

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, November 7, 2012 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF PAGES

Speaker: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a new page to the House. He is William Sternbergh from Porter Creek Secondary School. I'd like all the members to welcome him to the House at this time. He missed out on the initial training, so today is his first day. Give him a little slack.

Applause

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Remembrance Day

Speaker: This is the week of remembrance leading up to Remembrance Day, this Sunday, when we will all gather at the Canada Games Centre inside, out of the cold. The flags will be marched in, followed by the RCMP in their Red Serge, the army and air force cadets, then the current serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces and Rangers. Last to arrive will be the Legion members and the veterans. Not all Legion members are veterans and not all veterans are Legion members.

The number of veterans this year is again smaller than last year. The end of World War II was 67 years ago. The Korean War ended a mere 59 years ago. Those who came home are getting on in age and so they should. Sadly, I know of five veterans who have passed away this year. I also know there were others, but I don't have their names, and for that I apologize.

Bill Skea served in the navy and was a piper with the Midnight Sun Pipe Band. Fred Thompson was in the infantry and a truck driver with White Pass. Barney Roberge served a full career with the navy, better known here as the no-nonsense manager of the 98 Hotel. Bill Ford was a tanker serving with the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps and will be remembered for his love of hockey, which he played into his 80s. Noreen McLennan voluntarily joined the Canadian Women's Army Corps. Originally from Arnprior, Ontario — just west of Ottawa — she moved to Yukon in 1956 and worked for the army here and then the Department of Public Works.

Not all of these veterans served overseas, for it takes a lot of Force members to support one soldier in the field, from training new recruits, ordering and shipping supplies, organizing and transporting units inside and outside of Canada, keeping records of what is happening and even releasing soldiers back to civilian life. There are many jobs that need to be done and all are part of the collective effort and do not lessen the importance of their work, nor their commitment.

I knew all of these veterans, some better than others. All of them were fiercely proud of their service to Canada and even prouder to be called "Yukoners." We should all be thankful for their service to Canada and what they gave individually to Yukon.

Around Thanksgiving several years ago, a grade 2 teacher asked the students what they were thankful for. Noreen's granddaughter, Shea — who is actually with us today — responded that she was thankful that her grandmother didn't get hurt when she won the war. We all had a lot of laughs over that and Noreen never tired of telling the story. But it's true that every veteran should be looked at as individually winning the war; collectively they did it.

I am very pleased to introduce some of Noreen's family and friends who are with us in the gallery today: Heather Hierlihy, Tim Hierlihy, Tavis Hierlihy, Bryce Hierlihy, Shea Hierlihy, Nicki Simcoe, Terry Neis and Pam Cotton. Welcome to our House. We thank all of the veterans for their service, not just to Canada but also to the Yukon.

Applause

In recognition of Farmer of the Year, 2012

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Today I rise to pay tribute to Yukon's 2012 Farmers of the Year on behalf of the Assembly. It's a pleasure this year to recognize the very deserving recipients: Steve and Bonnie MacKenzie-Grieve. As Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and as MLA for Lake Laberge, it was my pleasure to present them with this award on the weekend. Steve and Bonnie are the owners and operators of the Yukon Grain Farm, located in my constituency of Lake Laberge on the Mayo Road or the north Klondike Highway, as the Department of Highways and Public Works would refer to it.

Steve and Bonnie exemplify dedication and a passion for continuing to expand their venture in new and creative ways. They also have employed a number of other Yukoners in their farming operation.

The name is Yukon Grain Farm, but they are better known by many people for their potatoes, which have become very visible in Yukon stores, and for other products including carrots, beets and broccoli. They demonstrate an interest in becoming involved and working with the community and they strive to always improve their operation. They were nominated and subsequently chosen as 2012 Farmers of the Year for several significant reasons that make them stand out.

