



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

---

Number 9

2<sup>nd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

---

## HANSARD

Thursday, May 4, 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
<b>Hon. Sandy Silver</b>	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
<b>Hon. Ranj Pillai</b>	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
<b>Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee</b>	Riverdale South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice
<b>Hon. John Streicker</b>	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
<b>Hon. Pauline Frost</b>	Vuntut Gwitchin	Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
<b>Hon. Richard Mostyn</b>	Whitehorse West	Minister of Highways and Public Works; the Public Service Commission
<b>Hon. Jeanie Dendys</b>	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

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Floyd McCormick
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Doris McLean
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Thursday, May 4, 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 the International Day of the Midwife

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today — I think, along with all colleagues in this Legislature — to pay tribute to midwives in Canada, around the world, and in the Yukon.

Tomorrow, May 5, is the International Day of the Midwife. Every year since 1991, on May 5, the International Confederation of Midwives asks the world to focus on the role of midwives and midwifery throughout the world. The 31<sup>st</sup> international congress of midwifery will be held in Toronto this year from June 18 to 22. Their theme is an anthem for midwifery and the role they play — midwives, mothers and families — partners for life.

This theme ties in well with our commitment to collaborative and people-centred care that promotes long-term well-being and quality of life for Yukoners. We believe that a healthy pregnancy is the foundation for a healthy birth. Investments at this critical time of development result in exponential gains in the health of newborns.

Mr. Speaker, people expect and want to share and shape their health care, especially when it comes to pregnancy and the birth of a child. Registered midwives are primary health care professionals in Canada and internationally and have been shown to be safe and effective in managing low-risk births.

In a moment we will welcome Angus.

They provide care from early pregnancy through to at least six weeks postpartum to women and their infants.

While midwives are responsible for the majority of births in other countries, midwifery is a regulated profession. As a regulated profession, it is relatively new here in Canada, where there are some 1,200 practising midwives in the country, including three here in Yukon.

These trained practitioners are responsible for approximately 10 percent of all Canadian births. In 2016, a midwifery working group was created and led by the Department of Health and Social Services to examine the practice of midwifery in Yukon. This group includes the Community Midwifery Association of Yukon along with the Women's Directorate, Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon Registered Nurses Association, Yukon Medical Association,

Council of Yukon First Nations and my own department, the Department of Community Services.

Regulating midwives in Yukon is a key goal for Community Services. As specified in my mandate letter, I will — and I quote: “Work with the Minister of Health and Social Services to regulate and fund midwifery to provide safe and more affordable childbirth options in communities.” I'm pleased to say we are currently working to develop a regulatory framework for midwifery. I have met several times with the midwives' association and attended their AGM, and I note that the young fellow who is here visiting us in the gallery today is older than I have been Minister of Community Services. It's a humbling thing to meet with the folks.

Yukon government will engage and partner with midwives as well as physicians who deliver maternity services to develop mutually beneficial working relationships. We value input from midwives and other medical professionals, and we will also rely on information that we have already obtained from the Community Midwifery Association of Yukon as well as research gathered by the departments of Community Services and Health and Social Services. Professional Licensing and Regulatory Affairs branch, which regulates a variety of professions including health care professionals, will examine options for developing a regulatory framework for midwives that is inclusive, safe, progressive, and fits Yukon's small-scale and unique needs.

Regulating midwifery in Yukon is one aspect of developing and implementing an inter-professional model for maternity care services. Including midwifery in Yukon's health care system will offer additional options for Yukon families.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to just pull out a quote from our throne speech that was given here just a couple of weeks ago: “Your government believes in making investments in newborn health. Midwifery can and should be a safe, supported childbirth option in Yukon.”

Working with midwives, doctors and other medical professionals, the government anticipates licensing the practice of midwifery later next year. The birth of a child is a major milestone in any family. Integrating sustainable and safe midwifery services will provide Yukon families with the ability to include midwifery, if they wish, when preparing for this great event.

I would like us all to welcome three of the executive of the Community Midwifery Association of Yukon: Erika Oppen, who is the vice-president; Christina Kaiser, who is the treasurer; and Ms. Kathleen Cranfield and partner, who is the president.

*Applause*

**Ms. McLeod:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to May 5 as the International Day of the Midwife, which highlights the work of midwives around the world.

I am happy to acknowledge this day and the chance to celebrate midwives in Yukon and raise awareness to their role in family health care in our territory. Midwives are health

professionals in the field of primary care for women and their babies throughout pregnancy, throughout birth and into the postpartum period. They provide a holistic approach to primary care and emotional support for families, as well as offer support in family planning and, in some cases, menopausal care.

Here in Canada, we're fortunate to have options from pregnancy to postpartum care. We can seek the services of medical doctors and choose to give birth in a hospital setting. Alternatively, we can ask for the help, guidance and expertise of midwives and embrace the choice of a birth free from medical interventions. We can choose to use the services of all, and they are readily available to us. Across the world, however, women do not have the choice.

Internationally, the practice of midwifery is an essential part of health care for women and newborns. In some cases, there may be no hospital and no access to medical care. It's here that midwifery is essential. It's estimated that over 350,000 women and over two million infants around the world die each year as a result of preventable complications in pregnancy and childbirth. By increasing commitments worldwide to midwifery education and employment, these numbers could be greatly reduced.

In Yukon, the practice of midwifery is not just about having the option of an alternative form of care. For many, it's about substantially improving the experience before, during and after childbirth. The Yukon government is in the process of regulating the practice of midwifery in our territory, which will place Yukon in line with other jurisdictions in Canada.

Efforts have arisen throughout the years and we have seen more of our community members lobby for increased resources, education and recognition of the unique professional role of midwives. Private midwives, as those in Yukon, are not territorially recognized and, as such, are unable to carry out the duties of regulated midwives across Canada. They cannot order diagnostic tests or labs and, along with not being able to participate in the full scope of service, there are limited educational, financial and professional supports and resources.

We thank the new government for continuing to work toward this goal of regulation and to allow Yukon to take its place among other provinces and territories that recognize and regulate this important part of our health care system. We would like to recognize the many contributions of our local midwives and encourage you all to continue your efforts in improving maternal and neonatal care.

Your services are welcomed by many and appreciated by all.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to pay tribute to International Day of the Midwife. Across Canada and around the world, professionally trained and registered midwives are well-educated health care professionals who are fully integrated into the public health care system. They care for women during their pregnancy, labour, birth and the

postpartum period, including care of the newborn during the first six weeks after birth.

In some jurisdictions, they care for families for up to a year. Imagine what that level of support could do for families in Yukon.

Registered midwives work to empower families by offering informed decision-making throughout their care, as well as recognizing that pregnancy and birth are a life-changing event for any family. Registered midwives offer continuity of care within small-group practices, choice of birthplace and a focus on the woman as the primary decision-maker in her maternity care. When women or their newborns experience complications, midwives will work in consultation with appropriate specialists. In a nutshell, midwives are experts in a healthy pregnancy and birth.

We thank the good work and long hours put in by the Community Midwives Association of Yukon. Your ongoing events, celebrations and community presence have made the topic of midwifery an everyday occurrence in Yukon. Your dedication and perseverance have got us to where we are today. Tomorrow, I believe you're hosting an event at Baked Café — Birth Stories at 7:00 p.m. If you want to know about how birthing affects women in Yukon, here is an opportunity — tomorrow at Baked at 7:00 p.m.

We acknowledge the commitment made by the Yukon government to have regulations in place to allow for licensing in midwifery in 2018. We look forward to that day when midwifery in Yukon will be available to all Yukon mothers.

A big thank you, Mr. Speaker, to the midwives across this country and in the Yukon who are working to offer choices to women and their families to bring healthy babies into this world.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of the Tantalus ridge run**

**Mr. Hutton:** Mr. Speaker, it's an honour for me to rise in this House today to pay tribute on behalf of all members of this House to the students, staff, volunteers and organizers who will converge on the Village of Carmacks tomorrow for the 40<sup>th</sup> annual Tantalus ridge run. This tradition held on the first Friday of May since 1977 has changed much over the years. It has grown and it has always brought people together.

Originally organized by Tantalus teacher, Bob McCauley, the event started out as a simple run along the north Klondike Highway. Eventually, it became a trail run along the ridge of beautiful Carmacks. As of Tuesday afternoon, well over 500 students from over a dozen schools had registered. This will officially be the largest ridge run ever and Tantalus School has been buzzing with activity. Race distances vary from three to five kilometres, to shorter distances for younger runners. Age categories range from six years to over 40. Every staff member and student at the Tantalus School is involved with the ridge run. This event requires all hands on deck.

I would like to recognize the hard work of principal Morgan Douglas-Alexander and teacher, Mitch Bruce, who have organized the run for the past five years. I would also like to give a special mention to teachers Patsy Cashin and

Ruth Buyck, who organized this event for many years before that. In addition, Ruth and Patsy have been responsible for organizing the Tantalus running club for K to 12 students, twice per week for over a decade.

I would also like to thank the RCMP and many community members who volunteer their day to ensure the safety of all runners out on the trails. You are wonderful role models for the students from near and far who will enjoy both the run and the post-run barbecue tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, it's people like Patsy, Ruth, Morgan and Mitch who, through their efforts, change an ordinary community in a beautiful setting into an extraordinary place that shows northern hospitality is alive and well. I wish the runners a happy, safe and sunny day.

Thank you and mahsi' cho to everyone involved.

*Applause*

### In recognition of Faro Crane and Sheep Viewing Festival

**Mr. Hassard:** It's truly an honour to rise today on behalf of all members of the Assembly to pay tribute to the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Faro Crane and Sheep Viewing Festival, which takes place this weekend, May 5 to 7, in Faro.

For those of you who have made the trek to Carmacks to the Tantalus Ridge run, it is just another hour-and-45 minutes down the road to Faro — good little segue there, thanks.

The Town of Faro is located in the beautiful riding of Pelly-Nisutlin and is commonly referred to as Yukon's best-kept secret. Faro just happens to be in the prime geographic location to view the phenomenal display of more than 150,000 sandhill cranes migrating from their wintering grounds around the State of Texas to their summer breeding grounds across the north from Yukon to Siberia.

At the same time as the cranes fly north over the Faro area, visitors and residents can also view Fannin sheep from the Mount Mye Sheep Centre as they cross from their winter to summer range as well. It is not unusual to see up to 100 sheep at any given time, and I would encourage anyone looking for a road trip destination this weekend to head up to Faro to take in the sights and sounds. I will not try to demonstrate what the sound of the crane or the sheep sound like here in the Legislature today.

Staff at the Mount Mye Sheep Centre will be on hand to offer information to visitors on the sandhill crane and the Fannin sheep, as well as a number of other species that viewers might be lucky enough to spot this weekend. The centre includes a cabin and viewing platform and is complete with detailed signs and information on the migratory patterns of the Fannin sheep.

For the adventurous, there are guided walks offered to the mineral lick alongside the Blind Creek Road and Van Gorder Falls, and I encourage all members of this House and the public who have not had the chance to make the journey to Faro to take in the crane and sheep festival to do so.

Not only will you be welcomed with spectacular sights and sounds, but the warm and wonderful people of Faro are

happy to host people from around the world to join them in this unique celebration.

Just as an added note to entice you a little more, they have cupcakes that I will be delivering — not made by me, but made by my neighbour — and they are absolutely worth the trip. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Introduction of visitors.

### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I would ask everybody in the Legislative Assembly to help me in welcoming former Premier of Yukon Pat Duncan.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I have for tabling the Yukon Utilities Board annual reports for 2014-15 and 2015-16, which are tabled pursuant to section 19 of the *Public Utilities Act*.

I also have for tabling the Yukon Workers' Advocate office report, which is tabled pursuant to section 109(7) of the *Workers' Compensation Act*.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support the continued growth of the Yukon agriculture sector by working with farmers, market gardeners, and agricultural organizations to increase production of local food and agriculture products with actions including:

(1) working with farmers, market gardeners and industry associations to implement the local food strategy;

(2) reviewing the *Vision for Yukon Agriculture 2006: Yukon Agriculture Policy* and Yukon's agricultural multi-year development plan to ensure they reflect the current needs of farmers, market gardeners and the Yukon public;

(3) supporting the development of agriculture infrastructure that improves food security, facilitates access to market and encourages local food production;

(4) making agricultural land available to Yukon farmers through planned development, a directed spot land application process and spot land applications;

(5) seeking partnerships with First Nations interested in creating opportunities for farming settlement land through options available under the new *Land Titles Act, 2015*;

(6) supporting development of local markets for Yukon agriculture products, including providing the Fireweed Community Market with a renewed multi-year funding agreement;

(7) exploring opportunities to improve the ability of farmers and gardeners to sell and market their products;

(8) working with farmers, market gardeners, processors, and industry associations to maximize the effectiveness of the Growing Forward 2 funding program;

(9) consulting with farmers, market gardeners, processors, and industry associations on the details of the agriculture funding agreement that will replace the Growing Forward 2 agreement;

(10) supporting the development of community greenhouses and community gardens;

(11) reviewing the operation, structure and fees for the mobile abattoir to maximize its effectiveness and ensure it does not unfairly compete with small businesses offering similar services;

(12) exploring the feasibility and effectiveness and of developing an agriculture production tax credit aimed at increasing the production of locally grown food and other agriculture products; and

(13) ensuring fuel for farming purposes, including irrigation, working in fields and electricity production for off-grid farms is exempt from a carbon tax.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works, the Minister of Community Services and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to convene a meeting immediately with the Kluane First Nation, Kluane Lake Athletic Association, local businesses and local residents to discuss and move forward on the critical maintenance required to the Destruction Bay marina, which is the main access point for Kluane Lake.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to meet the commitment of the previous government to the early opening of campgrounds and to ensure access roads and campsites are graded and well-maintained prior to opening the gates.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to immediately initiate a review of Yukon's minimum wage in the Legislature prior to BC's minimum wage increase scheduled for September 2017.

**Speaker:** Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Watson Lake alcohol and drug services

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On January 6, I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services for information regarding what services are available in Watson Lake for people dealing with drug and alcohol abuse issues.

On January 12, the response I received back was simply a list of departmental employees in the community. On February 21, I requested a meeting with the Minister of Health and Social Services, and it wasn't until March 27 that I finally got to meet with the minister.

At the meeting, I raised my original request, dating back to January 6, and I have not received a response to that request yet. I also raised the fact that the department website directs members of the community dealing with drug and alcohol abuse to call Whitehorse, and how this is a problem for those seeking help.

As it is May 4 and I still have not received the information I originally requested on January 6, will the minister today share with us what services are available in Watson Lake so I can share them?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Thank you for the question. I will commit today to provide a detailed list of the services provided in Watson Lake to the member opposite.

**Ms. McLeod:** Of course we know that drug and alcohol abuse is a major issue in our communities and, sadly, we have all lost too many members of our communities to these issues. Residents of all communities require access to resources and supports in their home community. As I stated earlier, I have been asking for a list of services available to my constituents. The website directs people from the communities to call Whitehorse if they are in trouble and need help. This is either in the morning or in the evening — 24/7 you call Whitehorse. This is a real problem and I hope the government addresses it.

Will the minister commit to providing better access to drug and alcohol abuse services to our communities? Will she also commit to having her website fixed so that members of Watson Lake and all communities know who they can contact in their own communities if they are in urgent need of help?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to say at this time that yesterday, in response to the mental wellness process and the 11 new positions that were created for mental wellness and the strategies for meeting the needs of Yukoners, we responded appropriately to the requests and the pressures from Watson Lake. As I understand it, we have two positions currently in the community. We fund and provide supports for the women's shelter in Watson Lake. We have responded in a timely fashion to the pressures received from Watson Lake.

I stated in the first response that I will get a list for distribution, if required, to the member opposite of all the programs currently provided to the community of Watson Lake.

**Ms. McLeod:** I appreciate the response, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to take the minister at her word that she will provide that information in a timely fashion. I'm a little

concerned about what that timeliness will be, so I will ask the minister if she can commit to a time frame to: (1) have the information provided; (2) have the website updated; and (3) improve supports to drug and alcohol abuse in all Yukon communities.

While I appreciate the addition of employees, that doesn't guarantee to any resident that services will respond to their needs.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the programs and services provided to the community of Watson Lake, historically that was the responsibility of the previous government. I would hope that the timely fashion in which the services were delivered and provided to the community would have been conducive to the needs at that time. At this point, we are working and we will work with the community of Watson Lake. In fact, the Health and Social Services team, along with Yukon Housing Corporation, are prepared to meet with the community of Watson Lake. We are going to commit to doing that.

With regard to the website, we will most certainly have a look at that and update and modernize it if that is necessary. The department will respond to the question posed. As I indicated, I will get the list. I am not at this point committing to a time frame, but I will get it to you as quickly as I can.

#### **Question re: Roads to resources**

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, the previous Yukon Party government had been working with the Government of Canada, First Nations and industry on what was called the Yukon Resource Gateway project. This is a multi-million dollar project designed to improve upon existing road infrastructure and build new roads to support resource development opportunities in the mineral-rich Dawson Range as well as the Nahanni Range. When the election was called, discussions were underway with affected First Nations to come up with the project agreements. Can the minister please update the House on where the process is now and if Canada is still willing to provide support for this project?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First of all, this government is completely committed to making sure that we have the appropriate infrastructure in place for the mining sector. Certainly, the key areas to that are: (1) making sure we have energy infrastructure so that we look toward making sure that there is proper transmission in place — a big priority; (2) making sure that we have the proper roads to access these resources; and (3) making sure that we have the proper capacity. We have talked a little bit in the Legislative Assembly about the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining and building a local workforce. Those three things and the regulatory regime are things that I am sure we will talk about as well.

