward reconciliation.

When Kevin and other members of the New Democratic Party caucus talked about the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015, we were moved by the depth and breadth of the report. It is really a profound document. Our discussions were at times animated and often emotional. That should come as no surprise to anyone who has read any of the 364 pages of basically the summary document, which is not all of the documentation — the 364 pages that are largely in circulation.

The mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was to inform all Canadians about what happened in the 150-year history of the residential schools. By revealing this history, they also challenged us to peel back our blinders and to be open to the truth of history and, in doing so, in being open to the truth of history and to be guided and inspired in a process of reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect. The guiding principle of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was that the truth of our common experiences will help set our spirits free and pave the way to reconciliation.

The first step, the difficult step, was to uncover the truth. You know this truth about residential schools is hard. One truth is that many children went missing. Many families lost their loved ones and never learned their fates. We heard personal experiences of the recollection of that history yesterday. Thanks to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the truth can no longer be denied, but in fact must be forever etched in our collective memories. But that is only the beginning. The next step is reconciliation. We use that word a lot. Governments use it and politicians use it. When we ask what reconciliation is, there really is no one way to define it.

Over the last two years, I have been moved by the language by Justice Murray Sinclair, now Senator Sinclair, who has a succinct way of expressing it. He says: “Reconciliation is about forging and maintaining respectful

relationships. There are no shortcuts.” Forging and maintaining respectful relationships, Mr. Speaker — it bears repeating. Respect is relational. It is mutual. Respect is never unilateral. It is not telling somebody you respect them.

In the spirit of reconciliation, we need, I think — just from the comments — and I am reacting to this because it brings back so many of the somewhat ugly debates that we had over the last five years — that we need to be truthful and acknowledge that here in the Yukon, we have a long way to go to maintain truly respectful relationships with First Nations.

Even before considering the calls to action, including call to action 80 that are contained in the summary of the report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, we need to take a moment to reflect on our local situation. Mr. Speaker, the *Umbrella Final Agreement* sets out a framework — a framework for respectful government-to-government relationships. The fact is, not all Yukon governments have respected the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. Going to court to resolve issues represents a failure of a relationship. The fact that we still have in place a number of court cases shows us all how far we have to go in this territory to develop truly respectful government-to-government relationships.

For reconciliation to be realized, substantial changes in how we resolve differences will need to be implemented. We have a long way to go, but here’s the good news: I think today, together, we can be starting in this new legislative setting on that reconciliation journey. Bill No. 2, *National Aboriginal Day Act*, can only be considered a part, albeit an essential part, of the complex mosaic that the fulfillment of the truth and reconciliation recommendations creates for Canada.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we have heard often about the 94 calls to action contained in the summary of the final report. As that report said — and I quote: “No Canadian can take pride in this country’s treatment of Aboriginal peoples, and, for that reason, all Canadians have a critical role to play in advancing reconciliation in ways that honour and revitalize the nation-to-nation Treaty relationship.”

You know, Mr. Speaker, I have spoken many times — and again just today — about breathing life into how we honour the agreements that were entered into on behalf of us all. However, I found the language of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission most compelling. I’ll quote from it. It said on page 238: “Reconciliation not only requires apologies, reparations, the relearning of Canada’s national history, and public commemoration, but also needs real social, political, and economic change”, because, as the TRC put it, “Reconciliation begins with each and every one of us.”

When I re-read the TRC summary report, I found myself personally challenged. The history that I was taught — like many in this House — was supposed to be objective. It was supposed to be balanced and, in short, it was supposed to be the truth. As the layers of the work and research done over the last number of years by both the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and now the Truth and Reconciliation Commission show us, it’s not the truth.

Mr. Speaker, we heard earlier today a line of questioning coming from the Yukon Party with respect to Bill No. 2 and heard it again just now — a line of questioning that, if we stand back even just at a slight distance, demonstrates how far there is still to go in addressing the challenge of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

I wonder whether the Yukon Party or its predecessor members of the Yukon Conservative Party question or questioned whether Discovery Day or Yukon Sourdough Rendezvous were appropriate. Perhaps, as the TRC pointed out, some of us are more comfortable with the notion of our history as represented by the idea of the settler society.