To begin with, this year they worked with two Whitehorse schools on From the Ground Up, a healthy choice fundraiser. This promotion, initiated through the health promotion unit of Health and Social Services, was very successful and was positive for all involved. The initiative involved selling boxes of fresh Yukon Grain Farm vegetables as a fundraiser for the schools. It showed youth and their families the importance of supporting local farmers, raised awareness of local food production, and promoted health and healthy eating within the community.

In the words of one nominator, Steve and Bonnie were willing to make it work and ensured that all orders were filled. They are diligent in their attention to detail and strive for the very best products they give out to the community. They have

very high expectations for their produce and only provide top quality. This was apparent in the vegetables they provided for the healthy choice fundraiser campaign.

Another notable initiative for 2012 for the Yukon Grain Farm was the implementation of the Canada Good Agricultural Practices program, developed by the Canadian Horticultural Council. This was the first for any Yukon farm.

The GAP program is an on-farm food safety program for companies that produce, pack and store fruits or vegetables on the farm. To become certified in the program, a farm must train staff, document procedures and follow a rigorous hazard analysis approach. The processes are audited by a third party who visits the farm, reviews the record, inspects the facilities, interviews staff and assesses compliance to the program.

The program provides customers with the assurance that the products they receive are safe and attest to the ongoing FoodSafe operation of the business. It is a time-consuming and expensive program to implement, but provides consumers with peace of mind that they are receiving safe, healthy produce, and GAP is an added incentive to do business with and purchase products from the Yukon Grain Farm.

Perhaps most notably and most impressive for 2012 is that we saw increased prominence in the display of Yukon Grain Farm products in local stores, including the carrots, which were very visible upon entering local supermarkets this year, adding to the potatoes, which were also very visible. What is really notable about that is that this is prime retail space for the local supermarkets. Stores do not give up prime retail space to a product unless they believe that product will attract customers and make them money. What we have seen and heard from grocery stores is that, in fact, the dollar-per-foot of display space provided in relation to the products' return they get was the highest for Steve and Bonnie's products of any of their elements within the store in their prime display space.

So Yukon Grain Farm delivers a quality product at a fair price. Consumers from all over the Yukon and beyond go into these stores, see Yukon produce featured prominently and, upon getting it home, I think anyone in this Assembly, who are listening and purchased their products, will agree that they're very high quality vegetables and that the carrots are, far and away, the best carrots you have ever purchased in the supermarket. Consumers that have never been to a farmer's market see in the grocery store the Yukon produce and the opportunity to purchase locally grown food, so the leadership of the Yukon Grain Farm and Steve and Bonnie does a lot for Yukon farmers and the Yukon agricultural sector as a whole in raising the product, increasing the production of local food significantly, and making it available to more Yukoners to purchase.

So, again, I am very pleased and proud to commend Steve and Bonnie MacKenzie-Grieve for receiving the 2012 Yukon Farmer of the Year award, and to thank them very sincerely for the significant contribution they have made to Yukon agriculture each and every year since beginning operation. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, if I may, I would ask all members to welcome Steve and Bonnie to the gallery.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?
Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Tredger: I'd like to introduce a friend and former neighbour from Pelly Crossing. He's a Quest musher known for his care of his dogs, and he and his wife, Anne, are now owners/operators of Muktuk Kennels. I'd like to introduce Frank Turner to the gallery.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Dixon: I have for tabling today the *Yukon Government Climate Change Action Plan, September 2012 Progress Report*.

Mr. Tredger: I have for tabling the following document: *Identifying Health Concerns relating to oil & gas development in northeastern B.C.: human health risk assessment — phase 1 report* that is prepared by the Fraser Basin Council to the B.C. Ministry of Health.

Mr. Elias: I have for tabling today a handwritten letter sent to the Arctic Winter Games organizing committee, and it's regarding the sled dog competition inclusion into the 2016 Arctic Winter Games. It is signed by the living legend, Frank Turner.

I also have for tabling a document from the United States House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce — Minority Staff, dated April 2011, and it's regarding chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions for presentation?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motion?