As for roads to resources, that is something we are absolutely committed to and we have been continuing conversations with Canada on that very important topic.

**Mr. Hassard:** The member also mentioned power which leads to my next question. The previous Yukon Party government was also in discussions with Canada to partner on

improvements to the Stewart-Keno transmission line. This project has broad support from the mining industry and mining companies in the area as well as the First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun. It was felt that this would be a great fit under Canada's proposed green infrastructure fund. Can you tell us today: Is the government still working on this important project for central Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** One of the great things about having First Nation leaders travel with us during Yukon Days was having everybody at the table together. Certainly, all of these major projects were key conversations that would happen — whether it was with Minister Sohi or other government officials, these were all key items. We know where we are going from a commodities standpoint. We know where we are going from interest in particular jurisdictions.

Leading off from the work that was previously done by the member across, there was a \$4.1-million engineering study — a good engineering study — that was in place. There were some funds I think the previous government had available to them. They might have not hit the priority on the historic Keno line. This is a priority for us. You have nailed it. I think the green fund, a \$2 billion northern fund — what northern means could be anything just outside of Winnipeg to here, I'm not sure. We're trying to define that, but I think it's a place we can go. This is what is known as a true green energy play.

The member opposite has nailed it. We need to have those continued discussions to make sure we can access funds to secure that line.

**Mr. Hassard:** Further along those lines, I would like to know if the minister — I'm sure he is well aware that there was a study conducted by the previous government on the feasibility of connecting Yukon to Skagway via a new electrical transmission line. This would be beneficial for both jurisdictions, as we could sell them much-needed energy in the summer to support cruise ships, and we could potentially buy energy from them in the winter, particularly if their West Creek hydro project was developed.

This would also make a number of projects along the line a lot more attractive. Can the minister tell us if the government is still looking at options around connecting our electrical grid to that of Skagway?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We're looking at all options at this point. Part of my concern is if we have enough energy. Some things are happening quite quickly. We have the extension at Minto and we have Alexco moving very quickly toward wanting to get back into production. I think things are looking good for Victoria Gold, so we have all those items.

Then we had a little scare this year in December, which we took into consideration, where we had some challenges with Aishihik and what that would do to us.

You are absolutely correct. There is an opportunity in Skagway. When you look at something like the potential Moon Lake project, there are still some early discussions on that. You could actually bring that online, which would be good. I am looking at all avenues at this point, but no big decisions have been made about looking at going to Skagway. I need to focus at this point, when I'm talking about

transmission, on Stewart-Keno. I need to make sure we're ready for what's going to happen in the Mayo area.

**Question re: Seniors housing**

**Ms. White:** For many years, the Vimy Heritage Housing Society board and volunteers have worked diligently to plan and build a seniors supported independent living facility, a glaring gap in current housing options for seniors. This organization is made up of individuals and groups, including the Legion, the Elks, ElderActive and Yukon Council on Aging. They have completed surveys among seniors and have done a needs analysis. They have a strong business plan and have completed a space analysis report. At every turn, this board has found support from more than enough individuals to fill 150 units, never mind the proposed 75.

Mr. Speaker, this group is asking the government to support them by making land available and providing a bridging loan that would be repaid and would allow them to apply for a mortgage. Does this government plan on supporting the Vimy Heritage Housing Society in a meaningful way to complete this project?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to thank the member opposite for the question. Right now, what I can say is that we are looking at all options. Our mandate, vision, and direction we're taking with the aging-in-place model is to look at the broad needs of Yukoners. How do we capture and address the needs of rural Yukon?

We are looking and we do acknowledge the work of the Vimy Heritage Housing Society. They presented us with an independent model, a model that addresses and meets the needs of a certain demographic group. That is being taken under advisement.

We have pressures from elsewhere as well, and we are taking that under advisement and looking at all the options that are available to us.

**Ms. White:** It's important to note that this is not a social housing project. This is private market housing. The Vimy Heritage Housing Society has recognized a growing gap in the range of care for seniors. Currently, seniors and elders no longer able or wanting to live on their own, perhaps in a home that is too large, have limited options beyond government care facilities. There is no in-between.

Vimy proposes to build a facility that will provide one- and two-bedroom units, as well as a common dining room, providing two healthy meals a day, some light housekeeping and social activities. With appropriate home care support, this would allow seniors to age at home and reduce the need for more costly government services. The Vimy group has completed a financial analysis of the monies that governments would save by supporting this project and, most importantly, individuals would be supported to age in place.

Has money been set aside in the 2017-18 budget to assist Vimy Heritage Housing Society in moving their project forward?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I can confirm that at this point in time, we have no money set aside for the Vimy Heritage project.

We are looking at all of the options. As I indicated, we are looking at a rural approach. We are looking for an aging-in-place model that meets the needs of Yukoners.

We know that, to date, the Vimy Heritage project has received \$74,000 early on from the Community Development Fund for a project management strategy and the government has contributed another \$50,000 to the building plan. At this point in time, all of that is being taken under advisement. We have the housing action plan that the previous government initiated in conjunction and collaboration with all Yukoners and the input from that was that we are now looking at a Housing First model. In terms of rural Yukon and looking at the needs of vulnerable populations, we really have to balance our budget appropriately. The question right now is: Do we put our resources into a project that addresses a high-end need or do we look at trying to balance a budget that provides for the vulnerable population and homelessness in our community? Really, I think we are trying to take into perspective what it is coming at me as a minister and doing it in a way that has input from everyone.

**Speaker:** Order, please.

**Ms. White:** With previous Liberal support, it's disappointing to hear that there is no meaningful support offered in this year's budget for this project. It's important to note that they're asking for a loan — something to be repaid. This is not a social housing project. Residents living in this building and receiving those services, such as meals and light housekeeping, will be paying their own way through rent. This project will be self-sustaining, covering staffing, maintenance and mortgage payments. All the society needs from the government is temporary help with up-front costs. This non-profit group has done their due diligence. They have a quality proposal that fills an important gap in housing options for seniors.

When is the government planning to provide a real commitment to get this project moving forward?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. I have been to many of the AGMs over the year of the Vimy project, as have other members from across the way. I know that the previous government did put some money toward feasibility studies to take a look into this particular project on Fifth Avenue and Rogers Street. I want to reiterate what my minister has said.

We have to take a whole-of-government approach on this and a whole-of-Yukon approach as far as priorities. This is a fantastic project — the member opposite is correct — as far as options for seniors who don't want to go into social housing or actually have the money to afford it.

This project is good on another basis as well. Imagine all of the homes that would be freed up if these individuals go into this project.

We have sat down and we have spoken with Ranjit and others. He was even at the chamber lunch the other morning. Of course, when he stood up, we knew exactly what question he was going to ask of the government. We are making sure that we do an evidence-based approach to housing as a whole. We know the benefits of Vimy as a particular project. We're



looking forward to future conversations with that agency and moving forward on this housing project.

**Question re: Energy retrofits**

**Ms. White:** In the last election, this government promised to invest \$30 million annually in energy retrofits. Energy retrofits create jobs, reduce our energy consumption and save money for us in the long run. It's a win-win-win situation. That's why we were disappointed to see this government break that promise in their first budget. In fact, the budget announced only \$200,000 in new money specifically for energy retrofits. Now it seems that the government's approach is to say that the promised sums are allocated throughout different departments.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell this House what this year's energy retrofit budget is? Can he confirm whether or not this represents new money or simply existing programs?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, you're absolutely correct. This is outlined in my mandate letter as part of my work plan for this year.

We did an analysis of what has been committed through the previous work of the government across the way. I think it was about \$23 million that was in place for projects that would carry on. There's the \$200,000 that we're looking at for this year.

We feel good about where things can go with the federal government — whether that's something that we look at — it's not in our mains right now. Certainly, I think, we can understand why. We're in a situation where we have a tremendous amount of pressure. We are showing a potential surplus but, at the same time, we are trying to figure out within the envelope the money we have. That is something I know you're going to keep my feet to fire on, and certainly it's a wait. But I think we can get there.

My colleague, the Minister of Community Services, continues to have conversations with the federal government. I think the approach that the federal government is taking on allocating money toward these initiatives shows that there should be some good funds in place, based on, sort of, their philosophy and where they are rolling out their funds.

The same as the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin said — there are some of these green funds that seem to be available and that would be a good place to leverage these dollars.

**Ms. White:** When this government promised \$30 million for energy retrofits to Yukoners, I doubt many people expected existing programs or regularly planned government building upgrades and maintenance to make up the core of it.

The truth of the matter is that with energy retrofits, nothing has changed for Yukoners. Existing loan programs are good, but I'm sure the minister knows that not everyone is able to borrow \$40,000 or \$50,000 to reinsulate their homes. There is limited government incentive to install solar panels or other renewable energy systems for one's home, and a \$600 credit on a \$25,000 heating system doesn't exactly make it affordable for people to get off of fossil fuel when it comes to home heating.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm if any of the existing programs for energy efficiency or renewable energy have been expanded through this year's budget?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'll try to answer several parts of the question that came from the member opposite.

First of all, the commitment that we made in our platform and that is now in the mandate letters is about new money. We're not talking about the existing money. It's a significant increase in the money.

We recognized that, as we announced during the campaign, it would have to build over time. It wasn't going to happen from day one. We stated that very clearly.

We need to build across all of our communities. It's not meant to be just Whitehorse-based; it would be across the Yukon. That includes building the dollars, investment, capacity, training, et cetera.

One of the other questions posed by the member was about — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I apologize, but I've just lost my train of thought.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate the effort. Yukoners want to do their part to support energy efficiency and renewable energy in the territory. Projects are popping up all over the Yukon. First Nation governments, community centres and also individuals are making major investments to wean themselves off of fossil fuels.

There is no doubt that these investments will pay off in the long run. They are environmentally and economically sound. Yet many people don't have the resources up front to make these investments that would benefit them and the government in the long run. Selling surplus energy from solar panels to the grid is great, but it won't help those who can't afford the money up front to install them in the first place. Will this government commit to using part of the \$30 million promised for energy retrofits to increase support with up-front costs for Yukoners who want to invest in renewable energy or energy efficiency for their homes?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I want to go back and I'll just try to help out my friend behind me here on one item. Yes, the \$1.6-million residential energy incentive program, which the previous government put in place — contractors love it, developers love it. It tends to work. We're going to stay committed to that.

It has been oversubscribed to previously and we're going to keep that good program in place. There is a lot that was put there and I know I don't have a lot of time to hit on it.

Yes, multiple communities are looking at projects. How do we support them? I think it's a combination between federal money and territorial money. As the \$30-million envelope, once in place or close to that — that new money — should we divert that over to the capital expenditures of new energy projects? I'm not sure. I think that is part of what we're thinking through our new innovative fund at Yukon Development Corporation. One year to do the governance piece — you will see in the budget as we roll it out \$5 million — I think that's the right place to get the dollars, but I think that the federal government will also have existing programs over and above the northern program. That might be a place to

go, but I'll take that under advisement. Should we be looking at that package as a place to move money? Potentially. I don't think that it has always been the practice to use those funds in that way, but we are seriously looking at all those communities — Old Crow, Burwash. We have interest from Watson Lake on geothermal and Carcross on wind.

**Question re: Agriculture funding**

**Mr. Cathers:** I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources about the agriculture sector of the Yukon economy. As the minister knows, the Growing Forward 2 funding agreement with the federal government is coming near to the end of its life and it's expected to be replaced with a new agreement that I believe is to be signed later this year.

Can the minister please tell us the status of negotiations between the Yukon government and the federal government about the new agriculture funding agreement, including whether the federal government has fully shared its plan and negotiating position with the provinces and territories and, if so, what the details of the federal government's proposal look like?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** A little bit of background and context for those who are not aware — my friend across the way represents a tremendous amount of the agricultural sector and knows this file from his previous role, but the Canada-Yukon Growing Forward 2 agreement, which is in place right now and which is what we're leveraging funds from, is a commitment to Yukon's agricultural sector by federal and territorial governments to build the productivity, profitability and competitiveness of the agriculture industry.

Growing Forward 2 emphasizes investments — as will the 3, as he is alluding to — into innovation, market-based profitability, adaptability, and long-term sustainable growth. Those align with the Government of Yukon's commitment to move forward a greater degree of food self-sufficiency.

Just on the timing of this, the Government of Yukon is working toward securing a successor agreement to Growing Forward 2, which will cover the years 2018 to 2023. I look forward to meeting with my provincial counterparts and my territorial colleagues. The signing of this is going to be done in July. I think the date is July 20. It will take place in St. John's, Newfoundland.

As for specifics, I'm not at the negotiation table. Probably as you had done, I'm supporting the officials in the department to work through it, but there are even some conversations happening next week as well.

**Mr. Cathers:** I thank the minister for that answer, and I understand that he doesn't have all the information in front of him but I would ask if he can provide more specifics at a later date. That would be appreciated by me as well as by my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, last time during the negotiations, one of the things that the Yukon pushed for and successfully negotiated with the federal government was a change to the agreement that allowed us to use federal funding for infrastructure, which is not something that provinces typically can do.

I would just ask at this time whether the minister could tell us if the Yukon government has consulted with Yukon industry associations and agricultural industry associations — the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee — individual farmers, market gardeners, processors and retailers to discuss Yukon's priorities and whether changes are needed compared to what they were in the past. If those consultations haven't occurred, does the government plan to hold them and when?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I don't think I will have the ability to tell you about every one of those interactions, but certainly I think the key people we need to talk to are — first, we have the Yukon Agricultural Association. I will be attending their AGM on Friday night. The initial conversations with them were fantastic from some people in your riding. When you look at Steve MacKenzie-Grieve, who is a real commercial farmer — I am getting some really good guidance from him. If you look at agriculture production — first and foremost, the big priority for me was making sure that I could help them with the commercial growth of that. They requested from me — and maybe we will pre-empt this. I wanted to talk them tomorrow, but to answer your question, they said: "We need somebody specifically in the Department of Economic Development to help us with this. We have some cross-border opportunities." I think the officials at Economic Development have identified an individual who is going to specifically work on agriculture. That individual is going on to do their MBA later in the fall, so there will be a little bit of capacity building, but we are absolutely focused on that. I know what you are getting at when you talk about infrastructure building. I think that is a great point.

We have an opportunity here, but we have to get behind some specific farmers who are really growing quickly. That is really about food security. Not to take away from some of the smaller operations, but some of the people in your riding have the experience to do it — generational farmers. Any time you would like to share some comments with me and some wisdom, I am open to that.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do appreciate the response from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and his willingness to work together on continuing to grow the Yukon agricultural sector. Like the minister, I will be attending the AGM of the YAA. As the minister knows, both the Yukon agriculture policy and the agriculture multi-year development plan are also due to be renewed and updated. Could the minister please tell us whether consultations with Yukon farmers and industry groups about the new Growing Forward agreement will include talking about the agricultural policy renewal and the multi-year development plan? If not, are those discussions scheduled separately and when might my constituents expect those consultations and discussions to occur?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First of all, right now at this particular time, I don't have dates in front of me about the consultation piece. What has happened is that a series of members — essentially the Yukon Agricultural Association Board of Directors have asked me to go out to their properties and have some discussions. I think that is the key thing. Growing up in and around the farm industry, I think that is where you are

going to have the best discussions to really understand what the needs are. As for how we align that with the strategic plan forward, I know that we are just in the midst of — there are a couple of spots on the advisory board. The Yukon Agricultural Association and the Growers of Organic Food have put some names forward. I have accepted all of those recommendations. They are great, long-time Yukon farmers. I think once we have that group in a fulsome way, we will be having some discussions there. Certainly, there is some quick work in conversations that will continue just on that infrastructure piece. I think there are some existing policies that have been in place. I know that you probably had some challenges with this — the previous government — where we are looking at infrastructure that needs to be built, but some of the existing regulations and policy is not really conducive to farming, so almost overdoing it than what you're looking for with infrastructure.

That is a tremendous amount of costs that I don't want to see put onto farmers.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### **Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act, 2017-18* — Second Reading — *adjourned debate***

**Clerk:** Second reading, Bill No. 201, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, Ms. White.

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful for the opportunity to address the budget.

We left off on Tuesday when I was talking about the importance of the Child Development Centre and how it's critical that a program like that runs for 12 months of the year as opposed to along the school calendar.

One thing that I really notice absent in the budget is any conversation about the disabled community. The more people I get to meet and the more lives I get welcomed into, the more I realize the challenges around how having a disability in the Yukon can really be a limiting factor in so many different ways.

Previously, using the end of the northern housing trust money, there was an accessibility grant that you could access through Yukon Housing Corporation and it was up to \$25,000. That was grant money, not loan money. That was when you made an application on how you want to change your house or what you need to make your life easier. Well, I had the good fortune of going through that application process with a friend of mine to get a wheelchair ramp built. For him and his family that was life-changing. His mobility was deteriorating and stairs were no longer safe.