Mr. Speaker, during the debate on the motion on December 9, I just thought it would be good to go back and revisit a comment that Kevin Barr made. I'll quote here: "The misunderstandings of what has transpired over many hundreds of years here in Canada — and I'll say North America — leads to the statement..." — he was sitting with Art Johns — many people know him, Elder Art Johns — and they were at the Moosehide Gathering having an ice cream cone, he said. He said, "... there were a couple of other tourists there from the States. They were saying, my goodness what a wonderful weekend they had. Who would have ever thought that they would stumble upon this Moosehide Gathering. They were telling us of the great time they had at this gathering.

"Then they went on to talk a bit about their understanding of not only Canada, but North America, and how glad they were that Columbus had discovered North America. Elder Art Johns looked over. It was just the way we hear elders speak so many times. He said, 'He discovered nothing; he was lost'..." Kevin said he laughed and it was a moment of clarity for him because with that simple statement it was clear: "As history is written, it certainly has not been written from the perspective of indigenous and First Nation people." I think that's really clear when we are comfortable with the notion of Discovery Day, but we're not comfortable with the idea of recognizing a step toward reconciliation in National Aboriginal Day.

Mr. Speaker, of course I've done my same thing where I scribble notes to myself and then I try to find where I am.

Recognition of National Aboriginal Day is reflected not only in the call to action 80, but we should recall that, with respect to consultation, as the minister opposite pointed out and as the Member for Copperbelt South alluded to, the original motion that the former MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes put forward was amended by the Yukon Party, and essentially that amendment was a delay tactic. The NDP motion was, as we've heard today, introduced in the Fall Sitting of 2015, with a view to having it in effect in 2016. Nonetheless, the motion introduced by the Yukon Party changed the intent from the symbolic unity of the Assembly declaring National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday to simply — in quotes: "consulting with Yukon First Nations, employers, employees and general public about the possibility" — the possibility, Mr. Speaker — "of declaring it as a statutory holiday."

One thing you learn in this Assembly is that sometimes it is best to keep focused on the end-game. The amended motion

introduced by the Yukon Party was an insult not only to the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, but it was an insult to the integrity of the discussion and debate that had occurred over the many months about what we meant by reconciliation — all the platitudinous language that was put out there about how much the Yukon Party was doing for indigenous people in this territory — not "with" — "to" or "for".

That Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes had provided to this Assembly an array of indicators of support for the declaration of Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday. He had, as we heard today, tabled a petition. He had in fact gone back to provide a history of National Aboriginal Day — the impetus, the historical background. It does go beyond and well before 2001 when the Northwest Territories finally passed that legislation. In fact, in 1982 the National Indian Brotherhood, now the Assembly of First Nations, put forward the idea of establishing national aboriginal solidarity day. Wouldn't it be nice to have that concept in there as a day of recognition?

In 1990, the Quebec Legislature established June 21 as the day to celebrate aboriginal culture. You will remember in the mid-1990s, there was an incredible tension — Oka comes to mind. Tensions between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples led to renewed calls for a national day of recognition. It was one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. In 1995, the Sacred Assembly of aboriginal and non-aboriginal spiritual leaders — a national meeting organized by Elijah Harper that encouraged the federal government to establish a national first people's day as a day of unity and acknowledgment. On June 13, 1996, National Aboriginal Day was proclaimed by then Governor General Roméo LeBlanc. Later that month, the first National Aboriginal Day — it didn't take them years to consult on that — was celebrated on June 21. There is a history to the idea that we should be thinking and working toward that.

Mr. Barr read into the record the support this idea had received. As we heard today, all 14 Yukon First Nations, the Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Assembly of First Nations vice-chief, the Yukon Employees' Union, the Yukon Federation of Labour and other unions along with positive feedback. He was clear, Mr. Speaker, not to mislead this House. He was clear that he had had positive feedback — not commitment — the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, the City of Whitehorse and the Association of Yukon Communities. While the latter had not in December 2015 formally endorsed the proposal, they all underlined the importance of recognizing the role of First Nation contributions to today's Yukon.

As Kevin Barr put it, we have an opportunity, along with the Northwest Territories, to signal to the rest of this great country — to signal in this, the 150th celebration of Confederation — that we recognize and celebrate the realities of the deep and vibrant histories and cultures that preceded those initial gatherings of the Fathers of Confederation in Charlottetown.

Mr. Speaker, that makes me think — if nothing else, imagine how much richer our modern sense of history and

culture will be when we embrace and understand the power of the matrilineal structure of governance of indigenous peoples across this land.