NOTICES OF MOTION

Ms. McLeod: I give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon, in keeping with the commitments outlined in its 2011 election platform, to implement initiatives and actions emanating from the "Our Towns, Our Future" review that included 75 findings in relation to the following 18 themes:

- (1) Yukon Government and Municipal Relations;
- (2) First Nation and Municipal Relations;
- (3) Regionalization and Governance;
- (4) *Municipal Act* Review Process;
- (5) Community Development Teams;
- (6) Municipal Sustainability Indicators;
- (7) Climate Change Adaptation;
- (8) Yukon Municipal Resources Website;
- (9) Provision of Local Services;

- (10) Municipal Infrastructure Deficit and Asset Management;
- (11) Revenue Generation;
- (12) Lot Development and Land Availability;
- (13) Comprehensive Municipal Grant;
- (14) Increasing Cost and Burden of Regulations;
- (15) Impacts of Peripheral Residents, Businesses, and Industries on Municipal Services;
- (16) Energy Costs;
- (17) Employee Recruitment and Retention; and
- (18) Training: Building Local Capacity.

I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, Land Planning branch, to continue its recently expanded efforts on local area planning and zoning by continuing to work with residents on initiatives, including:

- (1) Fox Lake Local Area Plan;
- (2) Carcross Local Area Plan;
- (3) West Dawson Sunnydale Local Area Plan;
- (4) Marsh Lake Local Area Plan;
- (5) Mayo Road Zoning Amendments; and
- (6) Mount Lorne Zoning Amendments.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue working with Yukon citizens living outside of communities by addressing their needs and priorities, including local area planning and infrastructure development.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to implement a successor program to the seven-year, \$8.8 billion Building Canada fund that was established under the 2007 Building Canada plan, due to expire in 2014, that funded on a cost-sharing basis national, regional and local priorities and support projects designed to deliver results in three areas of national importance; namely, a stronger economy a cleaner environment, and strong and prosperous communities.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to work with municipalities and local advisory councils to address the needs and priorities of citizens living in Yukon communities.

Ms. Stick: I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to review the Yukon supplementary allowance with a view to:

- (1) increasing the amount of the allowance to allow recipients to meet their needs; and
- (2) indexing the allowance to the consumer price index so that recipients do not fall behind.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with Northern Cross and the Yukon Conservation Society to increase awareness about the Yukon's oil and gas industry.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* amendments

Ms. Stick: Yesterday, we heard the Minister of Highways and Public Works say that changes to Yukon's *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* to keep more government information secret would bring us to the middle of the pack. I'd like to hope that this government strives to be more than just average. In fact, there's no reason why Yukon shouldn't lead the pack when it comes to open and transparent government and access to information.

The fact that Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador have weaker access to information laws is no reason to weaken the laws in the Yukon. So I ask the minister again: Will the government stop its plan to strip Yukoners of their democratic rights and withdraw the proposed changes to the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Let's not forget that the ATIPP act is the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, not just access to information. I thank the member opposite for the question again. I'm not sure what they're missing from the answer, but I'll take this opportunity to repeat myself.

Let us not lose sight of the fact it was a Yukon Party government that first introduced the ATIPP act, not the NDP or Liberals. The purpose of the proposed amendments is to bring clarity to the section of the act where there is uncertainty. These amendments will serve to balance the public's right to information against the public's right to the protection of privacy. These proposed amendments help ensure that Yukon's ATIPP act works as intended and is consistent with the legislation in other Canadian jurisdictions.

Ms. Stick: In these amendments, we are seeing an attack on, or shrouding of secrecy of the government's information. Our democratic institutions belong to the people and are responsible to the people. We should make government business more public by proactively disclosing documents and information, not shrouding government in secrecy. Don't take our word for it.