We got the grant money, but it was done in such a way that he had to front the \$12,500 first to get to the 50 percent before the first payout and then had to cover it to get to the

last payout, so what it meant is that for any family accessing that money, it was really limiting. I talked about it in previous budget debates and I bring it up again because, although it was problematic and it was hard and a lot of the time it was based on my relationships with people in the community to be able to access and be able to hold and carry that money forward, that money doesn't exist in this budget any more. The accessibility grant money is gone and for the families who were able to access the \$400,000 in \$25,000 increments, it was life-changing because that wasn't money that they borrowed; that was money that they were given to make those changes.

So the wheelchair ramp that my friend has is spectacular and that brings me to the next point. His mobility has continued to deteriorate and now he has been told he can't walk, so now he has been given a prescription for a motorized scooter. Now I don't know if anyone in this Assembly has had the opportunity of trying to find medical equipment, but it is daunting, so when I was told that he needed a scooter, I thought, oh, my gosh, I don't even know where to start. Where do you even look?

I called the Council on Aging and I started to call around and I was really fortunate that I have — there are great people working at the Yukon Association for Community Living, and they host the Rick Hansen fund, but the Rick Hansen fund actually ran out. You had to make applications prior to last September.

When I contacted them, they said that their clients were really thrifty and they accessed money, but they gave money back, so if they got \$3,500 for a motorized scooter and it was only \$3,000, they returned the extra \$500 so there was money left over.

With their help, I was able to access \$1,200 but, even on sale, the scooter was still \$3,700. I had additional money to find. I'm lucky that my friend is a member of a First Nation. The first time he contacted them, he was told to contact the mining companies. I thought that if I have to go to a mining company with a letter in my hand — because he doesn't have the mobility to do it — I will go. He will sign the letter, but it will be me who physically takes the letter to the mining company, asking for help for a motorized scooter. That's kind of hard, and I have to put on a different hat. I go in and I'm not Kate White, Member of the Legislative Assembly or elected Member for Takhini-Kopper King. I'm going as the human.

I was lucky that the First Nation was able to cover the balance of the cost, but when people come to me for equipment, they're not necessarily guaranteed to be First Nation members, nor does their First Nation necessarily have the ability to pay the balance, nor will the Rick Hansen fund and the money there exist. So how do we, as the Yukon government, make sure that people who have disabilities still live full and complete lives? Medical equipment — my friend couldn't use a hand-powered wheelchair. He couldn't. If it was the only thing he was left with, he would be dependent on the people around him, and that's not okay.

For the first time in about a decade, my friend is now more independent than he has ever been. He has this scooter; it's pretty exciting seeing him use his ramp, which I didn't think we were going to see so soon. It has been incredible. There are many other community members who require this kind of equipment and we might not be able to find the pots of money to be able to do that.

You are going to have all sorts of different people with disabilities. You're going to have people who are incredibly active and, if their equipment is limiting their ability to participate in society, then we have to look at the cost to the health care system that is going to have to pick them up when they're really down. If anyone in this House is like me, I can tell you that adrenaline is how I function. It's how I deal with this job, it's how I get through the days — it's knowing that I'm going to go for a bike ride at the end or knowing that I'm going to get outside.

Within the disability community, specialized equipment is very expensive. If you don't have the means, how do you go about doing that? How do you fix that?

Recently, and definitely with some support from members of this House, I decided the world was crazy — I just had a birthday and I wanted to help a family get a wheelchair-accessible van. That's something else we don't cover. I get that. There are federal grant applications that you can make to help with making a vehicle accessible, but a quote from a company in Ontario for an entirely wheelchair-accessible van was \$45,000. That's a lot of money.

With help from the community, we're getting really close to helping that family get the van. That's really exciting, but is it up to the community to throw a fundraiser every second Saturday when another family comes forward to say, "Without this, we can't survive?" I don't know what the answer is. I know that, within the budget and the budget speech, we don't talk about the disability community. We don't talk about the continuance of housing. We don't talk about options, and we don't talk about choice.

For me, that is a concern. I'm just putting that out there, because I have learned a lot of things — having a seniors complex and understanding the importance of being able to use your bathroom independently. For the first two years, I talked about bathrooms all the time. I never thought I was going, but we got big changes, so congratulations to the Yukon Housing Corporation, which made those renovations. We shouldn't be putting people into units with bathtubs that are higher than my knee, but that's what we were building. We should be looking at building units in which you can age in place.

Removing those factors, I've learned that it makes way more sense to have the buttons on the front of a stove, because if you go from being able to walk to having to use a wheelchair — if they're on the front of the stove, you can reach them, but if they're behind the stove, you can't. Refrigerators — how those are set up.

It's great, because now the Yukon government is accessing the disability community with those conversations about how we build better buildings and how we make sure

they are accessible for longer. So that has been an improvement, but that is still an issue because we're still putting people in inadequate spots.

We can talk about access to housing. I'm sure you've been contacted now and things have changed. Sometimes I see some of our regular visitors visiting the office next door, and I think this is great because you're going to start to understand what we were dealing with.

One of the things I do most is I become a translator for government programs. How do you access housing? Well, you go through a seven-page application form where it asks you everything — where you have to get copies of your income tax, you have to get copies of your banking information, and you need to get all of these things. If it's not complete when you go for your appointment, you have to come back at a later date. They don't accept it. They don't take what you have right there and you don't bring back the additional information; you come again with the entire thing.

In my experience, it has taken an entire business day, with support from me and the individuals specifically as they're trying to go through the process, to get that information together. That's hoping that I haven't missed anything, because sometimes the mistake is mine and it's awful to know that I'm going to send that family back in for the second time.

We have all sorts of things happening. We have a record number of seniors on the wait-list for social housing. I have people right now living in parking lots and that is hard, because what can I say? I can say, "Okay, your pension cheque is going to come in at the end of the month, and maybe if we can find you something, then you can rent it because you'll have the deposit and you're on the list for housing. But you're not at the top of the list because you get \$32,000 a year so you're not in the greatest need. It doesn't matter that you're living in a parking lot; you are not in the greatest need." I have had to learn to say that this is the best that I can do. Sometimes when you have to say that, it is painful. It is painful. If I had a bigger house, if I had more room, I tell you — as it stands right now, sometimes it's a lot more full than my roommates would appreciate, but I'm always trying to figure out how to make that process better and how to help out with that.

We've talked about Housing First and I'm so glad to even hear the term "Housing First". I spent three years talking about Housing First. I spent years asking if housing was viewed as a human right because that fundamentally decides how you move forward and how you look at housing. If you don't believe that housing is a human right and you believe that somehow you're responsible for where you're at, then there's no way to address it. During the 2016 election when, in the Liberal platform, they talked about Housing First, I thought, "Hot dog, we've arrived". Someone other than us was talking about it. That's critical.

I'm so appreciative that it's included, but it can't be Housing First in four years. With recent events in the community, we can't say that it's okay to wait. We have the City of Whitehorse, we have Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an

Kwäch'än, and they're working really hard for vulnerable people. But they don't have our resources. They don't have our abilities to actually put money forward to help fix the problem.

So we have the old St. Elias group home site. I have a friend who lives in the new St. Elias group home and it's beautiful. Maybe it isn't where it was originally going to go, but it's fantastic. It's a facility that's designed for those residents to age in place, which is amazing because a lot of them had been together for 10 years already and they will continue to live there. They live in a family. It may be government-run, but that is a family.

We have the old St. Elias site and the government owns it. We know that the building is in poor shape. We know that it can't be used. We know that it was a temporary shelter that had very few vacancies over this winter.

My question is: What happens to that site next? When do we make that decision? If that is going to be where we put Housing First and if that's where government is going to say that this is how we're going to address vulnerable people in our society — we are going to give them a safe roof over their head and we are going to build in the services to help them overcome or not overcome, but let them live safely — then why can't it be in that site? When do we make that choice? Because if we say, "Well, you know, in 2020, that's when we're going to open those doors," I'm going to tell you that more deaths will happen, more families will feel loss, more communities will mourn, and that's not okay. If you give someone an option of going to someplace safe or you tell them, "Well right now, I'm sorry, you're going to have to figure it out," then we are putting people in vulnerable situations.

In 2011, I got elected out of Corrections and I worked in the women's facility. I said that the one thing I saw over and over again there is that when women got to the point where they were being released, their anxiety spiked because, although the men could go to the adult resource centre, women went back to where they came from. Although they may have been sober for three months, six months, nine months, a year or 18 months, when they came to their release date, do you know what happened? We said, "Good luck." Just prior to that, they would start reaching out — they would start contacting old friends. They would start trying to figure out where they were going to go because we had no programs in place to ease them back into society in the new way. I got to meet them, I got to hear stories and I got to hear how challenging it was. I asked over and over and over again, "Can we do something? Can we build something?"

We had the facility that I was in that's now Takhini Haven group home. It's a group home on the footprint of a correctional facility, and if you ask the residents where they live, they'll tell you they live at jail — but they don't. It's a building, a group home that I would love to see moved within the community — if they could be in a house and neighbourhood. It does not matter that some of those clients are on the Yukon Review Board, because being on the Yukon Review Board does not make you a criminal. It means that the

government is responsible for your health and well-being and we owe it to those residents to make them feel like part of a community.

But to be honest, at the bottom of College Drive, it doesn't feel very much like a community. It's in my riding — I see it all the time. I know where it is. I worked in the building for two years. I'm pretty familiar with the site.

When we talk about social inclusion and we talk about the importance of a society for everyone, the testament comes down for the most vulnerable, and how do we address the concerns of the most vulnerable?

We talk about access to sport. For three years after the Carmacks ice rink closed, we asked, "Are you going to put \$500,000 toward repairing that roof?" The community of Carmacks deserves recreation in winter. They deserve an ice rink and they made do. They built a rink across the river on the First Nation's land. They did all these things, but there is a facility there that, with a bit of repair, will be usable again. When we look at recreation, we need to look outside of the City of Whitehorse. It's not to say that I don't think we should have recreation within the city limits, but every community is entitled to those recreation opportunities. There is a little, tiny skate park in Haines Junction, in Kluane, and it's fantastic. It's really small, and if I used a skateboard instead of a bicycle, it would probably entertain me for much longer. But there are opportunities for us to build pump tracks for bicycles or small skate parks that are small financial investments, but huge investments in recreation for those communities.

The Singletrack to Success — I rode the trails before the program existed, and I have seen that growth but, more than that, I have seen these kids grow up through it. I've seen someone who started quite young, and now he is a supervisor and they're looking at expanding to Dawson City. This is a phenomenal thing and it gives pride of ownership, but it also encourages recreation.

Those kinds of things are important and we have to look outside the City of Whitehorse. It's also important to note that, although we were elected to represent our ridings — because we all were — we also work for the entire territory. I'm not just the elected Member for Takhini-Kopper King. I'm an elected member of the Yukon Legislative Assembly and my job is to deal with anyone who contacts me. I want us to look outside, because it's not just about Whitehorse.

I recently had an opportunity to have a conversation with a contractor. I learned a lot of things. We had a conversation here earlier. I told you it was really important that we have mediation or arbitration available in the procurement process; that we needed to be able to sit down around a table and hash out details or problems that were wrong before we said we were done with the contract process. He taught me something really cool. He called it the golden triangle. He said you have this triangle, and it's cost, time and quality. He said you can speed up or take away any of those things, but the other two will suffer. I am going to put this out there right now with the continuing care facility. I'm going to tell you right now that I assure you that I will never ride you about the timeline. If it takes longer to build than has been committed, but that means

the cost will stay down and the quality of the project will last, that is what I want. I don't want it to open knowing that this is a building that won't last for 25 years. I want to know that this is a facility that, when it opens, it will stand the test of time and will do what it needs to do.

When you stretch that triangle and you switch those angles around in a triangle, something will be lost, and it cannot be the quality of that project. It absolutely cannot be the quality of that project, because you inherited it. You inherited that decision, whether you wanted it or not. I want to make sure that I do my best to support you in making that the best facility possible.

Remember the triangle: cost, time and quality. As soon as you adjust the schedule on one of those, the quality will be what is affected. I want to make sure the quality is what we are guaranteed at the end. Please, don't rush through projects. If you come into the Legislative Assembly and you say, look, it was cold this winter, the ground froze, things were crazy, and we didn't want to pour concrete when it was minus 30 — that is valid. What is not valid is pushing it forward at all costs and sacrificing the quality to try to keep up with that timeline. Please remember that triangle.

The Skookum Jim youth shelter was a conversation, if you can imagine, where it took almost 2.5 years for that to happen from when I was elected. Prior to that, youth used to go to ADS. They would have to change their clothes, they would have to leave all their possessions behind, and then they would be taken upstairs in the ADS building.

As you might imagine — I'm sure it's not hard to imagine — there wasn't a lot of uptake there, because it didn't feel like a safe place. Youth did everything they could to not go to that facility.

We supported the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre in opening the youth shelter, and that's amazing. It is busy there, but there's a problem with it. It's not with that facility, per se, but it's a problem with our continuum, which is that you need to be 17 years old to stay there. If you need emergency shelter as a young person, you need to be at least 17 years old. What happens if you're 12, or 13, or 14, or 15? What happens then?

Right now, that is happening in our community. What we are doing is forcing young people into couch surfing. We are forcing them into really precarious and unsafe situations because they are looking for a place to stay. How do we address the housing emergency for people under the age of 17? It happens — it's even happening within our group homes. We need to find out a way to answer that question. I don't know what the answer is, other than the fact that we need safe beds made available for people who are under 17 if they require it. That is really important.

There is the whole species at risk legislation. I talked a lot about species at risk legislation in the 33<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Assembly. I am hoping that when I bring it up in the 34<sup>th</sup>, it is not going to have to be quite so regularly. We signed on to an agreement that said that we would create species at risk legislation for the territory. We should. I would like to see it soon. Maybe in the fall — that would be great. We could have some good legislative debate about species at risk legislation,

but that has to happen. We made a commitment as Yukon. We haven't fulfilled it. We signed on to that agreement in 2009. I would like to see species at risk legislation.

We had changes here for the *Lands Act*. We made other changes so that we could protect sensitive environmental areas in the shoulder season from off-road vehicles. We made those changes. When I would pressure the previous government about when they were actually going to identify those spots even for interim protection, I was always told that we were going to have to wait. We are going to wait. We are going to have to wait. The problem is that with waiting, the damage continues to happen. It was great to hear at one point in time when the minister said, "Well, how do you identify these vehicles without registration?" I would love to have that conversation. If we looked at registering off-road vehicles in the Yukon instead of saying, "the red ATV with the guy in the yellow jacket", we could say, "licence plate number XYZ." That would go a long way to helping with enforcement and protection of sensitive areas. I look forward to that conversation and doing my part in helping with that.

We need to protect wild spaces, because the farther we push out, the farther the animals go and the worse it happens. In some situations, you can see the damage now on satellite images. You can see that what was once pristine is now covered in tracks. I mean, if it's okay with you, that's one thing, but it's not okay with me.

We are excited to hear about the positions for mental health workers in the territory, because having two people cover outside of Whitehorse is not acceptable. We heard today from the Member for Watson Lake where she talked about the challenges in her community for people in accessing alcohol and drug services. It is interesting because we had brought that forward before. In my previous trips to Watson Lake, I met people who had come in to ADS and went through the program and returned to their community. They were hitchhiking back in because they wanted to get to detox. Do we think that is acceptable? Is that okay with us? Are we okay with that? I don't know. Is there an answer? Am I saying that we need to build a facility in every community? I don't know — but can we make services available? Can we make transportation available? Can we somehow make that process for someone trying really hard to make changes in their life — can we make it easier? I would like to think so. What I learned when I was in Corrections is that if you release someone from the communities on a Friday, there was a distinct possibility that when you came back to work on Monday, they might be there.

You can't ask a family and you can't ask a community to make sure that someone is picked up if they don't have the capacity to do that. But it's our responsibility to make sure that someone gets back to their community — it is. It's the same thing with ADS, it's the same thing with medical travel, and it's the same thing with corrections. We have a responsibility to make sure that people get back to where they can be safe and we don't just let them out, because that's what we've done. That has been our previous decisions, with

Corrections, with the hospital and with ADS. Those things need to change.

There are some great things. There are great things that have been proposed across the way. National Aboriginal Day — I might have an opportunity to talk about that later today — that makes me really happy. The amount of people — when we talked about it last year and we circulated a petition and we had a placard for people to take pictures, they couldn't believe that it actually wasn't a statutory holiday — that we would celebrate Discovery Day and we would have Family Day and Rendezvous, but we did not have National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday. That was a hard one to explain.

With the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations, that's a beautiful way to start it. That's a beautiful way to say to everyone in the territory that I hope you have the opportunity to do this, and if you don't — I used to own a coffee shop; I used to own a small business and statutory holidays weren't bad for me. We were pretty busy and I paid more, but it didn't harm my business. People came and they probably came more because more people had the time off. Even when we talked about it and even when small businesses responded, they said that they understood the importance of National Aboriginal Day and they would figure it out. That's beautiful.

When the changes came forward to the *Vital Statistics Act* and the *Human Rights Act* to make sure that every person in our territory was afforded the same rights as the others — as everyone round them — that was amazing. The one thing that I have heard from the LGBTQ community is that they were concerned that we were the last jurisdiction in Canada to do it and they wondered why they had to fight so hard. That's great. It's great to know that they will be afforded the same rights as their friends and their families. That's great.