As I said earlier, I have heard from both sides already today mentions of the cost. I guess my first reaction is cost with a great big question mark. Collectively could there be a more profound act of reconciliation than to reject the notion of Discovery Day? But you know what, National Aboriginal Day wasn't about that. It's not about that. It was put forward in a spirit of generosity and reconciliation. That's what motivated Kevin Barr. That's what motivated the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. That's what motivated the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples to make this suggestion.

As we commend this bill — I guess it's fairly clear that the New Democratic Party will be supporting this bill — I ask that we keep in mind as we join together to support the recognition of National Aboriginal Day that we keep in mind some of the words that arose when in November 2012 — and I'm quoting from the closing words of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: "In November 2012, Elders from Indigenous nations and many other cultures gathered for two days on Musqueam territory in Vancouver, British Columbia, to talk about how reconciliation can help Canada move forward". In this statement they said — and I'm quoting here for Hansard, page 363 of the TRC: "As Canadians, we share responsibility to look after each other and acknowledge the pain and suffering that our diverse societies have endured — a pain that has been handed down to the next generations. We need to right those wrongs, heal together and create a new future that honours the unique gifts of our children and grandchildren.

"How do we do this? Through sharing our personal stories, legends and traditional teachings... Our traditional teachings speak to acts such as holding one another up, walking together, balance, healing and unity. Our stories show how these teachings can heal their pain and restore dignity...

"We invite you to search in your own traditions and beliefs, and those of your ancestors, to find these core values that create a peaceful harmonious society and a healthy earth."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hutton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise in this House today to speak in support of National Aboriginal Day becoming an annual statutory holiday for Yukon.

As a lifelong resident of Yukon, I have been present for the entire modern land claims journey that Yukon First Nations, starting with Elijah Smith heading to Ottawa with a group of chiefs in 1973 to present the document, entitled *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*.

I shared in the pride, joy and sense of accomplishment by the chiefs of the three Northern Tutchone-speaking First Nations in the Mayo-Tatchun riding when, after 20 years of intense negotiations, a deal was finally reached and the first four Yukon First Nations were able to sign off on their final and self-government agreements in 1992 and 1993.

I also shared with the First Nations in my riding a tremendous sense of optimism that First Nations were finally being recognized as being the first people of this territory with the right to govern their own affairs on their land while co-managing the rest of the territory with their federal and territorial partners.

In 1995, with the full ratification of their agreement, Na Cho Nyäk Dun embarked on another journey every bit as challenging as the actual negotiation process. The First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun struggled for many years — and their challenges continue to this day — to be recognized and respected as the original government in this territory. Na Cho Nyäk Dun find themselves today, in 2017, still struggling to implement these agreements, 22 years after the federal and territorial governments committed and agreed to work with Yukon First Nations in a government-to-government relationship. It saddens me, as a non-native Yukoner, that 22 years have gone by — a full third of my life — and it has been wasted by the federal and territorial governments. They haven't built this relationship. I am so proud to be here today as part of a government that is going to rebuild these relationships and that is going to get us back to where we were. Today, we should be partners with our First Nation friends and neighbours.

I share the frustration of Yukon's first peoples in trying to find a way forward with governments that have not understood the spirit and intent of these agreements, but instead have chosen a method — if I may quote Chief Simon Mervyn of Mayo: "Implementation by litigation." This is what all First Nations in this territory have seen as an implementation process. It has been solved in court instead of in rooms with people talking to each other. It's a terrible way of doing business, Mr. Speaker. This approach has not only failed First Nations; it has failed all Yukon residents who embrace diversity and honour and respect the culture of our First Nation friends and neighbours.

Providing an annual statutory holiday will enable all Yukon residents to celebrate the culture, tradition and history of all Yukon First Nations. National Aboriginal Day becoming an annual statutory holiday here in the Yukon is a small but very important step forward on the path to reconciliation with First Nations. We know this will be a long and arduous journey. I'm extremely pleased to be a part of this government that has taken this small step forward on what I hope will be a journey whose destination is a new, improved, respectful and honourable relationship between Yukon's governments and the people of all cultures and traditions in this territory.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of Hansard, I will provide the interpretation after today. So I'm going to say in my language [*Member spoke in Gwich'in. Text unavailable*].