Tyler Summers of *Democracy Watch* said, and I quote: "So in preventing Yukoners in this situation from accessing this information, it's stripping people of their democratic rights, and that's a regressive step. It's backwards. We should be moving forwards."

Again, will this government stop its plan to restrict public access to information, go back to the drawing board, consult widely and propose a bill to increase information access, instead of restricting it?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I thank the member opposite for the question. Let's not lose sight of the fact that it was this Yukon Party that brought forward the ATIPP act. We did some

amendments to the act for the inclusion of institutions such as Yukon College, Yukon Hospital Corporation, and Yukon Energy Corporation. But still, the ATIPP act is an information and protection of privacy act. The purpose of the proposed amendments is to clarify in the section of the act where there's some uncertainty and to ensure that Yukon's ATIPP act works as intended and is consistent with legislation in other jurisdictions.

Ms. Stick: It is a good act; I don't dispute that. But from what the Yukon Party would have us believe, our government has been functioning just fine for these past 10 years. They've provided no evidence that these changes are needed.

He can reference changes made in 2009 all he wants; the reality today, here in 2012, is that the Yukon government is attacking our democracy. This bill is a sign that the government is out of touch and thinks it should be above scrutiny. Either that, or there's something to hide.

Will the minister tell this House what his government is trying to hide from Yukoners through this attack on our democracy?

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, the access to information is there, but also the protection of privacy. I said that earlier — not just the access to information.

I alluded to this earlier and I'm going to allude to the same thing: this ensures that Yukon's ATIPP act works as intended and is consistent with legislation in other Canadian jurisdictions. This is to balance the public's right to information against the public's right to protection of privacy. The proposed amendments will bring clarity to this section of the act where there are some uncertainties. I thank the member opposite for the question.

Question re: Hydraulic fracturing

Mr. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, in July, EFL Overseas Energy announced it had acquired control of the Kotaneelee gas project in the Liard River Basin. According to EFL Overseas Energy, this will give them, and I quote: "... foothold ... The Kotaneelee gas field, with its conventional and important unconventional resource development opportunities."

The primary method of extracting unconventional gas reserves is through fracking, plain and simple. With this one company expressing interest now in unconventional gas in the Liard Basin, will the minister commit to a full public discussion on fracking before more companies apply to frack?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, I have to remind the member, as I did yesterday: the Member for Mayo-Tatchun consistently stands up and paints a picture that suggests that somehow someone is imminently applying to do hydraulic fracturing in the Yukon and he paints this as something that is very much to be feared.

Aside from the fact that this is an activity that occurs across the country in jurisdictions with oil and gas regulations and aside from the fact that the very work in New Brunswick the member was referring to yesterday recommended against a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing, but rather for government to take the appropriate steps to ensure that it was effectively managed, what again I will remind the member of is that, contrary to his repeated assertions, this is not an imminent prospect.

The earliest that someone would be looking at doing it, which would be something that is not a certainty — that because someone asks to do something, they are allowed to do it. It would be years down the road. So, again, the member should be a little less alarmist and spend a little more time researching facts.

Mr. Tredger: For the record, the article I referred to did not make mention one way or the other on whether there should or should not be fracking going ahead in New Brunswick. They just gave the information.

We know that EFL Overseas Energy is not going to frack the Liard Basin next week, but they and other companies are starting to spend large amounts of money. To make plans to secure future investment in the Liard Basin and other parts of the Yukon, they will want to frack in the not-too-distant future.

Will the minister explain why he is opposed to the idea of a public consultation on the issue of fracking, a position supported both by YCS and Northern Cross?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, what I have to remind the member is the member has consistently been very alarmist around the entire oil and gas industry.

I have to remind the House again that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun is the same member who stood up consistently while the review of the request for rights of oil and gas in the Whitehorse Trough was going on and consistently told Yukoners that government had decided to issue the rights. They knew that was going to happen when, in fact, as I said from day one, government considered there to be three options, on which we wanted public input: all of the areas, some of the areas or none of the areas. We listened to the public; we chose none of the areas.