One way we can move forward at addressing that is starting to look at new construction. We can start looking at building public buildings in a different way. Bathrooms don't need to be gendered. You don't need a men's washroom and women's washroom. You need doors. You can have a big room with 15 doors and communal sinks and I can tell you, it works. Every time I go down south and I see one of these bathrooms and I think, oh man, my friend wouldn't stress out here — could use whatever bathroom they wanted without having to be like, "Is someone going to challenge me if I go into the one I feel safest in?" I know that for the trans community, bathrooms are actually pretty stressful. They're pretty stressful. I didn't know this, but I have since learned that often a social outing is based totally on how long you can be away from home, because using a bathroom can be really stressful — picking the spot where you're going to feel safest is going to be really stressful.

How do we get rid of it? We get rid of gender. You need a toilet, you need a sink. We can share sinks. I would be happy to share sinks with all of you. It has to change. We have to look at it that way. We have to look at making sure our schools and our government buildings are inclusive. There is one gender-inclusive washroom up here, because it doesn't

have a man or a woman. It has a toilet and a wheelchair. But it's up here and it's a bit of a ways away and maybe you would feel vulnerable if that's where you had to go.

We need to look at doing things like that better and we need to make sure that we're protecting the people around us. I have it pretty easy and most of you in this room have it pretty easy, but it's not about us; it's about making sure that the most vulnerable people in our population also have it easy.

This is what happens, Mr. Speaker, when you have your notes all over the counter and you haven't really put them into an order.

We know we got to hear the Minister of Community Services today talk about how families were important and children were important. Well, an early childhood strategy and one that makes sense for families is going to be critically important. I use my little sister. She totally knows I talk about her in here so it's okay. But my little sister and her husband both work. My sister drives a bus now because — did you know the most family-friendly company in the entire territory is actually the bus company? My little sister takes her two preschool-aged children with her to work and they ride on the bus with their mother every day. She has made them little reflective vests and they go to work with their mother every day because her family can't afford daycare. Two full-time positions in daycare — it's unaffordable for them and they both have jobs. They work. I mean, they're not living large. If you were to meet my sister, her husband and their three kids, you would understand that they do a really good job living within their means, but daycare is unaffordable.

It's important that we don't even look at daycare as "daycare". Daycare is early childhood education, and every child should have the right to early childhood education because it's all about development and it's about growth. When we limit a person's ability to have their children participate, if they so choose, then we're limiting that ability for that child to grow. It's an important thing to look at because we also lose skilled people out of the workforce because they have had to make the choice to either work or stay home, and sometimes staying home is the easiest answer — although it might not be the easiest answer.

Having midwifery in the mandate letter — knowing that we're going to look at having that by the end of 2018 is fantastic. Previously when we asked questions about midwifery, a person from a community accessing a midwife coming into town would have to pay the medical travel because it was not viewed the same as visiting with a doctor. Families were paying out of pocket to come into Whitehorse to visit with their midwife, although they would have had to come into Whitehorse to visit with their doctor because babies are still not born in communities. How is that a thing? So knowing that we're going to have midwifery legislated in this Assembly for the end of 2018 is amazing. It's levelling the playing field. It's allowing people to make choices. We had great tributes today about midwifery. It's true. It's about choice. It's about decisions and it's about women being able to make the best choice for themselves. I'm looking forward to that.

I was happy to see the increase to the youth organizations because youth organizations have had stagnant money for quite awhile. It's good to see that's increasing, but there are challenges within those NGOs because they're trying really hard to fill the gaps of government. The only reason I know right now that there are kids under 17 who are homeless is because of people working the front lines of those NGOs. If it weren't for those front-line workers, we would never know what some of the realities are in Whitehorse and Yukon. That's a specific Whitehorse story, but that's super challenging. How do we change that?

It was great to see in yesterday's paper about the two transitional housing units in Ross River — for when those houses are getting refurbished.

But there was a promise in 2016 that the housing crisis in Ross River would be addressed, and two units at a time when 47 have been deemed uninhabitable — it is not enough.

Mr. Speaker, I thank everyone for this opportunity. I really look forward to budget debate. For all the new ministers, you have a decision to make — if you want to engage or not. I hope you choose to engage, because 20-minute responses to a 35-second question gets really old really fast.

If we have the ability to go back and forth and talk about things, you'll be so impressed by how far we can go, because the questions coming from this side of the House aren't about catching you up. They are about trying to make things better for people in Yukon.

I thank you for this opportunity, I thank you for all your statements, and I look forward to budget debate and in future years.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you to the honourable member for her comments. I think they were food for thought for all of us, and we will continue to learn from all of the former members and current members of this Legislative Assembly and we look forward to doing so.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and my colleagues for the opportunity to speak to the 2017-18 Yukon government budget presented last Thursday in this House by the Premier. I rise for the first time in this budget process to speak to it, and it is my honour and privilege to do so.

The Yukon Liberals said repeatedly during the election — and as the Yukon government, during all of our work to date, and in this House — that we intend to work collaboratively with all the members of the House to make lives better for Yukoners. Many of the comments I have heard recently and during previous days give me hope that we will actually be able to do that.

To that end, I thank the honourable members who have already had the opportunity to speak, and those who will speak, to this budget for their thoughtful comments and for their ideas. As my colleagues here know, I was brought to this House by the Riverdale South riding. It's an amazing and rather unique place to call home. It's an established, yet diverse, neighbourhood.

People who live there are like Yukoners from any other community. There are lots of children, single parents, multi-generational and smaller families; there are elders; there are new Canadians; old-time Yukoners and newcomers. Every one of them will be touched by something in this budget.

Part of my job during the budgeting process was to respect their interests and the interest of all Yukoners — I take the honourable member's point on that — and give voice to their concerns in determining how government needs to work for them, understanding what those concerns are and speaking about them at the table. On many occasions, there are sleeves rolled up, trying to figure out what we should be doing.

I have promised them and have been sent here to work hard on behalf of them and all Yukoners, and I stand here proud of that commitment.

I'm going to take a second to thank my family and friends for their endless support and understanding. As everyone who has done this job, even for a short period of time, knows, being a member of the government and of this House takes a toll on relationships. It is wrong, but the demands on your time mean that your family and friends regularly take a back seat and they don't have you in the everyday moments of their lives as much as they or you might like. This commitment is one that they make as well, when we decide to go down this road.

This first budget of this new Liberal government is groundbreaking. It represents a new direction for government of transparency and accountability, and I look forward to us discussing it and having real conversations about how these decisions came about and what they will mean for Yukoners. It illustrates fiscal responsibility and innovation and responsibility. It shows how we are to meet our commitments to make Yukoners' lives better. We've been clear in stating our enduring priorities or our guiding principles, and we've repeated them many a time.

Our government is working with all Yukoners to make their lives better. We're focused on creating jobs and strengthening a diversified economy and protecting our environment — all critical. We're working collaboratively, we hope, in this House and government-to-government to ensure that all communities in the Yukon continue to grow and thrive. I particularly appreciate the comments during this budget debate with respect to the communities and the representation of members of this House of their home communities or of other communities and their dedication to those. It's important for all of us to remember that, which is why it's an important piece for the Yukon Liberals to say and repeat that all communities matter. Communities in the Yukon, hopefully, under this budget — our cooperative approach focuses to ensure that all communities in the Yukon continue to grow and thrive as we move forward and make responsible investments in programs and services that lead to healthy, productive and happy lives for Yukoners

After 14 years of promises with shine but only some substance, we will do what we said we were going to do with real measurable results for Yukoners. As the Leader of the



Third Party so aptly said the other day during her address, actions speak louder than words. We agree.

Yukon is currently facing many challenges, but there are positive changes on the horizon that will be led by this budget and other initiatives. Making Yukoners' lives better means more than just encouraging capital projects, although this budget has plenty of that — as outlined by my colleagues, and I won't repeat them — but for happy, healthy lives, we need more.

I recently had a number of very meaningful experiences that brought that home to me again as I was thinking about addressing this House. I had the honour of attending the Yukon Special Olympics' banquet, where I was so inspired by the athletes, coaches, families and friends, as I am every year. It's one of my favourite events in the year. They show us how important encouragement in sport, competition and friendship is to our lives. The Special Olympics motto is one that we would all do well to remember — maybe not so important in here — but it is: "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

I was also recently at the Skills Canada competition and banquet, where I witnessed the young future of our workforce. Trades and technologies must be supported and encouraged. We must recognize that the growth of trades and technology means the growth of our economy. The experts who work in the trades and areas of technology make endless contributions to our everyday way of life.

At the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees — the AYSCBC, an acronym I might actually have now in my brain — we heard about the educational experiences, among other things, of four former students. They were all First Nation young adults — three from Vuntut Gwitchin and one from Carcross. They described their stories and experiences within the education system and the individuals who influenced them. We learned so much and can learn so much from knowing and understanding their learning journeys. It will help us to do better.

The Rotary Music Festival's showcase of music, dance and voice also reminds us of the importance of the continued development and support of arts and culture in the territory. Arts and culture enhance our lives as Yukoners. While the Rotary Club of Whitehorse has been a leader in supporting our amazing talent here in the territory by hosting the Rotary Music Festival for 49 years — I had to think about the ages of the kids who were in that first one and how old they would be now, and it scared me a little. The arts and culture in our community are important to our lives although it hasn't always been a priority for the Yukon government. We hope to make that change inherent — it has to be adopted and I know my colleagues believe that as well.

Our goal is a growing, prosperous economy as well as vibrant communities. All of these organizations that I have mentioned and the great honour I have had in attending these events — all of these organizations and programs contribute to a better, happier, richer way of life for all of us.

Yukoners are very hospitable people. They are always prepared to share their way of life. Newcomers can come to

the Yukon to follow their dreams, be they in mining, sports, conservation, arts, trades, professions, farming or as inventors — whatever they may be. Yukon is the land of opportunity and it has afforded many of us — even many of us here in this House who came chasing one of their dreams — a chance to grow, thrive and give back to our communities. I, myself, have had too many opportunities to count to work both in the justice and educational arenas and other parts of the community as a volunteer and for other things that I believe in. Now here I am with the ultimate opportunity to participate in shaping our priorities in those areas for Yukoners — of justice and education.

Our priorities in Justice initiatives include — and this is by no means an exhaustive list, but there are some things I want to point out today and in relation to the budget. I will work with the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and our community partners to improve services for victims of violence and sexual assault. We will also conduct a review of legislation, policies and practices to ensure non-discrimination for the LGBTQ-two-spirit communities. We will develop alternative correctional therapeutic environments for individuals with disabilities, mental health and addictions problems. There is — while maybe not indicated — new money in the budget. There are programs that we will support in the current departments to do this. We are working with Health and Social Services on these priorities at the Department of Justice.

We will engage with Yukon First Nations to develop culturally relevant programming for offenders. This was promised — I read it myself in Hansard — upon the opening of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre in 2012, but it is a goal that has not yet been adequately achieved. A small piece of that will be completing a consultation, and there is \$20,000 in this current budget for that consultation to be completed so we can move this project forward.

Part of my job is to improve access to legal services and protect the public's interest by preparing updates to the *Legal Profession Act* and regulations — another priority that has been on the books for more than 10 years — actually for 13 years. That will happen this fall. There is \$820,000 in this budget to implement the land titles modernization project and to complete it. It has been going on for a bit and is really an opportunity to modernize that project, which will affect all Yukoners and a lot of Yukon businesses and developers. It's an important piece of how our land is dealt with.

It's essential for me to note here that, for the first time ever, we anticipate that our Land Titles Office will issue a certificate of title for a Kwanlin Dün First Nation category A or category B settlement land as a result of a consent amendment to the *Kwanlin Dün First Nation Self-Government Agreement*. This will mean that land owned by the Kwanlin Dün First Nation can be registered, opening up opportunities for development. They are leaders with this partnership project, and we hope other First Nations may find this a useful option for some of their settlement land. This was done

without any expense to our government, the First Nation or Canada. It was built on positive relationships and goodwill.

There's \$11,000 in the budget for the continuation of the Lynx project, which is a project that supports children who come into contact with the court system, whether they are witnesses or victims. This project makes that experience better for children.

This budget contains \$489,000 to enhance programs and services for victims, including the expansion of training for victim services workers. We know that the response by the first person who a victim discloses to, particularly victims of sexualized violence, dramatically affects the trajectory of the situation and how the victim experiences the days, weeks and months to come, and ultimately how they recover. We must address this with a one-government approach so that, no matter where a victim turns, she or he will find comfort, empathy and meaningful assistance.

This budget also supports and provides additional funding for the Human Rights Commission of \$72,000, a one-time funding this year based on a request, and funding for Yukon legal aid of \$200,000.

Other investments include the Community Wellness Court and the Justice Wellness Centre, which was started as a pilot project in 2007 and has been running and funded as a pilot now for some 10 years. This program has been very successful, resulting in an almost 70-percent reduction in recidivism rates for offenders who have gone through this program to deal with what were very high rates of re-offending.

We all know that, in order to plan and continue to evolve and meet the needs of the community, secure funding is required. It is our government's intention to pursue that. This budget allocates an additional \$100,000 to the court this year, being the last year of the third pilot project. Permanent funding for this project is being pursued.

The honourable member spoke eloquently this afternoon of re-integration for people leaving the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, Alcohol and Drug Services or the hospital, both women and men, and we also believe this is a priority. It will be a focus for Justice in the coming months — how we can make that integration back to their community better for the individuals, for their families and for their communities and help them to be successful.

Moving to Education, the priorities that I will mention — again, not an exhaustive list — but some of them that are evident in the budget are as follows. One of the key priorities, which is coming quickly and is well underway, is implementing the new student-centred Yukon version of the revised BC school curriculum from kindergarten to grade 12. In 2017, kindergarten to grade 9 will be implemented. There is \$472,000 in this budget to make that happen.

We'll complete the planning and begin the construction for a new French first language high school. There is \$8 million dedicated to that project in this budget. As part of that initiative — and I want to stress this — we've promised to properly complete the F.H. Collins Secondary School, including remedying significant deficiencies that still exist,

and \$2.9 million has been put in this budget to complete that work for students and staff. For some reason, the grounds work at F.H. Collins campus was either not done at all or completed with serious problems. The completion of that work must be done as soon as possible and we have dedicated \$2 million to that end.

As well, \$474,000 will be spent to provide for annual intake into Yukon College's licensed practical nursing program — something that was considered by the former government and is a good idea. Other work at Yukon College's learning commons and electrical system on that campus is also being completed — again something started before we were here, but certainly worthy to be finished at this time.

In her remarks the other day, the Member for Porter Creek North posed some excellent questions, all of which I look forward to addressing as we proceed through the budget process in the House. Her questions were particularly — not all, but the ones that I'm keen to discuss with her are about education. I value her insights and look forward to working together for Yukon education.

Our government is focused on cultivating a one-government approach with a view to removing silos — removing silos in caucus, in Cabinet, between departments, between divisions inside departments, and between government staff. The process of developing this budget was done as a one-government approach to get a full picture of how funds are actually being spent. For example, youth programs are funded by several different departments, making it overly complicated for applicants and difficult for government to coordinate funding or even know what's being spent as a big picture. A one-government, coordinated approach will address these issues in this and in future budgets.

Our team is very proud to support the leadership of the Premier as our new Finance minister. His leadership and that of his department in the development of this budget has been illustrative of government operating as he believes it should — and as we all believe. He listened, included caucus in wider conversations to set priorities and painstakingly reviewed every decision with Cabinet in determining expenditures. His expectations were high of government staff, officials and of us all — as they should be. The process was wise and innovative with a commitment to gathering the best information possible for every decision and making them based on the evidence.

It's possible — and perhaps we will be criticized for something like the small business tax, reducing it at this time from three percent to two percent. But when we looked at the numbers, it became apparent that more information and further exploration of the effect of the reduction was needed. In particular, we needed to ask if eliminating the tax at this time would provide benefit to the Yukoners that it was intended for. We needed more information. We have promised to make evidence-based decisions and that too is a commitment — one that is over-arching to all other commitments, in my view, and one that must guide every other decision. I promised the people of Riverdale South —

and we all promised the people of the Yukon — to make the best decisions we can on their behalf with the best information we have at the time. If the information we have changes, we will review our decisions and update them as well.

Canada — and particularly the Yukon — is unique in the world. When other parts of the world are closing ranks and becoming less tolerant, we continue to evolve and progress with such innovations as: making National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday; new laws to support the LGBTQ-two-spirit community and to protect their rights; modernization of regulations for pharmacists and midwives; support of nurse practitioners; innovations in housing, home care, medical care, clean energy, communication infrastructure; access to information; reduced government red tape; access to training and education — all designed to make the lives of Yukoners better.

Before I end my remarks, I want to make one statement to address the statement from the Official Opposition that seemed to say that this government does not understand or appreciate the staff and officials of the public service. I was offended by that suggestion because us not having faith and respect for the public service is simply not true. Our relationship with the public service is characterized by openness, listening, learning and mutual respect. I hope the honourable member will restrict his future comments to topics on which he has some facts. His assumptions and insinuations were simply not true. We've been working with every public service staff and official, and our relationship has been really characterized by mutual respect.