The values we live by — that's who we are as indigenous peoples of this territory — my values as a Gwich'in person, our values as Yukoners. Despite the comments that were made

with respect to costs associated with the Aboriginal Day celebration, I have to say that the honour of representing the indigenous community in this House far exceeds any costs associated with our culture. Our culture is rich in history and the countries of the world come to the Yukon to celebrate indigenous aboriginal cultures. That's value — the value of what attracts tourists to our country — to our Yukon. That will far exceed any expenses associated with one day of recognition.

We had a bit of a history lesson from the Official Opposition House Leader dating back to 2001. Mr. Speaker, since time immemorial, Bluefish Caves in my traditional territory and in my grandfather's and grandmother's traditional territory — we've been living there for tens of thousands of years. During that time, we demonstrated that we far exceeded — going back to the comment about, well, who found who? We were here and we were here far before anyone else. We have a dark past. There are dark chapters in our history of colonization — residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, discrimination, rights to vote, and racism. I myself only acquired my Indian status in 1985. Why? Because the system decided that my mother, who is a full-status Indian, did not deserve her recognition in this society because she married my father, who is a three-quarter-status Indian. She was stripped of her rights. That is discrimination. The National Aboriginal Day celebration is intended to recognize and give back. That's reconciliation.

Our land claims agreement — Vuntut Gwitchin — was one of the first signatories in 1993 to sign off on our self-government agreement. The objective of that was to give back to the First Nations their rights in society, their rights in our Yukon — the rights to those individuals who have been scooped from their families and stripped of their indigenous rights to be recognized in society as indigenous.

Deeply rooted — tens of thousands of years rooted in our culture and our traditions and our practices. We are nations, in Yukon — all of us — that are determining our own future based on our needs, our values and our principles, not by anyone else's. The Constitution of Canada speaks about protecting indigenous rights associated with our self-government agreement — indigenous rights as we've earned them, as we've negotiated, that have been recognized by the Government of Canada. The analogy used — and I quote: "The noble cause derived from history". As the respectful Leader of the Official Opposition spoke about the national brotherhood, the Assembly of First Nations, members of our Yukon First Nations participated in those early discussions, and the call for the creation of aboriginal solidarity today. Following that, the Assembly of First Nations, in 1995, post our signatory agreements, had a conference of indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. The amalgamation of the Yukon Indian Brotherhood, the status of Yukon Indians and the non-status Indians merged and put forth solidarity in recognizing their indigenous roots.

In 1995, following the assembly, the royal commission designated National First People's Day. The country is now on a roll in recognizing indigenous rights. The Yukon has

since signed off on 11 self-government agreements — half of that of Canada. We are blazing and leading the way. Times are changing. National Aboriginal Day was announced in 1996, as stated by the Governor General of Canada Roméo LeBlanc, declaring June 21 of each year as National Aboriginal Day. Roméo LeBlanc also recognized from every jurisdiction in Canada, indigenous youth — indigenous youth who were to carry forward the message about reconciliation, about the health of indigenous people, and about promoting our culture and our integrity. I was privileged and honoured to have received the Governor General's support at that time to promote and bring that message forward. I'm still doing that today — advocating for change.

Ironically, June is Aboriginal History Month. We need to celebrate. We celebrate aboriginal history. The history that comes with this is the changing of seasons. Culturally, the principles around celebrating National Aboriginal Day are that we change seasons; we celebrate. We have a fall harvest feast. The indigenous populations celebrate the changing of the seasons and that's part of the celebration of values and principles behind that significant day.

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* — Canada officially adopted that in May 2016 after years of objections. I'm sensing that not everyone in this House is in 100-percent support of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in bringing forward true reconciliation. Among other things, it affirms that indigenous peoples, of all other peoples, contribute to the diversity and the richness of our civilization and cultures that constitutes our common heritage. We celebrate our heritage in the Yukon. It's used to respond to the pressures that we've heard earlier. It allows us to promote and share our rich resources. Our traditional cultures and teachings state that what we own and what we earn as indigenous peoples, we never keep that to ourselves. We pass it on for knowledge and we share because it makes us a richer place. Our society becomes richer for it.