In the case of hydraulic fracturing, I would again remind the member that the same reports he likes to cite and talk about — the work that was done in New Brunswick — they have reviewed it. The recommendation in New Brunswick was against a moratorium, but rather to safely regulate the activity. I would point out, specifically to the point of Northern Cross and the Yukon Conservation Society, that we welcome the letter received from them. We look forward to hearing more from them about what they would suggest government should do to foster and inform public dialogue about the oil and gas industry, and we very much support continued conversation and public discussion focused on trying to have everyone provided the information and evidence, and have good, solid, informed discussions about matters such as the oil and gas industry.

Mr. Tredger: It's not me who's being alarmist; it's a lack of information and clarity and a government that doesn't appear to be listening that is alarming the people of the Yukon.

Yukoners across all walks of life want to have a conversation with their government about the future of the oil and gas industry. Yukoners want to explore potential benefits and discuss their concerns. Yukoners want the scientific evidence to be laid out on the table for all to see and discuss. Yukoners want to be engaged in what has become a very important issue for them. What they are asking this government to do is to provide some leadership and create an open and transparent process for Yukoners to engage in. One day in the next few years, a

company will apply to frack. Why is this minister so insistent on dodging the issue? Why won't he encourage a public discussion now, instead of leaving it to the last minute?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: As I discussed yesterday, I have received a joint letter from the Yukon Conservation Society and Northern Cross Yukon. Within that letter, they have articulated some recommendations that they feel are important for all Yukoners. Really, this is a discussion about outcomes versus processes as well. Yukoners want to use Yukon resources for Yukon energy. We also want to ensure that we keep our water safe and that we protect our environment. That is the intent of all Yukoners, and I'm looking forward to meeting with the Yukon Conservation Society and Northern Cross Yukon together to really find out from them directly why they made the recommendations they did.

Once we get a real understanding from that, it can help us to shape what our next steps forward will be, because this is how we're going to move forward on this where we have the proponents. We have someone who is actually, actively dwelling and we have the Conservation Society — the two ends of the spectrum coming together to have a good discussion on how we can move forward — that's how this government will move forward.

Question re: Peel watershed land use plan

Mr. Silver: I have some questions for the Minister of Environment regarding his department's role in the Peel land use planning process.

Early in 2012, the minister co-signed a Cabinet submission that resulted in the now infamous eight principles being released a few weeks later. As the eight principles were not developed in collaboration with First Nation governments, who are supposed to be partners in this process, can the minister tell the House who did author these principles?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, as we announced a few weeks ago, we have opened the final round of public consultation for the development of the Peel land use plan. Since the election, Yukon government has been very clear about its perspective on how to move forward. The eight principles the member opposite referenced were jointly developed by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Department of Environment, in collaboration with a number of other departments.

Those principles guided government's work forward to where we are today. So I believe that answers the member opposite's question. I would take the opportunity, though, to encourage Yukoners to participate in the consultation currently ongoing and provide thoughtful and constructive input about the tools, scenarios, and concepts proposed on our www.peelconsultation.ca website.

Mr. Silver: According to documents that we've obtained through the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the authors of the eight principles were the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of the Environment. These same documents make it clear that there are a number of unhappy people in the Department of Environment, who saw their good work being thrown under the bus by this government. With the release of the eight principles, it

became pretty clear which department was calling the shots and which department was heading the plan. E-mails from Environment speak of frustrated staff, one in particular, saying, and I quote: "Interesting that this department has to get the planned principles from the news release."

To the Minister of Environment: Who is supposed to be a partner in this exercise? Why were employees in his department left to learn about these major changes in directions from a news release?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: All I can say with the utmost certainty is that throughout the process of this endeavour since the election, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Department of Environment have been in lockstep in their development of the work that has been undergone so far. Senior officials in both departments were involved from square A to where we are right now. I can say with certainty that the Department of Environment's perspectives were provided thoroughly in the work that is presented to the public currently, as well as the work provided by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

The two departments worked in lockstep and they continue to do so. As well, there were important contributions from the departments of Tourism and Culture, Justice, land claims and a number of other departments. This was really an excellent team effort from across government.