Mr. Speaker, I'm truly honoured to work with the staff and the officials of the Department of Justice and the Department of Education and with the one-government approach to the other members of staff and officials whom I've had the honour of working with in the other departments.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this address today.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would like to begin by saying thank you for the opportunity to speak as the MLA for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. I'm very pleased to get a chance to speak to the budget today. I would just like to follow a little bit on the words of our House Leader to say that we have been working hard — as it should be. It has been a really great process to get to work with the department officials and with colleagues. I'm pleased that we're now here in the Legislature to start to discuss the budget and I am pleased with the budget itself.

I would like to state clearly that it's my impression — our impression — that when we took over the reins of government, we inherited some very significant fiscal challenges.

I would like to talk about red and black for a moment. I would like to discuss deficit and surplus, debt and savings. I would like to discuss our financial situation and when I say "our" financial situation, I don't mean the Yukon Liberal government, but rather I mean the financial situation of the territory.

Days after the November 2016 election, we had our very first briefing with the Department of Finance officials. Before we had been sworn in, before a Cabinet had been chosen and before the outgoing government had even vacated its office, we got our first look at the fiscal framework. It was deeply disconcerting. From that first day, we recognized that the projected surplus was already a deficit, so we rolled up our sleeves. We started to dig into the finances. We asked questions, and the more we pulled back the curtain, the more resolved we became. Not only were we in a deficit but, as we dug down into the departments, we started to identify many budget line items that had been one-time for many years. In simple terms, this meant that these line items were being paid for but not accounted for as expenditures in future years. This type of short-term budgeting risks turning a deficit into a structural deficit.

Then we came across large budget line items which had not been appropriately costed in future years. The 2016-17 budget indicated that we should be in surplus. Instead it was a deficit. We, as a government, got to work making hard decisions to control expenditures. In doing so, we turned last year's deficit into a slim surplus for 2017-18. We turned it from red to black.

At the same time, we told all departments to ensure that the cost estimates being used were accurate — neither overprojections nor underestimates. We asked for the best estimates based on the best data and the best understanding of the budget items. Based on that direction, we looked at the fiscal projection. It showed large deficits starting in 2018-19, so we decided to share these numbers with this Legislature, respectfully and with the citizens of the Yukon.

For a moment, let me use some actual expenditures to illustrate the situation. Here are some operation and maintenance costs that were not budgeted for previously: \$2.2 million for continuing care beds in the Thomson Centre and McDonald Lodge; \$3.5 million for new teachers who were hired last year before we took office; and \$4 million for an increase in pensions to the Yukon Hospital Corporation and Yukon College. This already comes to nearly \$10 million in costs, year-over-year, that weren't in the budget.

Now let's add in the Whistle Bend continuing care facility. We were briefed that the future budget projection for O&M was originally woefully underestimated by the previous government. The current estimate is \$36 million per year. Yesterday, department officials from the Department of Finance stated publicly that the previous government had not accounted for the true ongoing costs of the continuing care facility — and I quote: "It wasn't \$28 million annually, it was \$20 million over the four years. That's why we say that there was just a small fraction of the annual costs."

The operation and maintenance costs of this one project represent an unaccounted swing in the budget of over \$30 million. I have to say that when we uncovered this situation, I was astounded. Then add new budget pressures for Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, CanNor, local area network upgrades for our rural communities — which are all great by the way — and suddenly the jump in

operation and maintenance is well over \$40 million. That is year over year — all spending that pre-dates our arrival. If you add these costs and projections to the previous government's 2016-17 budget, which I have here, then it too would have been showing a significant deficit in future years.

For a moment, I would like to turn to capital spending projections. I realize that the back and forth from the government's side to the opposition side is never as transparent as we would like, but here it is in black and white. I have the government's Budget Address from 2016-17, and I am looking at the long-term plans. Under that, I look at capital expenditures where it says 2017-18 projected estimate, I see it listed as \$215 million. Whereas, this year we have projected that we will be spending \$243.5 million, or a difference of \$28.5 million. For 2018-19, the previous government had here in black and white a projection of spending of \$175 million. We projected that as \$220 million. The difference is \$45 million. From those years forward — from 2018-19 to 2019-20 — the difference again is \$45 million. In that comparison, what we are able to show is that the previous government, who has been criticizing us for not having enough capital expenditure in our budgets and for not moving fast enough or spending enough money on capital expenditures, they had budgeted for a lower capital budget in out-years. If you add these costs and projections to the previous government's 2016-17 budget, then it too would have been showing a significant deficit in future years.

Adding up those two — \$45 million in operation and maintenance costs, which are ongoing, and \$45 million in projected capital spending costs, which are sitting in black and white in front of us and which we can't dispute — then we end up with a \$90-million difference per year. That is the difference that we are talking about. This past Monday, the Member for Lake Laberge stated that we as a government had — and I quote: "... inherited the rosiest financial situation that any new government in the territory's history has ever had on taking office." I respectfully disagree. As we took office, the territory was already heading for future-year deficits and/or deep cuts in capital spending — both actually. We inherited a red-ink picture, and the only silver lining is that we identified the situation and are now working to turn it around here in the Legislature.

I understand that the opposition's perspective is that, as government, we need to take responsibility for these future-year deficits, and I agree with them. I disagree with what caused this deficit and where it is rooted; however, I agree that we were elected to govern the finances of the Yukon. I also agree with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, who stated that it is our job to move forward. It is our job to steer us away from a deficit. It is our responsibility.

We decided that the best course of action was: (1) work to bring this year's budget back into a modest surplus, which we did; (2) share an understanding of the full cost estimates in this Legislature and with the public, which we are doing right here and now; and (3) restructure the Department of Finance to better inform fiscal planning and create an independent

expert Financial Advisory Panel, which are the next steps. For me, this is responsible fiscal management.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I listen to the members of the Official Opposition, each one outlined their belief that we were spending too much money — far too much money. At the same time, each one also criticized us for not spending more. I heard requests for more spending in hospitals, Meditech, sports, expansion of cell service, brushing, road maintenance, land development, information centres, a marina and more infrastructure. The overall message I heard was: spend more, you are spending too much.

They have been pressing us to spend more money on infrastructure when they told us that they would spend approximately \$28.5 million less this year alone, based on their past budget. The Member for Watson Lake let us know yesterday that, when it came to her community, and I quote: "We have seen almost no investment for a number of years." Again I quote: "We have seen almost no investment for a number of years."

Let me again reassure her that we are investing in her community. We care about Watson Lake. For example, we have budgeted just under \$12 million for infrastructure in Watson Lake this year. We are investing \$10 million in Pelly-Nisutlin this year, and \$12 million for infrastructure in the communities of the Kluane riding this year.

As the Premier stated, all communities matter. Overall, this budget is investing \$310 million in capital projects this year across all our communities. All communities matter. This budget is our first step toward partnering with municipalities and First Nation governments. We are emphasizing local solutions to local problems.

I have been tasked with helping municipalities have predictable levels of funding, including structural fire protection. We put that into this budget and, next week, I will be sitting down with all municipalities at the Association of Yukon Communities annual general meeting to discuss the comprehensive municipality branch going forward. I look forward to seeing many from the Legislature there.

Through this budget, we are putting \$2.1 million toward solid waste and recycling diversion. We are committed to working with municipalities and all communities and our partners in waste diversion — the chambers, the processors, the haulers. In fact, I believe our solid-waste working group is meeting again this week. We will collaborate with our community partners to create a standardized system for the Yukon with shared responsibility, waste reduction, financial sustainability, environmental health, and economic benefit.

With respect to our budget contributions to sports, I would like to thank all members of Legislature for their strong support for sport, recreation and culture. The Yukon is stronger when our young people have hope and confidence. Sport and recreation is a way of investing in active and vibrant lifestyles.

Overall, I'm happy to report that sport funding is up this year. The operation and maintenance budget is increasing by 14 percent to \$5.9 million. As well, we have identified an additional \$220,000 for youth groups and an additional

\$60,000 for Singletrack to Success, which has been doing great work in the community of Carcross, plus we have earmarked \$2.5 million for the F.H. Collins track.

As part of that \$5.9 million, there is nearly \$1 million for games this year, including the Canada Summer Games and the North American Indigenous Games. This money will reach out to youth from across the territory, from all communities.

By the way, just in comments to the member opposite from Takhini-Kopper King, I have been sitting down with all communities to talk about their sport infrastructure needs. We have talked to Carmacks about their rink, we've talked to Dawson about their rec centre roof, and we've talked to Carcross about their skateboard park. When it comes to all infrastructure — noting the needs to have planning with infrastructure and when I have spoken previously about the clean water and waste-water fund — our strategy is to plan over time so that the money is well invested.

All communities matter. In Protective Services, we have \$650,000 for four new ambulances, \$1.5 million for four new fire trucks, \$120,000 to enhance emergency measures services for e-patient care, and \$150,000 for an additional wildland fire crew this year.

I have had questions from members opposite about where those ambulances are going. My understanding is that it's a formula based on the age of the ambulances, so I don't have the answer at this date. I will get it at some point and I will be happy to share it as soon as I hear it.

I have also been sitting down with First Nation development corporations to have conversations about some of those wildland fire crews. We invested in some training with them this year and we're looking forward to expanding the service with them. We think this is a great way to get more of our communities engaged around Protective Services.

We're also investing \$100,000 into a case management system for the Employment Standards and Residential Tenancies office. We're adding \$90,000 for our Professional Licensing and Regulatory Affairs office. Both of these are there to reduce red tape and to increase services to our citizens.

We have \$360,000 that we are putting toward asset management. This is to try to ensure that the \$310 million that we are investing into capital projects this year as an infrastructure investment will mean that this infrastructure will last over time. It is very important that we look at how we ensure that our investments in infrastructure last. We are working in partnership with municipalities and First Nation governments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with respect to the Yukon Liquor Corporation, we have been working to improve the efficiency and operations and are already seeing that this investment is starting to pay off. This year, we are working to support the growth of our local producers, reviewing our pricing policies and working on social responsibility.

With respect to the French Language Services Directorate, we are super excited to get a new agreement with the federal government to support our French language services. This is especially with respect to access to health

care. It's a tremendous investment and we are very excited about it. Over the next three years, we are building to triple the previous agreement. It won't happen this year, but it will build up to triple what it has been.

I want to read here a couple of quotes from AFY — the Association franco-yukonnaise. I quote: "AFY will continue to position itself as a privileged partner of the Yukon government with respect to French language services in the territory". That's from president of AFY, Angélique Bernard. I continue with the quote: "The last few years have been characterized by a number of positive developments; the future looks even more promising for the Yukon Francophone community".

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the work that was done by the past government under Ms. Elaine Taylor. I know that the French community speaks highly of her work and we are happy to build on that work. Thank you.

All communities matter. My own community of beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes is excited about our investments in home care, land-based healing, work on the Nares bridge, the \$1.5 million for innovation in renewables and the Carcross learning centre, and that we've doubled our regional economic development funds to \$800,000 and also that we are focusing on aging in place and working in all of our communities to support that.

I am very excited to have been part of working on this budget. I'm very excited that we are here today to present it to you and I look forward to us passing the budget.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate it.

I would like to take the time to recognize all of the hard work that has gone into the budget that is before us. I also want to thank the officials from the Department of Finance for their work on the budget.

This budget document offers a different way of doing things — two main differences from previous governments as far as delivering the budget. It accounts fully for known O&M commitments that are on the horizon — for example, taking into account the \$36 million that it will cost to run the Whistle Bend facility. The budget we are debating also includes the annual economic forecasts. We intend to issue this forecast every year. Previously, there was no real schedule to the release of the forecast. Sometimes it happened in the spring; sometimes it happened in the fall. I believe there was one year where it wasn't released at all.

Mr. Speaker, the budget is guided by our top-line commitments to Yukoners. 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 ensure that all communities in the Yukon continue to grow and to thrive. As we move forward, we are making responsible investments in programs and services that lead to healthy, productive and happy lives for all Yukoners.

Our collaborative, government-to-government approach has set a new positive tone and we are already making progress with our First Nation partners, with the federal government and with our provincial and territorial counterparts. We are holding the Yukon Forum on a regular basis. Our meetings with the Government of Canada and Yukon First Nation governments has set the stage for positive growth going forward. We have secured millions of dollars for mental health and home care and the new health accord. We have signed on to the *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change* and signed a trade deal that will see a reduction in trade barriers.

We have met with our federal counterparts, Prime Minister Trudeau, Finance Minister Morneau, Infrastructure Minister Sohi, Natural Resources Minister Carr, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Minister Bennett and others. We have seen the results of these meetings in the 2017 fall budget, which included significant investments for Yukoners. We will be maximizing our efforts to ensure that all of those federal dollars and opportunities find their way to the Yukon. While we have inherited some financial situations, we have a responsible plan for progress, which we shared in the throne speech and also in the budget. From the environment and the economy to the health and well-being of communities, our government is working every day to make the lives of Yukoners better.

I would like to address some of the issues that were brought up in the responses from the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, there was a question about the Government of Canada's carbon-pricing mechanism from members of the opposition. As I have noted, this is a Government of Canada initiative and, while we have information on how they intend to proceed, we will release that information on how we plan to rebate 100 percent of that funding to Yukon people and Yukon businesses. Again, this is a federal initiative, so it is not in our budget to answer that question.

There was a question about the Vimy housing project. The decision to support transitional housing for seniors had not been made by the previous government. We are looking at housing as a priority but, as we talked about today in the Legislative Assembly at Question Period, Rome wasn't built in a day. We are working on a housing strategy that affects all Yukoners.

It's a similar story on the fibre optic line. While little work was done by the previous government, there was a big announcement on the eve of the election, but, as we're finding, much of the leg work is not completed. We have recently applied to Canada for funding for this project and we remain committed to it.

The status of the Dawson City Airport project — much of the prep work not completed. I was at the Mineral Exploration Roundup a year or so ago when the previous premier announced that this was going to happen but, again, no homework was done. Our government remains committed to working toward solutions to that project.

There has been a fair amount of criticism from members opposite on future projected deficits. I will note for the record

that the Yukon Party government ran deficits in 2010 for \$25 million and in 2011 for \$6.6 million. I also note that a look back at the budget tabled last year by the Yukon Party provides an interesting perspective on how they planned to keep their books balanced. We have discussed several times that the main plan was to not include figures for O&M forecasts. They also planned on dramatically reducing capital spending. For example, in 2018-19, our plan is to spend \$220 million in net capital. The Yukon Party's plan was to spend — I believe it was only \$175 million. That alone is another \$45-million difference on the bottom line. In 2019-20 — the same approach — \$45 million less in capital under the Yukon Party compared to ours.

There were comments from the opposition about standing up for contractors. The plan that was signed last spring by the previous government tells a different story. There was a big reduction in capital that would have caused significant problems for our contracting community.

I want to note for the record that most of the Yukon Party members in the House refused to speak to the Speech from the Throne. Yesterday and the day before that — the first time this week and the first major speech for several of those members. There was one member who, in his first speech, really set a tone for how they want to participate in this session. He accused the government of deliberately overprojecting the spending pressures in years to come. He basically accused the government of cooking the books. This is a very troubling approach.

I would like to highlight today some projects that I am particularly proud of, and they include investments in aging infrastructure. We are protecting Yukon's infrastructure to ensure its value for generations and are allocating \$15.3 million for bridge rehabilitation projects, including the Nares River bridge, Nisutlin River bridge and Fox Creek bridge. There is \$30 million for infrastructure investments in communities across the Yukon. There is \$35.8 million for all Yukon highway restorations and rehabilitation projects. There is also \$6.5 million for restoration and the rehabilitation of Yukon airports and airstrips. The total budget is \$1.44 billion. The operation and maintenance budget is \$1.14 billion, and the capital budget is \$309 million.

The capital budget is in fact \$300-million higher for mains to mains compared to last year. There is \$1.5 million toward the innovative renewable energy initiative to support small First Nation and community-driven renewable energy projects. There is \$1.6 million toward residential and commercial energy incentive programs, and \$3.5 million to extend the interim electrical rebates.

With regard to lifelong learning and supporting education at any stage of life, there is: \$422,000 to implement new school curriculum; \$4 million to increase school staffing; expanded training opportunities for Yukoners; and \$145,000 toward operational and activity funding related to the cultural component of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation learning centre.

To promote innovation and growth, there is: \$100,000 to develop an open-data repository; \$1.6 million to support the

implementation of e-health programs and services; and support for Yukon College's transition into a university.

For our people-centred approach to wellness, we are supporting Yukoners' well-being through programs and services that include: \$771,000 toward enhancements in home care; beginning planning for a bilingual primary health care clinic; funding for 11 new full-time addiction and mental wellness workers in eight communities; and \$150,000 for land-based healing programs as well.

We have cut the corporate tax rate from 15 percent to 12 percent and reduced the small business rate from three to two percent. More help is on the way for small businesses, particularly sole proprietors.

To create good jobs in a sustainable environment and build healthy, vibrant communities, we will allocate \$75,000 to fund an arts summit hosted by the Yukon Arts Centre; double the regional economic development fund budget to \$800,000; and spend \$150,000 to develop an overarching strategy to support Yukon's tourism sector.