As I stated earlier and I'll restate again, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report stated that reconciliation is not an aboriginal problem — it is a Canadian one. Virtually all aspects of Canadian society may need to be reconsidered. The question raised by many is: What is reconciliation? What does it mean? I would ask the Official Opposition party: What does reconciliation mean? What does recognition of Aboriginal Day and enacting Bill No. 2, *National Aboriginal Day Act*, as an act to recognize and appreciate reconciliation, and mutual respect for our diverse cultures mean?

Justice Murray Sinclair, the chair of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission said, during the release of the TRC Summary, "Starting now we all have an opportunity to show leadership, courage and conviction in helping heal the wounds of the past as we make a path forward for a more just, more fair and more loving country." Among the 94 calls to action, one that stands out is a call to create a new national statutory holiday, the national day for truth and reconciliation — Aboriginal Day.

It's a symbolic move in the right direction. There are many calls through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but that's the beginning — that's the one that stands out for me, for all of us. It recognizes us as distinct and unique and that we are a contributor to our society. Aboriginal Day is about celebrating cultures and indigenous peoples. It's about learning and educating Canadians. It's about sharing our history based on reconciliation and a path forward. The 2001 discussion about the Northwest Territories — they saw value. They implemented the laws of practice to recognize the rich culture and history.

Less than a year ago Canada adopted the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* — a little slow, but it's there. It's there to support our process. We want to do the same here in the Yukon.

This new holiday will allow people to participate and engage with communities as they celebrate who they are, from Southern Tutchone to Northern Tutchone to Tlingit to Vuntut Gwitchin. We all celebrate our very rich and diverse culture, and we share it with the world.

This provides all Yukoners with the opportunity to continue to learn about our 14 Yukon First Nations and the eight distinct spoken languages across our territory. The recognition and acknowledgement brings new hope in the spirit of reconciliation in the territory. We should be proud of taking this step and the step of enacting a law that will make this a reality for all of Yukon — for all of Yukon indigenous peoples.

To quote from former national chief Shawn Atleo: "As First Nations move toward a better quality of life for our people, where our communities are strong and healthy and our governments are supported and our economies are strong, we do so with an important balance — living and learning according to the wisdom of our ancestors while gaining the knowledge and support we need to fulfill our dreams."

On Aboriginal Day, we celebrate the traditions and teachings of our ancestors to look to our youth to carry forward the message. First Nation young people are the fastest growing population in our country. We know that to be true also in the Yukon. They must be supported in their efforts to motivate change for future generations. Their journey forward and beyond reconciliation will be long. It won't be easy, but it is necessary. It may be uncomfortable, but it's necessary. This new holiday will be change and change is sometimes very difficult, as we heard, and sometimes uncomfortable. For us to grow and learn together, we must welcome the vulnerabilities and discomforts. We need to come together and promote something new and different that enhances and enriches our Yukon.

Here in the Yukon, I am very proud to say and share that our territory has public and private sectors, including First Nation governments, that have worked in partnerships and collaborations to offer cultural events to celebrate First Nation peoples' day. We have been doing that since we signed our self-government agreements in every community. The question is: What is this going to cost First Nations? My response — and their response, I may venture to say — is that

it's not of concern to the First Nations. It's about what do we do? How do we share? How does this enrich other people, other cultures and our society?

The Adäka Cultural Festival started with the support of the Commissioner of the Yukon in the 2000s, and that was to celebrate Aboriginal Day. We held it in Rotary Peace Park to commemorate our rich culture. It started back then. The federal government, the regional government and every First Nation participated in that process with the Commissioner of the day, I might add.

Events like the Adäka Festival currently still happen in support of sharing our rich cultures with partnerships of First Nations and the Tourism sector. This contributes to the richness and vibrancy of our territory. Our team here — the Liberal team — is happy to follow through on our commitment to introduce the statutory holiday — another step toward forging a better relationship with Yukon First Nations based on respect and recognition. As a Gwich'in person, I am proud to stand here today to speak about the importance of National Aboriginal Day, the honour of our elders and our ancestors. We are a strong and resilient people and our contributions are significant to this territory. Our grandchildren and the children of tomorrow will honour us for that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleagues of the Legislative Assembly to help me in welcoming to the gallery one of my most loyal and hard-working volunteers: my son Liam.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that we are conducting our business this afternoon on the traditional territory of the Ta'an Kwäch'än and Kwanlin Dün First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to be here in this House today to speak about this historic and overdue act to make National Aboriginal Day a general holiday in Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, as borne of a dark history at odds with our perceptions of our national identity — a history of residential schools, and lost status as we heard today and of the suppression of languages and cultures, the suppression of peoples. National Aboriginal Day celebrates the diversity and strength of Yukon's aboriginal peoples and also of those across Canada. The cultures and traditions of our first people are woven into the social fabric of our community, our territory and our country. Their contribution to the development of Canada cannot be overstated. What we're doing today and in the days to come is about reconciliation. There were 94 calls to action, and this is one of them. The Leader of the Third Party —

Speaker: Order. The Member for Kluane.

