

Mr. Speaker, Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, honoured guests and visitors, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the First Session of the 34th Legislature.

I want first to acknowledge that the opening of this new Legislature is occurring on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and the Ta'an Kwach'an Council.

I also want to recognize that Yukoners will be joining others across the country in celebrating Canada's 150th birthday, and here in Yukon we will also be commemorating the 75th anniversary of the building on the Alaska Highway.

On behalf of all Yukon citizens, I want to thank members of this assembly for your commitment to serve the public. I want to give a special welcome to members on both sides of the House elected for the first time. Our system of government depends on the willingness of people to put the time and effort into working on behalf of Yukon people.

This is the tenth Legislature since Yukon achieved responsible government in 1979. It is a time to reflect what we have achieved in Yukon in the last 35 years.

The responsibilities of this Legislature have grown in this period. With the devolution of jurisdiction for natural resources more than ten years ago, these responsibilities are largely the same as those of a province.

Most Yukon First Nations are self-governing, having reached First Nation Final and Self-Government Agreements over the course of the last three decades. Yukon First Nations play a key role in the economic, social and cultural life in Yukon and our community recognizes the importance of advancing reconciliation.

Our system of government has matured and our ability as a jurisdiction to speak on the national stage about issues important to the people here has grown.

All parties represented in this Legislative Assembly have contributed to the progress Yukon has made since 1979. I want to acknowledge the efforts of the many involved over the years.

Over the next two months, my government will be carrying out a review of spending priorities. This review will provide the basis for an appropriation bill for the coming fiscal year, which the government will present to the house in March, along with supplementary estimates for the current year. At that time, my government will also present a Speech from the Throne that will set out in more detail the government's priorities and its legislative proposals.

The agenda for this session is to put the machinery of the Legislative Assembly in place. You have elected a Speaker to preside over discussions in this House. You will be asked to elect the other two House officers, the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole. As well, you will be asked to appoint members to this Assembly's Standing Committees.

These decisions will allow the work of the legislative committees to get underway before the House meets again this spring.

Honourable members, thank you. May fairness and wisdom guide your deliberations.