We are building relationships through reconciliation and advancing a modern Yukon that is diverse, inclusive and strong by allocating \$100,000 annually to host the Yukon Forum four times a year; \$150,000 to support indigenous women's organizations; \$325,000 to support the Yukon Aboriginal Sport Circle in delivering training to communities and to Team Yukon attending the North American Indigenous Games; and \$1.5 million for the First Nation housing program for new housing, renovations and rental supplements.

We are building strong, vibrant communities and seeking local solutions to local problems by providing \$500,000 to Habitat for Humanity's construction of two triplexes; \$660,000 for four accessible seniors housing units in Carmacks; \$2.4 million to construct six staff housing units in Ross River; \$95,000 to support rural dog population management; and \$220,000 as additional core funding to Yukon youth groups. We're extremely proud of all of these investments and there are many others we will discuss in department debate I'm sure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to highlight two specific initiatives in the Department of Finance today as well. We are beefing up the Finance department. The new division in the Department of Finance — economics, fiscal policy and statistics — will provide fiscal policy analysis and advice that has not been available to previous Management Boards. The division will operate in a highly collaborative manner with all departments to ensure that all budget planning incorporates the latest information and provides for an internally consistent fiscal plan.

Budgeting and reporting processes will be improved and streamlined and supported by a consistent set of assumptions across Yukon government departments for planning purposes. Future budget documents will include the economic and population outlook, thereby improving the sophistication of budget documents. This will also allow third parties to assess the fiscal outlook and associated risks to the territory for investment.

Economic and fiscal forecasts will benefit from a more rigorous internal review process by the economics, statistics and tax unit, thus improving fiscal accuracy and forecasting accuracy. Tax data can be shared within the departments and is informative, not only in forecasting exercises, but in some areas of responsibility for statistics, including reviewing work in progress for governmental financial statistics — GFS, and also for economic accounting, which is the GDP work in progress and also in verification.

I would also like to highlight the positive feedback that our budget and initiatives have been receiving from local organizations. Just two days ago, the Association franco-yukonnaise announced the launch of a network of sightseeing circuits, Le Yukon autrement, to head out to discover untold stories on the BaladoDiscovery mobile application. These unique, self-guided tours mark a new milestone for francophone tourism development in the territory. The association received \$35,000 from the Department of Economic Development and this will boost tourism and showcase the economic potential for the franco-Yukon community.

The Tourism Industry Association of Yukon issued a press release this morning stating that they believe that the budget introduced by the Government of Yukon on April 27 will help strengthen the Yukon's tourism industry and is a reflection of the government's commitment to helping the tourism and cultural sectors develop more capacity and access untapped potential.

The Yukon Chamber of Commerce issued a report card in regard to our budget, grading the budget on taxation, on infrastructure investments, housing and balancing the budget. The overall grade given was a B+ and we received high marks specifically for balancing the budget and for record high capital expenditures.

We are proud to have earned the support of many Yukon organizations and we look forward to continuing to do so.

We are committed to ensuring that the government's finances are sound now and into the future, while meeting the fundamental needs of Yukoners. We are establishing an independent Yukon Financial Advisory Panel to provide advice to Yukon government on appropriate financial policies and tools. Because we want to hear from all Yukoners on the financial priorities, I have directed the panel to engage with residents, First Nation governments, municipalities, businesses and organizations on how we can make the Yukon government financially stable now and for future generations. The panel will be made up of two Yukoners and three Outside members, who will bring financial expertise and familiarity with a Yukon context. It will be chaired by a Yukoner. The advice and options developed by the panel will inform the Government of Yukon's financial decisions and policies over the term of this government. The Department of Finance has budgeted \$250,000 to cover the costs of the panel and the public engagement.

The Yukon government is facing significant fiscal challenges due to an unsustainable ratio of revenue to expenditures. Our current unstable fiscal situation is driven by

previously unbudgeted commitments, including operating the new Whistle Bend seniors facility, budgeting teachers in the classroom and increasing O&M commitments related to a growing capital asset base. The costs faced by municipalities and communities are related to key infrastructure deficits, the need to build local economies and to develop their businesses, industrial and human resource capacities and also the cost of an aging population. The panel will engage with all Yukoners on the fiscal and economic challenges facing Yukon and the fiscal and economic tools available to us with regard to revenue and expenses.

They will provide all Yukoners with the opportunity to commit to and make recommendations about potential government fiscal and economic spending options. The public engagement is anticipated to start once the spring legislative Sitting concludes in June, will break in July and August and restart again in September. The work of the panel will not replace any future direct budget discussions between the Government of Yukon and First Nation governments, municipalities, organizations or citizens.

The terms of reference will be released very shortly and the final report will be released later this year. Hopefully the Official Opposition will decide to support the panel. The leader said that he did yesterday, but the Member for Lake Laberge said that it demonstrated a lack of confidence in financial officials.

Perhaps they could compare notes, decide who is speaking for the party and what their position is on the panel.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Istchenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for interrupting the Premier. I would just like to introduce Bob Dickson, Chief of Kluane First Nation and one of my constituents. Welcome to the House today.

*Applause*

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, to sum up — good timing. It is my pleasure to speak to our goals and priorities as outlined in the budget. I want to once again thank all of the members who have shared their ideas and their views. While there has been positive debate on this budget, worthwhile debate will continue to take place on determining the best path forward for Yukon so that we can build on our prosperity and quality of life.

Before I conclude, let me outline our plans for developing future budgets. The Financial Advisory Panel will recommend actions for putting Yukon finances on a sustainable pathway forward. The panel's work will include broad public engagement. That input will inform our government's 2018-19 budget and future budgets. I hope all members will actively participate in this discussion and encourage people in their communities to do so as well.

The Leader of the Official Opposition mentioned how we plan to receive input from Yukoners. He raised legitimate concerns about the timelines and timing of the consultation process. Again, I hope he and all of the other MLAs in this

House will encourage their ridings to participate and for their constituents to participate.

As the work of the panel proceeds, we will continue building capacity within the government to apply evidence to decision-making. To support this work, we will continue our progress in reorganizing the Department of Finance's lines of business — this year, as detailed in our budget, investments focused on four priorities that will guide the government's work in the coming years. The budget supports people and their well-being. The budget supports strong government-to-government relationships, fostering reconciliation and cooperation with First Nation governments. The budget commits and promotes support to sustainable economic growth and will support the creation of good jobs for all Yukoners. The budget will contribute to healthy, vibrant communities. This is the first of many budgets that will set a new standard of making decisions backed by evidence. It will be addressing the real challenges faced by Yukoners and it will use evidence. We will show measured progress toward the goals that we identify. The budget recognizes that we have stepped boldly toward Yukon's future. We do so with confidence and we do so together.

**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. White:** Agree.

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

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

*Motion for second reading of Bill No. 201 agreed to*



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

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

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** It is my honour to express my sincere support for Bill No. 2, *National Aboriginal Day Act*, which amends the *Employment Standards Act* by recognizing National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday in Yukon.

I must begin by acknowledging that we are on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and it is a privilege to support Bill No. 2 on this land.

It is only recently, relatively speaking, that we have started to hear about reconciliation. We have calls to action, goals and genuine desire to improve things in our own country. It has been almost two years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its report that included the voices of 6,750 residential school survivors.

Of the 94 recommendations from the TRC, one speaks directly to government with regard to actions like recognizing National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday. The Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action 80 reads — and I quote: “We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.”

While this call to action is directed at the federal level, it resonates with our Liberal territorial government. This is an opportunity for Yukon to lead the country in an effort of reconciliation and join the Northwest Territories in recognizing National Aboriginal Day as a holiday.

I believe that making National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday is an integral step toward the path of our own reconciliation. Responding to the TRC recommendation will contribute toward building a strong foundation of reconciliation efforts. It's time that we celebrate the immense contributions that First Nation people have made, and continue to make, in our territory and across the country.

We have the opportunity to show the provinces of Canada that National Aboriginal Day is a day of celebration, hope and pride. It is especially poignant to legislate the statutory holiday this year, as we celebrate 150 years of Confederation. Let us remember that Canada is much older than Confederation. Let us celebrate the First Nation people of this country, the people who were here first.

When I moved to Yukon as a teacher, I immediately felt welcomed. I was most welcomed by my students — the students whom I taught at F.H. Collins and other high schools in Whitehorse in my first two years in the Yukon. They are the reason I am still here, and they are well in their 40s now and great friends of mine. I have lots of great friends from those first couple of years.

I did want to speak about what I witnessed back then. There was a double standard. It wasn't a shared double standard but it was there. I taught in those years with some of Yukon's most amazing teachers, EAs, LAs, administrative folks and administrative assistants, but still, there would be a double standard and it did occur. Rural students, rural teens coming into the big city and going to the high school, not being challenged because they had challenging personalities — that was the way it was described to me at the time. My friend and colleague at the time, Jeff Teasdale, prepared me for this. He taught previous to me in these classes and he talked about the character of these students.

I was given no curriculum materials. In the science lab that I had, the cupboards were bare. There were no Erlenmeyer flasks and there were no Bunsen burners. I went down to the administration office about two weeks later. I spent the first two weeks getting to know these kids — amazing kids. I was told at that time that if these kids miss more than 20 classes, then you can let them go. That was pretty much the instruction that I was given. That was an interesting approach to education — and I didn't let them go. I continued to try to get my best out of my students and engage with them. Like I said, these kids flourished and did very well in that class. I think 18 of the students in there at the time were First Nation boys. They all challenged the academic exams and passed with flying colours.

Not a day went by in that class where I didn't witness the damage that was done and the scars left by residential school. A lot of the students had inherited a tragic legacy. I look back at my early days of teaching and I realize how much that group of students meant to me, but I didn't know at the time what I know now as far as the legacy of residential schools.

They made me acutely aware of how divided this country is. It is long overdue that we work hard to mend this divide. We much acknowledge its causes and we must learn from past mistakes. We must move forward, working closely with aboriginal people, in that effort of reconciliation. We must place great value on these efforts, the same value that my students deserved but did not receive.

Developing healthy relationships with Yukon First Nations has been a priority for me in my years as an MLA as it has been a priority for many MLAs in this building. In June 2016, I was honoured to attend the Council of Yukon First Nations General Assembly. In the week prior to the General Assembly, I was home in Dawson City and I was able to share National Aboriginal Day with Chief Joseph and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people. Sharing that important day with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens was a highlight. I was glad to share my feelings about National Aboriginal Day with those who gathered soon after the general assembly. I made it clear that, by the time we arrived at June 21, 2017, I hoped to be standing beside Grand Chief Peter Johnston as Yukon marked the day for the first time as a statutory holiday. I confirmed for those gathered at the general assembly that a Liberal government would be committed to making that happen. I am honoured to be here today serving as Premier of the Liberal government and keeping that commitment.

As Premier, I have had opportunities to meet with all of the Yukon First Nation chiefs, and I am grateful for the conversations and look forward to continuing to work for the benefit of First Nation communities and for all Yukoners.

I would like to make special mention of the contributions of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in my riding of Klondike. I was warmly welcomed by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people when I moved to Dawson City, and that welcome is not one that I take for granted. The traditional knowledge that has been shared with me has greatly contributed to my experience as a Yukoner, as a teacher and as an MLA. As Premier, I am incredibly grateful for the positive working relationship that I maintain with Chief Joseph. I would like to extend my congratulations to Chief Joseph on her re-election and also congratulate educated counsellors: J.T. Taylor, one of my ex-students; Darren Bullen, one of my ex-students; and Babe Titus and Simon Nagano. I look forward to officially celebrating National Aboriginal Day — that holiday — with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people for many years to come.

Renewing government-to-government relationships with the First Nation people of Yukon is a priority of our Liberal government. We have been vocal about this priority since our campaign, and Bill No. 2 is an excellent representation of our dedicated commitment. We have already made remarkable progress in repairing the Yukon government's relationship with Yukon First Nation governments. We have committed to holding a Yukon Forum four times a year and enjoyed the opportunity to meet with all Yukon First Nation chiefs at the first forum. Yukon chiefs joined our minister at Yukon Days in Ottawa and presented not only the perspective of Yukon First Nations to federal ministers, but also a united front with the Government of Yukon.

The recent intergovernmental forum is another reflection of our positive working relationship as chiefs joined our ministers in conversations with the federal Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Carolyn Bennett.

Our Liberal government has clearly made working with Yukon First Nations a priority, and already our efforts have provided us with a positive and encouraging relationship. We look forward to continuing partnerships and we know these partnerships will benefit all Yukoners.

When surveyed by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics in 2016, over 1,400 Yukoners responded with incredible support for National Aboriginal Day: 88 percent of the surveyed respondents supported the idea of recognizing National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday; 90 percent of First Nation citizens who responded believed that there would be benefit to National Aboriginal Day becoming a statutory holiday; more than half of the survey respondents identified Yukon's ability to celebrate, respect, acknowledge, understand and recognize First Nation history, culture and traditions as the reason why they support the creation of this new holiday.

Of course we also recognize the concerns from employers surveyed — 26.9 percent of employers said that they would be negatively affected through loss of profit and increased cost.

We understand these concerns but are confident that in the long-term the benefits will be financial as well.

The Official Opposition, the Yukon Party, has raised concerns about the cost of the holiday. Our government believes that this is a priceless opportunity to celebrate aboriginal people. Much of the feedback from the business community surveyed was very encouraging as well. With regard to how recognizing National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday will affect their businesses, 48.7 percent of employers responded that they would only be slightly affected or not at all, and 22.2 percent of employers felt that they would be positively affected by the holiday. Multiple employers reported that they thought the holiday would increase profit, employee morale and First Nation community support.

Yukoners have spoken. Our people, culture, traditions and history shape who we are. We recognize the immeasurable contributions made by our aboriginal people. This government is proud to join Yukoners in recognizing those contributions by making National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday.

It may be only recently that we have started to hear about reconciliation efforts in this country but our actions today will set the path for our children tomorrow. Let us set a path forward that leads to healing. Let us be leaders in reconciliation. Here in this Legislative Assembly today, on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, it is an absolute honour for me to express my unwavering support for Bill No. 2.

**Ms. White:** It's a great honour to be standing speaking to this bill.

I was thinking a lot about my friend, Kevin Barr, the previous Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, because he really got us here. It started off with a conversation in caucus and it was an easy conversation. I mean, of course, it makes sense. The part that wasn't easy was trying to get it off the ground. We started with a petition. We circulated the petition, we took it around and people were really keen.

It was a proud day on December 9, 2015 when he tabled that petition. We had more than 500 signatures at that point — some were electronic and more were coming in. To have Kevin be able to table it was phenomenal. That's what started the conversation and that's what got the ball rolling toward this. I wanted to really make sure that I acknowledge the work that he did, because he laid out the groundwork.

It's fascinating because the Premier will remember that when we were here and we debated this motion in the House and we had people in the gallery, it didn't go like we expected. We thought it was going to be a no-brainer. We thought that it would be an easy conversation, that we would talk about all of the reasons why this was great. At that point in time, we had pretty strong opposition from government. We had people in the gallery. We invited First Nation leadership and people from the communities and they came in and it was amazing to have them here. It was really hard because we thought this would be something that we could agree on. This

goes back to when I said that I'm a natural cheerleader and this just made sense.

I listened to the Premier and I listened to him talk about his experiences as a teacher. Well, I can tell you, as a kid who grew up in the territory, we didn't talk about residential schools. We didn't talk about the effects. When I was in Whitehorse Elementary, I didn't understand why some of the kids I went to school with had the struggles that they did. Then as an adult in Corrections when I went through training, I thought, oh my gosh, how is this the first time I'm having these conversations? I was lucky because I got to spend time with elders like Martha Snowshoe, Agnes Mills and Pearl Keenan and they taught me a lot when I was in Corrections.

They would come once a week and if the ladies didn't want to spend time with them, then I got to have tea. I had to let conversations start naturally, but they taught me a lot of things. What I learned within Corrections is that intergenerational effects of residential schools exist and they will continue to exist until Canada, as a country, has a bigger conversation about it.

We have this ability here, as legislators, to take some first steps toward saying that we acknowledge the importance of your ongoing contribution to our society and we apologize for the mistakes of the past. Having this be one of the first bills brought forward by the new Liberal government is a beautiful step. It's the reason why I voted positively on the first reading of the budget, because I have faith, right? I have faith that we won't make the same mistakes of the past.

I'm incredibly proud to be able to talk about this and I am also really, really proud about the work that my team did in the previous Legislative Assembly. We worked really hard at bringing this forward. We took it out to communities, we took it out to streets and we took it out to gatherings. We took it to general assemblies, we took it to meetings and we took it everywhere. When we had conversations in communities it just made sense, so a big thank you to Jim Tredger out of Mayo-Tatchun, to Lois Moorcroft of Copperbelt South, and to Jan Stick in Riverdale South, because without them, the groundwork wouldn't have been laid because that happened from the NDP opposition at the time.

I thank the Premier for recognizing the importance of this and taking that motion in the debate that we had in this House previously and moving it forward. We asked questions again — we asked questions in May 2016 — and we continue to ask questions about it because although the government at the time had said that they would move forward on it, it wasn't going to be without extensive consultation. When that consultation came back and said it was positive, there was still no motion to move it forward.