The Minister of Highways and Public Works, if you could continue please.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member of the Third Party — the Leader of the Third Party, rather — spoke with passion and almost a sage-like knowledge of the truth and reconciliation document. My colleagues — many in the House here — have lived it. They said the cultures and traditions of our first people are woven into the social fabric of our community, our territory, and our country and their contributions to the development of Canada cannot be overstated.

Taking all this into account, and also our commitment to re-engaging First Nations in government-to-government relations, it is essential that we celebrate this day, that we actually recognize it and make it a statutory holiday. It is an essential step toward reconciliation — a small step, the first one.

Shortly after being sworn in as minister, I joined my colleagues, the Justice minister and the Member for Porter Creek Centre in a blanket ceremony at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre. It was a very moving ceremony, Mr. Speaker — very moving — and I am richer for it. There at the centre, we abandoned our names, our titles, our professions, our identities. It was an anonymous ceremony. Together there, we listened to a succinct and compelling history of indigenous people in Canada. We listened as First Nation people spoke about what it was like to grow up in Canada, in the territory. It often wasn't easy to listen to. We learned about oppressive rules — spoken about this afternoon — shocking practices that had a tremendous impact on families and individuals in this territory — shameful rules, shameful practices. In recent history, this happened — often surprisingly recent.

But there were also moments of compassion and sharing and hospitality that infused the ceremony. Working together as strangers, we traded food and goods, learned about subsistence life and about traditional territories. We also learned how those territories were whittled away over the life of this country to reservations and small slivers of land. Afterward, we talked candidly among ourselves while sitting in a circle, sharing our thoughts and perspectives, talking and sharing together.

It was, as I said, a moving ceremony and brought to mind other ceremonies. Decades ago in Watson Lake, I was invited to participate in a sweat lodge. I was a young man at the time — from the suburbs in Ontario. Years ago, that cloudy afternoon in Watson Lake was something remarkable in my life — a first and, despite 30 years of memories competing in my aged mind, I can clearly remember that ceremony today. Again, I am richer for it.

In our caucus, we have had smudging ceremonies. Such a ceremony — again, a first for me — promoted sharing, candor and discussion. It bound us closer together as colleagues and moved us toward true friendship. I am richer for it.

During our swearing in, we had the Dakhká Khwáan Dancers perform. As my colleague and Minister of Tourism and Culture noted, it was the first time the drums had echoed

off the walls of the Legislature — the main building — the first time, Mr. Speaker. I found that remarkable at the time. What was remarkable was the fact that it had not been done before. I still find that remarkable today, and I also find it sad — a loss. Our predecessors for some reason denied themselves the pleasure of that thunderous music, that vibration, that culture. The visitors I brought to that ceremony — my family — had never seen anything like it. They were moved to tears by the performance. We agreed again that we were all richer for having seen it.

My point is that we are surrounded by a vibrant culture. This government is committed to righting more than a decade of neglect. This government will live up to the spirit and intent of the land claims agreements that we have signed. This government will live up to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This government fulfills its promises. This government was elected to bring a new statutory holiday — National Aboriginal Day — into existence, and we are going to do it.

I am immensely proud of my colleague, the Community Services minister, for his hard work drafting this legislation. However, I would also like to take a moment to recognize the hard work that the Third Party and the former Official Opposition put into making this new holiday a reality. The former MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, Kevin Barr, worked tirelessly, consulting communities, business organizations and other levels of government. I would like to thank him very much.

I would also like to thank the Leader of the Third Party for her courageous and considered remarks on the subject this afternoon. Her understanding, passion and authenticity on this issue were truly inspiring to me. She was ferocious and true to her beliefs and to her colleagues, to the debates in this House. For that, she is to be commended for her efforts making this holiday — should it pass — a reality. This is a great thing.