Mr. Silver: Shortly after the government released its eight principles, officials in the Department of Environment expressed reservations. They were concerned, and rightfully so, that the government not just disperse little protected areas around the region if they wanted to maintain conservation priorities. The Yukon Party's new plan has done just that, so these concerns are valid and they were ignored by this government.

Briefing notes prepared by the minister this fall — the kind of documents that will not see the light of day under proposed changes to the ATIPPA act before us this sitting — made the following statement: "There is considerable public support for some form of protection in large wilderness areas in the region."

The new Yukon Party plan for the Peel ignores that public support. It leaves entire areas open to development.

Why didn't the Minister of Environment represent the advice of his department officials when he co-authored the eight principles with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Once again, we hear some very interesting and inaccurate assertions coming from the Leader of the Liberal Party. What I would point out to the member opposite is that development of this approach was jointly done by the Department of Environment and Energy, Mines and Resources with leadership especially of senior and involved officials in developing this work on the basis of sound evidence, contrary to the member's assertions.

I point out that this is the same member who attacked the proposed modifications the Yukon Party came up with and the same day, I believe it was, or it might have been the next day, asked in an e-mail if he could have a briefing so he could actually understand what we were proposing. The member has no interest in the facts of what the government is doing because

Yukon government has in all of the proposed modifications protected roughly three-quarters of the entire Peel area, would limit the maximum footprint of activity to less than one-fifth of one percent. That would ensure that 99.8 percent of the areas within restricted use wilderness areas would remain undeveloped and in protected areas.

No new surface or subsurface dispositions would be issued. I encourage Yukoners not to listen to the members; get the facts; visit www.peelconsultation.ca.

Question re: Old Crow recreation centre

Mr. Elias: For over a decade the people of Old Crow have demonstrated an ambition that remains unmatched by this government. The citizens of Old Crow have poured thousands of hours of hard work into the planning and design of a community recreation centre and not one of our citizens has been paid one cent for their efforts.

This community centre is a priority for us. It will feature an indoor hockey rink, a fitness area, an early-childhood education facility, and a 409-square-foot multi-purpose hall with an attached kitchen where we'll be able to host gatherings for up to 361 people. The constituents of every Yukon riding have immediate access to a community recreation facility except for those in the Vuntut Gwitchin riding.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the government that my constituents are Yukoners too. When can we expect the Minister of Community Services to make the Old Crow community recreation centre a priority at the Cabinet table?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, as I articulated the other day in the Legislature, this government recognizes the importance of investing in sport and recreation and community infrastructure development in every single Yukon community. That is, in fact, what the Government of Yukon is doing.

As I articulated, in this year's budget, we have approximately \$100 million in support of recreation infrastructure, drinking water upgrades, waste-water treatment, green energy, rural road upgrades, and so forth. We will continue to work with the Vuntut Gwitchin government, as we have in the past, and we'll continue to ensure that all communities have safe, healthy and sustainable infrastructure to draw from, and certainly that includes community infrastructure.

Mr. Elias: I just came home from our community of Old Crow and the minister keeps referencing the water well and the new waste oxidization unit in the dump, but I didn't see signs on those two buildings saying, "Hey kids, come play in here." This centre is a green project, designed to meet the specific environmental challenges of an isolated community that's north of the 67th parallel. It will be located in close proximity to the community's new water well, and photovoltaic solar panels will feed energy back into Old Crow's power grid. Waste heat from the ATCO diesel power plant will maximize the use of all energy produced in Old Crow, thus reducing the overall carbon footprint of our remote Arctic community. This project is a win for Old Crow, the north and the environment, and it will be a win for this government as soon as they sign on.