I am so pleased and so grateful that the Premier has taken this as one of the first big motions — big bills — in his government, because this lays out the expectation and the groundwork for future decisions. When we look at the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations, they are nothing unless we breathe life into them, and that is our job as elected officials. It is our job to take those recommendations and figure out how we can weave them into government, because

we are only one of the many governments in the Yukon. When it comes down to it, we're not even the most powerful government in Yukon. Depending where we are with the final agreements, we're not the top of that pack, but what we do have is the responsibility to make sure that we lead with what we can and Bill No. 2 is setting that out.

I have great faith that in the next number of years, you will take those recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and that you will breathe life into them. By making this one of your first acts of government, that's huge. That broadcasts to the territory that you're serious and that's important. It's lovely to have a couple of members in the gallery because the first couple of times we talked about it, it wasn't so positive. Now we can say it's going to happen — on June 21, it will be a statutory holiday and everyone will get to participate and that's amazing.

I thank the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes for following up where the previous member left off. I thank this government for not just saying they would do it, but doing it, and for making this June 21, 2017 the first day in the territory that National Aboriginal Day will have the recognition and the importance that it deserves.

I look forward to it. We all go out anyway, but it will have a different feeling this year, because we will have told the rest of the territory that this day is important and that this day matters, not just for our First Nation members and communities, but it matters for everybody — it is part of our Yukon. That is broadcasting that it is an important thing.

I thank the Premier and people who have spoken to it previously. It's great to be able to talk about this motion with a different feeling, knowing it's not going to be amended, knowing that the intent is going to stay the way it is and knowing that this year, we will celebrate National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday.

I thank the government members who made this an important first step. I thank them, because they are saying that they will breathe life into these recommendations. I am grateful for that. I absolutely support this bill and it's a pleasure to be here. I do want to acknowledge the work that got us here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the government for this.

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** Mr. Speaker, honourable members, friends, people of the Yukon — before I go into my talk, I just want to thank the member opposite for her words and for everyone else who has spoken to this bill so far. I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to speak in support of proposed legislation to create a new statutory holiday in the Yukon.

We would ask that you join us in celebrating Yukon's First Nation heritage and honour the many contributions First Nation people have made to our territory. The *National Aboriginal Day Act* will make June 21 a new statutory holiday in the Yukon.

Today is particularly important to acknowledge that we are gathered today on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. I thank

them every single time I get up to speak in any other gathering for allowing us to be on their territory and to be so generous and be our hosts. I thank them today.

First Nation people recognize the power of consensus in decision-making. That is something I hope this House begins to operate by. I know it's certainly something I aspire to every day — to find a place of consensus. I hope we are able to come to a consensus in full support, with all parties in support of this proposed new legislation.

June 21 is summer solstice and it holds a very sacred place for us as indigenous people. The meaning of the day is well understood by First Nation people. It is the longest day of the year, when here in the Yukon, we experience a very long period of daylight and celebrate the beginning of summer. It's a time when we hold ceremony; it's a time when we honour the Creator and we honour our seasons. It's a really important day for us as indigenous people. We share that culture, and we share that experience with other Yukoners. Wherever we may be throughout the country, it's a very important day for us.

The calendar that nature provides us is marked by summer and winter solstices and spring and fall equinoxes. For time immemorial, these natural markers were the traditional calendar, which identified the change in the seasons that dominated indigenous life. That's how we lived. Throughout the year, there was a time for all seasonal activities and a rhythm being revitalized. June 21 is an appropriate day for the celebration of First Nation people and has always been marked in some way in the Yukon.

More recently, there have been a series of events planned and implemented. First Nation governments recognize the day and provide time off for their employees to attend celebrations. First Nations' time on the land goes back before recorded history. Our First Nation ancestors were capable stewards of this land. Living with the land, in tune with the seasons — that's how our ancestors lived. The generations were challenged by a harsh climate and interruptions in food supply. There were tribal conflicts and problems to solve. Our experience did not prepare us for the challenges of contact with newcomers. There were waves of contact that affected Yukon indigenous people, including the building of the Alaska Highway 75 years ago, an anniversary being marked this year. That was a very big turning point for Yukon First Nation people. I feel that not only during the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Confederation, but also the marking of this anniversary — of the Alaska Highway — it is very fitting that this is the year that we celebrate National Aboriginal Day as a holiday in the Yukon.

The modern-day treaty process in the Yukon was launched by the delivery of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* in 1973. Throughout the years that followed, the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and subsequent final land claims and self-government agreements were concluded by 11 of our 14 First Nations. We are proud of all our self-determining nations, our treaties and accomplishments.

Our Liberal government has committed to building a stronger government-to-government relationship with all 14 First Nations in the Yukon. The Yukon Forum is on stronger

ground today because of the work that we have done together with our First Nation partners. The passage of the *National Aboriginal Day Act* reinforces that commitment to building stronger connections.

I would just like to acknowledge Councillor Sean Smith to the Legislature. Thank you so much for coming.

The marking of an important day in the First Nation calendar as a day to celebrate and remember First Nation people and their contributions is important. The action taken in this House today sends a powerful message to First Nation people. The message from all Yukoners — that's all of us sending a message — to First Nation people in setting aside this day is: "We respect you, we honour you, we celebrate you and we see a bright future together." We mark Discovery Day as a statutory holiday and it is time to mark all that came before that day in the same way.

Culture, I believe, is at the foundation of everything we do. It's our identity. It's our strength. It is going to save our people. I believe that. I've seen it in action. I watched the land come alive and bring healing to our people. Those are the things that we're celebrating. When we celebrate National Aboriginal Day, those are the things that we're celebrating.

I would like to also acknowledge Chief Doris Bill. Thank you so much for coming here today.

We have committed to the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action and we have heard a lot of discussion in the House around the calls to action. I agree with the member opposite that they are only words unless we breathe life into them — that we commit to seeing through the commitments that we've made and that Canada has made to our indigenous people and to all of us.

We have begun the work of building the capacity to work with First Nation governments and of moving forward. There are initiatives underway and being launched by this government that are in line with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. We are fortunate to have the strength of all nations and our treaties to build from. We have a framework for reconciliation, and they are alive within our self-government agreements.

The National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is also a national initiative that we are fully engaged in with our First Nation partners. The telling of the truths and the planning for action that builds a better, safer and stronger Canadian society is a shared vision of both documents. I believe the passing of the *National Aboriginal Day Act* in Yukon is a powerful statement and an important contribution to the spirit and intent of this national work.

After a nine-year delay, on May 10, 2016, Canada finally removed the objector status on the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. On September 13, 2007, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted the declaration — 144 states voted in favour, and four voted against, with 11 abstentions. Canada was joined by Australia, New Zealand and the United States in voting against the declaration.

The other three objectors, to varying degrees, have also turned their vote. While the General Assembly's declaration is not a legally binding instrument under international law, it does represent the dynamic development of international legal norms and it reflects the commitment of the United Nations member states to move in a certain direction.

The UN describes it as citing an important standard in the treatment of indigenous peoples that will undoubtedly be a significant tool toward eliminating human rights violations against the planet's 370 million indigenous people and assisting them in combatting discrimination and marginalization.

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* codifies indigenous historical grievances, contemporary challenges and socio-economic, political and cultural aspirations. Further, it is the culmination of generations-long efforts by indigenous organizations to get international attention to a secure recognition of their aspirations and to generate support for their political agendas.

Federal Minister Bennett was quoted as saying, "We intend nothing less than to adopt and implement the declaration in accordance with the Canadian Constitution." We in the Yukon align with our federal Liberal counterparts in our commitment to the declaration. I believe we are all just beginning to fully understand the impact of Canada's commitment to improving relationships with indigenous people of Canada.

I believe that by declaring June 21 of every year Aboriginal Day and marking it as a statutory holiday honours the profile of First Nation people in this territory. I ask that you join me and my colleagues in supporting this proposed legislation and all that it represents.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Ms. Dendys:** I would like to also acknowledge William Carlick, an elder representative of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation.

*Applause*

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I also want to recognize in the gallery — with Chief Dickson of the Kluane First Nation is Lisa Badenhorst, who is the governance director for the First Nation, and also former Chief of the Kluane First Nation and the current caucus strategic analyst extraordinaire, Mathieya Alatini.

*Applause*

**Mr. Hassard:** It is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill No. 2 today. Last week, my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt South, outlined the Official Opposition's position on this bill. While I believe that he did do a thorough job, I would just like to take a moment to reiterate some of what he said and maybe expand on it a bit.

As he indicated, the Official Opposition does fully support National Aboriginal Day, and we think it is incredibly important to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding achievements of our

aboriginal people, both here in the Yukon as well as across the entire country. We believe that here in the Yukon, the celebration of Yukon First Nations enriches the lives of all Yukoners. It is for this reason that we believe the Yukon government has an important role to play in taking part in this recognition and celebration.

During our previous time in government, we tried to ensure that recognizing First Nation heritage and cultures or celebrating the outstanding achievements of aboriginal people wasn't something that was confined to a single day, but occurred throughout the year and throughout the lives of Yukoners. Some of that work included the actions from 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. It included work done to help preserve and teach First Nation languages in Yukon communities and schools. It included our earnest support for the Aboriginal Employees Forum and the Aboriginal Employees Award of Honour that showcases the talents of individual aboriginal public servants, strength and pride in 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. Those are just a few examples, and we know that there is more to be done.

We of course would be happy to support the government in taking further action and, indeed, we would certainly support the Yukon government in increasing its support for celebrations, activities and events on National Aboriginal Day. If the Liberal government has other ideas of ways either the Yukon government or the Legislative Assembly can aid and support the celebration of National Aboriginal Day, we would be more than happy to engage and offer our support as well.

While we will be supporting this bill at second reading, as the MLA for Copperbelt South said, we do have concerns about financial impacts on the business community, and we will have questions for the minister in Committee.

As I stated, the core of our concern is the fact that this government doesn't seem to know what the economic impacts of the bill will be. We haven't seen any study that would indicate how much it will cost Yukon businesses, families or even the Yukon government itself. Of course, those costs are on Yukon taxpayers.

I think that asking these questions is responsible and it's how legislators exercise the responsibilities given to them by the good people of the Yukon who elected them. As members of this Legislative Assembly, it would be irresponsible of us not to ask these questions. We are trying to understand the implications of the bill. No one should take offence to us asking questions. Further, as the Official Opposition, it's our job to hold the government to account for its actions and ask the questions about how and why it makes the decisions that it does.

Creating a new statutory holiday will increase costs — costs that will be carried by Yukon businesses big and small and in all sectors. It will also create a significant cost for the

Yukon government and other levels of government, including municipalities. Now, the creation of these costs may be acceptable, and just because a cost is created, that does not mean that the bill isn't a good idea. But we wouldn't be doing our job if we didn't ask these questions. At this point, it seems that the Government of Yukon doesn't know the answers.

In his second reading speech, the minister said that he believes the benefits of this bill will outweigh the costs and that's great news. It really is. But we would like him to share with us the analysis that shows that. Indeed, as the Minister of Highways and Public Works put it, perhaps there is a cost in not moving ahead with this bill, and he may be right. So let's look at the economic analysis so we can truly decide that. That is why we are here in this Chamber — to debate and discuss these issues and make decisions on behalf of all of the people who we represent here today.

As my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt South, indicated, we look forward to asking these questions in Committee of the Whole, and today, if it comes to a vote, we will be voting in favour of the bill at second reading so that we can move forward to that next step and debate the bill further.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I offer my complete support for the tabling of Bill No. 2, *National Aboriginal Day Act*, which amends the *Employment Standards Act* by adding National Aboriginal Day as a holiday in Yukon. Today we make another commitment that the Liberal government campaigned on.

Mr. Speaker, this day is extremely important for reconciliation. This is a day to recognize and honour contributions of First Nation people here in the Yukon. This day is to celebrate the diversity and strength of our First Nation community and to recognize their perseverance and commitment for a better life for their community and for all Yukoners alike. It is a day for First Nations to share in their culture and tradition, a chance to educate and a chance to build relationships.

I've heard concerns about higher wages, resulting in an increase in operating costs and reduced profits from those in the business community and I understand those impacts. Certainly I have an obligation. It's not to take away from the importance of the conversation, but I have an obligation — and certainly it was brought up — as Minister of Economic Development to speak how this potentially affects our economy or how it affects business. I have to say, I have also heard that businesses feel this day has the potential to stimulate positive economic growth by encouraging spending through tourism and recreational activities and have to say I tend to agree with that statement.

When you think about our economy and you think about how reconciliation affects our economy in the Yukon, really what I've heard the opposition say and what they're digging at is that they want analyses and numbers. What I have at least been able to see in the short term — and not directly impacting just on this one point — is that as we've had discussions with the resource sector over the last five months,

we've seen — whether there were decisions to be made previous to this government coming into place, or there was a course of action by companies — that they stopped and took a breath after the election. Certainly the meetings that we had an opportunity to have — whether at the Prospectors and Developers Association Conference in Toronto or at Roundup, what they said over and over is: "We like many of the things that happened, but right now we really like what's happening and we're so happy about this new relationship and reconciliation."

We talk about numbers — the number that I've seen at least, just on resource development, in five months is \$130 million. That is what has been committed for future expenditures. Many of those agreements are signed and they have been put forward to the Securities Commission, so we talk about economic impact.

As my colleague here stated — when we talk about Discovery Day, it's interesting that when you think about who gets celebrated. When you go to the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada conference, one of the biggest nights now is when they give out the Skookum Jim award, so the reason that there is a Discovery Day in many ways — maybe it wasn't Skookum Jim. Maybe it was Kate. I don't know if it was Kate Carmacks; I don't know if it was George. But those are the three people who were there, and so when we think about why we have these industrial effects in the Yukon, it's based on First Nation individuals. A little-known fact is that Chief Jim Boss was a prospector and is attributed with some of the finds of some of the copper just outside of Whitehorse. The slant I want to talk about is that, when we think about economy and business — this is an important day because I get to stand here and I get to be on the right side of history. I hope that we don't have a ton of debate after we get by the second reading. We have confirmation now that we're going to get support to move this through.

I want to be able to look my kids in the eyes and understand where I was on this particular item. When you think about how we celebrate in the Yukon, our great history and commerce of ships moving up and down the Yukon River and things such as that — I know there are a lot of stories that will be shared and they'll be focused on the atrocities of residential school. I just want to share one little tidbit under this idea of business. My youngest son's hero whom he never knew is his great-great grandfather, Frank Slim. I can still remember when he was really young — he's 10 now. He was about five years old and there was a showing of the last voyage — I think it was the *Keno*. It was Frank Slim guiding that ship. We went down to watch it, and in comes the little guy. He walked in, and for some reason they decided that they were going to change up the films that day. He walked in and Andy Connors, who was there putting on the film festival, said they were going to change it up and Calum was like, "No, no. I came to watch a movie about my great-great grandpa and he drives ships and he drove that ship down there too" — the *SS Klondike*.

As he continued to study the history of it — part of the history of this gentleman — we celebrate him. The City of

Whitehorse celebrates him. It's the Frank Slim Building. He's a hero to many — and here's a First Nation man who, in order to help to build the commerce of the Yukon, had to give up his First Nation status in order to get his licence. His licence to this day sits in the hands of his grandson, Glenn Grady — I've seen the licence — and that was given to him by Transport Canada. It was a licence so he could actually drive these steamships.

I think we can go over and over about why this is the right thing to do. I'm glad that we have the forum to do it. This process really brings me back to my memories of city council. In some ways, it reminds me of when Lillian Nakamura — and I appreciate her for even connecting me to this process — and Heather MacFadyen came to see me and talked about the anti-racism and discrimination bylaw. There had never been one passed north of 60. There had been across the country in many municipalities. They had gone to the municipality before to try to gain support on it and they couldn't gain the support.

I want to be polite and I don't want to be aggressive as I speak through this, but I couldn't understand why we wouldn't move forward on this. We talked about how to table that bylaw. I had tremendous amount of resistance as I tried to even craft the language on it. You do go through all kinds of different emotions as you're taking this forward. I don't need to share all those emotions here today. But we brought it forward and at the same time, I remember people saying there is no reason for this.

Shortly within that period of time or just after that time, there were election signs that were grotesquely written on — one individual who was running and I can't even imagine — that's tough. It hasn't happened to me. When it does — I'm sure it will someday, but I hope it doesn't. It's a hard pill to swallow.

Anyway, we tabled the first reading. I was at PDAC in Toronto for first reading. I put it through. I couldn't help but not be there. I was going to be there for second and third reading. They tabled it. I didn't think it would be a big deal, but I had a commitment in the mining sector so I was in Toronto that night. I remember that they let me call in. With the time change, it was late that evening and, to my shock, when it came to a vote there was one positive vote and I was standing alone. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe that I sat there on this particular topic. We were doing the right thing, and cost was something that came up. It was: "Well, what's the cost to the city on this item of having a committee?" That's what they had to do.

After some discussions, we went to a second vote and, surprisingly, at the second reading it was unanimous support — once people started to think about the magnitude and impact of these things.

Sometimes there is a time to do the right thing. There is a time to be brave. There certainly is. There is a time to put politics aside. I respect the questions to me. I will tell you what. As Economic Development minister, let me carry you. You can tell every business person who is not supporting this that the Economic Development minister in Yukon is the

person that they should call and talk to. I have had one e-mail so far.