It is a great moment for Yukoners, Mr. Speaker, for all Yukoners — a great opportunity. This is a chance to better understand our neighbours, our friends and to strike new ones. My colleague from Mayo-Tatchun spoke very eloquently about this. This is the chance to knit ourselves a little closer together. Some members of the Official Opposition seem reluctant to embrace this new opportunity, this holiday. They question the work that has been done by former MLA Kevin Barr, by the Leader of the Third Party. They ignore the evidence, Mr. Speaker.

Here is what members of the Yukon Party are ignoring: Community Services and the Yukon Bureau of Statistics consulted 1,400 Yukoners — 1,400 Yukoners, Mr. Speaker; that's a huge number — and 83 percent supported a statutory holiday — 83 percent. Only 13 percent opposed such a thing. Three percent were neutral on it.

Then they raised questions about the cost. Of course, there will be some costs. Some things are easy to put on a ledger to account for — accounts. Other things are not so easy to account for. These are the intangibles we have in society — the righting of wrongs, the opportunities that change opens in society. I answer: What is the cost of not implementing this

statutory holiday? What is the cost of refusing to take one of these important steps in the reconciliation process? There is simply no way to put a dollar figure on such an important act. I must also say that it's very fitting that we celebrate National Aboriginal Day on the longest day of the year. It's an important day for Yukon's first people. This holiday celebrates our history and those of our first people. It dates back thousands of years. We will launch it during the 150th anniversary of our nation and the 75th anniversary of the Alaska Highway. Those are all important anniversaries, Mr. Speaker — shared anniversaries — things that had great good and had great costs associated with them as well.

I started this on sort of an upbeat, but today we are discussing a matter that our descendants will enjoy — a legacy. We are creating a new statutory holiday in this House — something that hasn't been done in many, many years — in a good cause, to celebrate an important history. It will foster healing and reconciliation. It will bind our society together. It will strengthen it, Mr. Speaker. I have no doubt that it too will make us all richer.

Thank you.

Mr. Adel: I know the time grows short but we'll go on with this. We are on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. I always like to start off with that because it does show the respect that they deserve. My esteemed colleague has pointed out the where and whys of how this came to be, and I'm going to take a different tack.

Looking back on my personal experiences, I have had some dealings with not being included or accepted within a community. My family history is one of persecution in Europe during two great wars, before and beyond. What I learned was from the stories — and it's the stories that are important here — that my grandfather's family told me. These stories enabled me to understand the why of this non-acceptance and to create a narrative to present to my peers to help them understand the culture that I came from and to foster an acceptance and a respect in the community so I could move forward.

For me, this is why National Aboriginal Day, as a national holiday, as a holiday in the Yukon, is so important to us, to our indigenous people, to the rest of Yukoners. It provides a showcase for our First Nations and a venue for Yukon's first people to tell their stories to the benefit of all.

This is a quote from a constituent of mine, Mathieya Alatini, who is also a former chief of the Kluane First Nation: "Accepting National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday within the Yukon is another step toward reconciliation by recognizing the contributions the indigenous people of Canada make to the Yukon and Canada as a whole. Yukon's first peoples are leading the way in so many initiatives, and a holiday such as this will allow the opportunity for Yukoners to take the time to learn about and celebrate the 14 Yukon First Nations. These nations are made up of eight unique linguistic groups, and 11 of them are signatories to the benchmark of modern treaties for Canada. The majority of modern treaties within Canada are held here

in the Yukon. This is an achievement to celebrate and, of course, implement. I applaud this Liberal government in continuing the initiatives started by the former Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes MLA, Kevin Barr."

My two youngest sons were born and are being raised as Yukoners, and this holiday will create another opportunity for them to understand First Nation culture and how it forms so much of the narrative that is Yukon. This venue can help them shape themselves into being leaders for tomorrow when they continue to make First Nation relationships a priority for their governments, to continue to forge strong relationships with First Nation governments that build on partnerships based on respect and cooperation. Celebrate the diversity and strength of our first peoples.

Let's come together on June 21 to hear the stories, because the stories are important, to celebrate a vibrant culture, to foster understanding for all Yukoners of our rich aboriginal history. Thank you. Mahsi'cho.

Speaker: We are very close to 5:30 p.m. so I'll call order at this time.

The time being 5:28 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on second reading of Bill No. 2 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.