When will the minister join the people of Old Crow in this winning proposition and provide a firm commitment to the final stage of its development?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Again, the Yukon government recognizes the importance of recreation infrastructure to every single Yukon community. That is why the government is in fact constructing a new recreation centre in the community of Ross River — after the detrimental fire that took away its recreation facility a couple of years ago. That's why the Government of Yukon continues to work with the City of Dawson on improvements to its recreation centre. It continues to work with the community of Carcross in addressing its infrastructure needs and priorities — as we have to the tune of over \$12 million over the last several years.

So we continue to work on recreation infrastructure, such as what we have done in Marsh Lake and Mayo and, rest assured, we will continue to work with the Vuntut Gwitchin government on priorities, as identified with Vuntut Gwitchin government, through an inter-governmental accord that is currently underway between the Premier and the chief and council. We certainly recognize the very importance of this initiative to the citizens of Old Crow. We applaud the work that has been done, and we will continue to work to ensure that this does become a reality in days to come.

Mr. Elias: Now we're getting somewhere. The community of Old Crow has numerous agreements with private industry and governments in regard to the planned community recreation centre. We also have a memorandum of understanding that's signed between Yukon Electrical and our Vuntut Gwitchin Development Corporation. Our community has a signed inter-governmental accord, integrated community sustainability plan and a capital plan, all of which contain clauses addressing the delivery of a community recreation centre. There is an expectation here that a government lives up to the signed agreements it has with its communities and with other governments. I'm disappointed. I expected a lot more from a veteran politician, because I know when that minister puts her mind to something, you might as well consider it done. When will this government live up to the commitments it has repeatedly made to Old Crow and make this recreation centre a priority?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: For the member opposite, this minister is responsible to every Yukon citizen. This minister is responsible to every single First Nation government and community government, municipal government, local advisory council — and I work with all of them. There are critical infrastructure needs in every single community. This government has actually put money where its mouth is, and that is, in fact, why the Government of Yukon has invested and will continue to invest in critical community infrastructure — and that is inclusive of recreation and drinking water upgrades, which have been identified by the Vuntut Gwitchin government as a priority.

That includes solid-waste improvements and community upgrades to its road structure within the community of Old Crow. So rest assured — we are committed to working with every single citizen throughout the territory to meet the critical infrastructure needs.

Question re: Income supplements

Ms. Stick: Last week I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services a question about the Yukon supplementary allowance and services to persons with disabilities. Although the services for seniors the minister spoke about are all fine and good, he did not answer my question. Since then I've heard from more Yukoners struggling to find the supports they need. Some have reported they are now required to get a second opinion from another doctor to prove their disability and make them eligible for the Yukon supplementary allowance.

Will the minister tell this House why Yukoners with disabilities are being forced to jump through new hoops before they receive the Yukon supplementary allowance?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I'm not sure exactly which new hoops the member opposite is talking about because there has been nothing new introduced at the department level. Without knowing the specifics of any individual who has experienced difficulties, it's very difficult to answer these kinds of questions. But no new policy has been introduced.

We're still doing the same thing that we did previously, but we're improving the system, as I've stated many times in the past. We have now implemented a process by which people with permanent disabilities do not have to apply and provide medical advice on a monthly or semi-annual basis. So we are making improvements, and no other changes have been made to date.

Ms. Stick: Up until now — as I was aware — people had to come in once a year with the information about their disability and only had to come in once a year for their social assistance benefits. But they still only received the same amount as social assistance. The Yukon supplementary allowance is \$250 a month and that has not increased since 2005, not even with inflation. If we truly want to build an equal and inclusive society, we must do what we can so people with disabilities can live with dignity and participate in the communities to the best of their abilities.

Will the minister please tell us why the Yukon supplementary allowance has not increased, and when will he review these and other supports for persons with disabilities to ensure they actually meet the individual's needs?