I sat today at lunchtime with the leadership and ownership of the largest manufacturing company north of 60 and one of the largest construction companies, and my question to them was: "Is this an issue?" They said to me: "We haven't even had it come up, and if it did, we would be completely supportive of this."

The member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition, knows very well that your community is the showcase of reconciliation — absolutely — at least one of them. Your mayor is a First Nation lady who is cherished in the community. The community, as it works together through the community corporation, has shown that reconciliation and people coming together lead to economic growth, and that's why everybody wants to try to do what you guys have done, because you have done those amazing things.

For some companies, there will be some effects. What I have always experienced on National Aboriginal Day is that, in Whitehorse, the downtown is booming. Most First Nation offices let their staff out. Many companies that are owned by First Nations, which is a tremendous number, let their people out.

If you look at what happened in 2009, the mining sector and what happened was a huge driver. When you sit and look from one side of this community to the other, and you figure out where the money came from to build and build and drive that growth, we all know that comes from those very progressive First Nations and how they have invested in this community.

At this time, as I said, let me wear that. We can go through a series of numbers and we can debate. I don't think we should even take that approach to things here. I think we should stand behind this. I think we should do the right thing. I think that, as we look at where we want to stand, as people in this country — it's true that we have an opportunity to set a standard that the rest of this country will look to. We have an opportunity, and we can do it here, all of us together. We can debate a whole bunch of other stuff. You can pick me apart on numbers on things in Energy, Mines and Resources, and in Agriculture, Economic Development and the Yukon Development Corporation — go at it. I know we'll have those discussions, but on this one, let us pass this and set a right path forward for the rest of this country.

I'm going to leave it at that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** It is my privilege and honour to rise today to speak in favour of Bill No. 2, *National Aboriginal Day Act*. With the exception of the discussions we have had on the budget, this is my first opportunity to speak to a bill in this Legislative Assembly. It is an exciting moment for me, having worked my whole life and career as a lawyer to now be involved in the making of a new law, my first law. It is doubly exciting to be involved in the making of this particular law.

This country is changing. The recognition and celebration of the rich heritage and culture of Canada and Yukon's first

peoples is long overdue. The recognition of First Nation contributions to our way of life here in the Yukon and across Canada is long overdue. Recognition and respect of our First Nation governments as leaders of their communities is long overdue.

One of the true highlights of my career occurred a few years back when I got to spend a day with Mr. Justice Murray Sinclair, as he was then. At the time, he was the Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I know him to be a thoughtful, articulate and eloquent man.

I know that in drafting the truth and reconciliation recommendations, he and his colleagues chose carefully the words: “calls to action.” Think about how succinct and powerful the words are — calls to action. Mr. Speaker, it’s time. It’s time to act. It’s time to make a new law. Proclaiming National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday is but one small step on our reconciliation path, but its time has come.

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the truth and reconciliation calls to action can’t be just words any more. We need action. I look forward to celebrating National Aboriginal Day this June 21, 2017 as one Yukon community and I am proud to speak in favour of this Bill No. 2.

**Mr. Gallina:** Mr. Speaker, I’m honoured to stand here today on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta’an Kwäch’än Council to speak to you, the members of this Assembly and the members of the gallery on Bill No. 2, *National Aboriginal Day Act*. I’m going to take this opportunity to reiterate the significance of this important day here in the territory and throughout the country to highlight what this day means to me and my family and to show how this day is a tool for reconciliation.

Our government is committed to improving relations with First Nation governments across the Yukon. Renewing government-to-government relationships with First Nation people of Yukon is a priority for our team. Through the establishment of National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday here in the territory, it sends a clear message that we have taken decisive steps to live up to this commitment. Our government is proud to table Bill No. 2, a bill to make National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday in Yukon.

Presenting this bill honours an important campaign commitment that we made to move to establish National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday. Every year on June 21, we celebrate the diversity and strength of Canada’s aboriginal peoples, their cultures and traditions.

National Aboriginal Day is a tool for reconciliation. June 21 is a day that sees my family and me regularly enjoying National Aboriginal Day festivities at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre. On this date, we’re usually in full Yukon summer, which often sees mixed weather and blustery conditions along the waterfront. Through my work as a community investment manager here in the territory, I would help to set up the annual feast hosted by Northwestel. I would work with other volunteers to serve up to 1,000 people, including elders, families, visitors, dignitaries and the community at large. It’s incredibly fulfilling to be able to have

this connection to the community and be in a position to serve. Mr. Speaker, these actions foster reconciliation.

A few years ago on a particular National Aboriginal Day, with the feast concluded, I joined my family to celebrate the rest of the day. We visited exhibits and crafted jewellery. We danced and sang songs together. We listened to traditional stories from elders and youth, who gave life to their characters through movement and wonderful descriptions.

On this particular day, it wasn’t the stories or the songs that struck me most. On this day, as we moved through the exhibits and displays, I looked back to do a quick family head count. This is a common act when you have four daughters and are at a public event. I looked for them through the crowd and saw my daughters had found a quiet space among the grass with the sun shining down on them, and they were playing with some other children. I slowly made my way over to them, trying to figure out what they were playing. It turns out, Mr. Speaker, the children had gathered some paper and pencil crayons and were making flash cards of our northern lifestyle in Southern Tutchone and were practising with their new friends. What a special moment to bear witness to.

My children attend Whitehorse Elementary and learning Southern Tutchone is part of their core curriculum. I have to say they are doing well in this course and are enjoying their time in class. Mr. Speaker, I was proud to see how these children were playing together, but, as I look back on that day and on that situation, I think to myself that me, my family and the people at the Cultural Centre — we were taking part in reconciliation.

As Yukoners and Canadians, we all have a role to play in reconciliation, and National Aboriginal Day is a tool and is one way, one day, where we can strengthen our bonds with and among the First Nation community. All of us here today are stewards of the land and champions of the community and will set the foundation for future generations to benefit from our positive collaborative actions.

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would like to begin by thanking all the members of this Legislature for bringing their words forward on this important issue. I would like to again acknowledge the House leader for her comments that this is the first bill that we are seeking to pass. I am honoured to be the person who has this portfolio and has this opportunity to lead. Thank you all.

Before I get too far into it, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to acknowledge that I was recently gifted with a tie, which is from Brenda Asp. I’m very proud to be wearing it here today, so it’s a nice moment.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Well, there you go. I didn’t know that.

Establishing National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday is a key commitment of this government and supports the goal of a modern Yukon with strong government-to-



government relations, vibrant and healthy communities, and a society that is both diverse and inclusive. Eighty-eight percent of respondents to the Yukon government's National Aboriginal Day survey, conducted last spring, supported the creation of a statutory holiday to recognize National Aboriginal Day.

Yukon is leading the way on many reconciliation initiatives and it is important that we continue to lead in recognizing and celebrating First Nation culture together as a community. Celebrating National Aboriginal Day on June 21 as a statutory holiday contributes to reconciliation by allowing Yukoners the opportunity to learn more about indigenous peoples and participate in cultural events.

We believe that all Yukoners benefit from a unified society that celebrates and shares in the culture of indigenous people. I emphasize: all Yukoners.

Along with Discovery Day, National Aboriginal Day will be the second holiday that is unique to Yukon. The rest of the holidays we recognize are national. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our bringing in National Aboriginal Day here in the north would pave the way for it becoming a nationally celebrated holiday?

I would like to thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for saying that his party fully supports National Aboriginal Day. We agree that there are some economic costs and that there are also economic benefits and we look forward to that conversation in Committee of the Whole. We also need to consider the social, cultural and wellness benefits that so many of our colleagues here have articulated in their speeches on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reached out to Mr. Kevin Barr to invite him here today and, again, I will acknowledge that it was in his role as MLA for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that he brought forward the initial motion to this House to introduce National Aboriginal Day. I thank the members opposite who took this out to the public to get their viewpoints. He wrote back to me — and I quote:

"It is a step for us all to move forward with respect and further our understanding for future reconciliation. I will be out of the territory but will be there in spirit.

"Kindest regards, Kevin Barr"

Celebrating National Aboriginal Day provides Yukoners — all Yukoners — the opportunity to recognize the rich heritage, culture and significant achievements of aboriginal people in the Yukon and across Canada.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

**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:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yea, nil nay.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.  
*Motion for second reading of Bill No. 2 agreed to*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair (Mr. Hutton):** Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### Bill No. 2: *National Aboriginal Day Act*

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*.

Is there any general debate on this bill?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** If you could just give us one moment here, please, to welcome our staff — thank you.

Mr. Chair, I would like to welcome to Committee of the Whole today from the Department of Community Services, Ms. Louise Michaud and Mr. Shane Hickey. I don't know what is appropriate here, but I would like to welcome them.

Mr. Chair, I'm rising today to speak to Bill No. 2 — and I'm pleased to do so — entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*. This bill establishes National Aboriginal Day as a general holiday in Yukon for all employers and employees regulated

under the *Employment Standards Act*. June 21 is a special day to recognize and celebrate the culture, heritage and achievements of indigenous peoples. In Yukon, National Aboriginal Day will be a day for Yukoners and visitors to celebrate Canada's indigenous peoples by bringing together talented artists and performers to celebrate the unique, vibrant and rich culture of Yukon First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

Celebrating National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday contributes to reconciliation by allowing Yukoners the opportunity to learn more about indigenous peoples and participate in cultural events. Yukon's current statutory holidays include: New Year's Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Discovery Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day and Christmas. Including National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday will make Yukon consistent with British Columbia, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories, all of which currently have 10 statutory holidays. This new holiday will apply to all territorially regulated businesses and organizations. First Nation governments, the federal government and employers in federally regulated sectors, such as aviation, finance and telecommunication industries, will not be affected.

I note that First Nation governments have been recognizing this as an important day, even before it becomes a statutory holiday, by providing their employees with a day off. When we talked with First Nations, my understanding is that 100 percent of them give this day off already as a holiday, with pay.

Over a year ago, this Assembly unanimously passed Motion No. 1039, urging the Yukon government to seek public input concerning the possibility of declaring National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday. From May 15 to July 16 of 2016, local businesses, First Nation governments, development corporations, labour organizations and the public were invited to provide feedback. We got quite a few responses.

The survey results, both the full report and the summary of results from the 1,400 participants who responded, are available on the Community Services website. They show that this government is acting in a transparent manner and listening to Yukoners. Overall, 88 percent of Yukoners who responded to the survey were in favour of making National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday. Support for the holiday was received from a variety of respondents including 68.1 percent of the business community, 54.3 percent of employers and 90 percent of First Nation citizens and employees. That was support for it, Mr. Chair.

We know that this endeavour will have some cost implications to varying degrees for employers and local businesses, including the Government of Yukon. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics calculated that, for Yukon government, the average statutory holiday payroll cost was approximately \$1.16 million and the estimated overtime pay to Yukon government employees for Canada Day as a statutory holiday was approximately \$117,000. We used Canada Day as an example because of its proximity to June 21 for National Aboriginal Day. It should be noted that these numbers are

based on an average and are subject to change should there be a natural disaster or an emergency event.

We acknowledge that there will be some loss of production and some additional costs for 24-hour operational programs, essential services and seasonal sectors. It is challenging to determine the full economic impacts of this initiative on all sectors, even for the Northwest Territories, where National Aboriginal Day has been celebrated for 15 years. When recently asked about the cost-benefit analysis of National Aboriginal Day, the Government of Northwest Territories confirmed what the research has shown — that undertaking such an economic analysis requires a very broad scope and significant resources. I note that there has not been a full-cost analysis done in the Northwest Territories, so we didn't have something exact to go back to. We also need to note, as I have noted in other speeches, that there are economic benefits and also social benefits celebrating the diverse cultures of Yukon across our eight language groups and 14 First Nations, 11 of which are self-governing First Nations under modern treaties. I still think that is the majority in Canada. It isn't just about the economics, Mr. Chair.

We recognize that there are financial implications and that is why we provided advance notice of our intentions to table the legislation and provide regular updates so that employers have time to prepare. I sat down with several of the chambers of commerce here in the territory to discuss just that, and I gave them as early a notice as I could — encouraging us to announce publicly that we would be seeking to bring in National Aboriginal Day as one of our first bills.

From the outset, establishing National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday was a key commitment of the Liberal platform during the election. I also note that it was given to me in my mandate letters from the Premier. On March 2, we announced both our intent to reconvene the Yukon Legislative Assembly and the proposed changes to the legislation that we would be bringing forward, including legislation to establish National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday beginning this year in 2017.

When I stood and tabled Bill No. 2, Mr. Chair, newspaper advertisements notified employers and the public of the government's intent with this initiative. Just last week, notices were sent to municipalities, First Nation chiefs, development corporations, chambers of commerce, the Yukon Federation of Labour, and contractors through the Highways and Public Works tender management system. When I attended the quarterly meeting of the Association of Yukon Communities, and in my first meeting with the president of the Association of Yukon Communities, I alerted all present to National Aboriginal Day coming forward this year here in the Legislature, and everyone was appreciative of that.

That said, we are confident that these costs will be offset by social and economic benefits, including forging and enhancing respectful relationships with aboriginal peoples, employee satisfaction and increased spending in tourism, hospitality, First Nation small businesses and recreational sectors.

We agree with the majority of the public and the business community that responded to the survey that the benefits of this holiday outweigh the challenges. Feedback indicates that the cultural and symbolic importance of recognizing National Aboriginal Day and the contributions of First Nations is an important, concrete recognition of First Nation culture and heritage within Yukon.

The results of the survey and the response at the polls for this government's platform commitment to establish National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday speak volumes to the wishes of the people of the Yukon. This government is listening. Enabling Yukoners to recognize, respect, understand and celebrate indigenous peoples' history, culture, traditions and continuing contributions is a key to a modern Yukon that can build on its strengths of diversity and inclusivity.

Celebrating National Aboriginal Day on June 21 allows Yukoners to recognize and celebrate the contributions of, and partnerships with, indigenous peoples across Canada and here at home. This government is building strong government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations. We are, together as governments, responsible for a healthy, vibrant, tolerant and inclusive society that rises to meet the needs of all its citizens today and into the future.

Our strength lies in our abilities to reconcile past injustices with integrity and humility, forge and bolster partnerships, celebrate our differences, capitalize on our strengths and inspire innovation and collaboration.

Mr. Chair, this government is privileged to listen to and serve the people of Yukon, to work collaboratively and respectfully with others and to lead the way toward a progressive, inclusive, multi-faceted and contemporary society. As a government, we are honoured to debate this bill with members of the Assembly and Yukoners in order to establish June 21, National Aboriginal Day, as a statutory holiday. We know that it is the right thing to do. We look forward to responding to questions that may arise.

**Mr. Kent:** I would like to congratulate the Minister of Community Services for bringing this bill to the floor of the House. He has mentioned, as well as the Government House Leader, that this is the first bill that we are able to get into Committee. I am certainly pleased that we are able to bring this forward. As mentioned by colleagues and as witnessed in the vote at second reading, the Official Opposition Yukon Party does support this bill.

We do, however, have some questions and, to echo the minister's welcomes, I too would like to welcome Ms. Michaud and Mr. Hickey to the Legislature here today, as well as Ms. Michaud's service dog. I think that is a first for the floor of the House — that we have had a service dog.

I would also like to thank the minister's officials who were present at the briefing. It didn't take very long. The legislation is very straightforward. I did mention to them at the time that I would have some questions on the floor just to get on the record and just to give a little bit of an outline of what those questions will be for the minister.

I'm going to be bringing forward questions on behalf of business organizations and individual companies that we have

heard from. I will also follow up on a letter that I sent to the minister, as well as his colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, on March 9, 2017. He has provided some responses in his opening statement, but we will look to explore some of the other responses as well.

I think I will just get right into it. My history in Committee of the Whole is not to put — it's my first time asking questions in Committee of the Whole, I guess, but when I was on the answering side working with the Premier at the time, we went back and forth rather quickly, and I found the flow was a little bit better.

I guess the first question that I would like to ask is with respect to the economic analysis aspect. I know that this was something in a discussion I had with the Yukon Chamber of Commerce that they requested of the minister, and I believe what they mentioned to me was that the minister told them he would take that under advisement.

He did mention in his opening remarks that the Northwest Territories was asked to do an economic analysis. I think his words were that there was a broad scope and it would take significant resources.

I'm actually as interested in the benefits. I have a couple of questions for the minister. Was there any consideration given to doing this economic analysis before implementing this platform commitment and item from his mandate letter? If not — there's obviously not time to do it prior to enacting the statutory holiday this year, but would the minister consider conducting an economic analysis over the next year or two, when we get some decent data surrounding that day, so he can report back to the House what the benefits are in particular? I think that is something we would be interested in hearing and it would help us in conveying that story to the business community.

Those are the few opening questions I have for the minister.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** That's a great question and I thank the member opposite for it. We are certainly supportive of evidence-based decision-making and I think it's great to do some analysis on it. I know we reached out to the NWT and we looked for any analysis they had. I mentioned that in my comments. We are interested to understand what the economic costs and benefits are to having National Aboriginal Day. I would happily consider that and I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

Mr. Chair, I am looking at the clock, and I notice that the time is 5:25 p.m. I move that you report progress.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Chair report progress on Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*.

*Motion agreed to*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Ms. McPhee that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

**Chair's report**

**Mr. Hutton:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 2, entitled *National Aboriginal Day Act*, and directed me to report progress.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.*