Hon. Mr. Graham: This one is very easy to answer, because it's currently under review. Also, what we're attempting to do within my department and the Yukon Housing Corporation is come up with a better system by which persons with disabilities are able to access funds for both housing, as well as equipment required to keep them in their houses on a go-forward basis. We're making progress in that area, and I know the Minister of the Yukon Housing Corporation and I will, hopefully, be able to make some announcements in this area in the very near future.

Question re: Water management strategy

Ms. White: For years, the Yukon NDP has been calling for a comprehensive water strategy for the Yukon to protect the quality of both ground and surface waters and to ensure the careful stewardship of all of Yukon's water resources. The Yukon Party Leader joined this call. It has had a motion regarding a water strategy on the record since December of last year.

Can the minister tell Yukoners when they can expect a Yukon water strategy and what it will include?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Thank you to the member opposite for the excellent question. It's a priority of this government, of course, to develop a Yukon water strategy, and I'm glad to hear that the NDP will be supporting us in this endeavour.

As I indicated in our previous sittings, we are working toward the development of a water strategy. Earlier this year there was an excellent workshop held to bring together a number of different bodies and governments that all have a role to play in the management of Yukon's water. That was a very successful workshop as far as I can understand. I gave some opening remarks there, and I have had reports back since then that it was a successful endeavour. Work is ongoing within the department to develop such a strategy. I look forward to presenting to Yukoners and this House the Yukon water strategy as soon as it's done.

Ms. White: I look forward to that as well. The extractive industries, both mining and oil and gas, rely heavily on the use of fresh water for their businesses. The Yukon Party government constantly says it wants to provide clarity for industry and yet it is dragging its feet on creating a comprehensive water strategy. We've been waiting. This brings economic uncertainty and raises doubt in the minds of Yukoners. Government should take a clear and balanced approach to water in order to provide regulatory certainty and assure Yukoners that water will be protected.

When it finally gets around to it, how will the Yukon Party water strategy protect Yukon's water from secret chemical cocktails used in the oil and gas industry?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Again, I thank the member opposite for bringing up a priority of this government, which is of course the development of a water strategy for Yukon.

We've made very clear that this is a priority for us. It was in our platform. We gave direction to departments to develop this strategy immediately upon coming into office, so work is underway. I know the member opposite expects that we would just snap our fingers and have a strategy. These things take work, and we want to make sure that we talk to other governments and other bodies that deal with water in Yukon to ensure that we provide the best possible strategy for Yukon's water resources. It is a priority of this government and it's a priority for me as minister, and work is underway currently.

As I indicated earlier, we had a workshop earlier this June which brought together a number of different people and governments as well as departments within the Yukon government to discuss these issues. It was a very successful meeting, and they are doing work continuously in the Department of Environment on this project. I look forward to bringing this Yukon water strategy forward to Yukoners and to this House as soon as it is ready.

Ms. White: We share the values of many Yukoners when it comes to water. We want the Yukon to be a leader in developing a truly comprehensive water strategy and we are not alone. The Government of Northwest Territories has developed a water stewardship strategy with the vision that, "N.W.T. waters remain clean, abundant and productive for all time."

Will the Yukon Party government water strategy be done behind closed doors or will it be public? Will it include traditional knowledge of First Nations? Will it include both ground and surface water and a framework to include climate change impacts?

Hon. Mr. Dixon: The short answer is yes. Of course it will be developed publicly. I mean, public government and departments have already been engaged. A number of different departments, as well as different levels of government, have been involved to date. Of course, we will take into consideration a number of the factors the member opposite mentioned, including the effects of climate change, including ground water and Yukon's groundwater regime, and a number of other things, as well.

It's my intent that this Yukon water strategy not only provide guidance for the future, but will reflect some of the significant investments this government has made in water resources to date. We've developed a very innovative tool — an on-line tool for the collaboration and expression of Yukon water information. I believe it's www.yukonwater.ca.

As well, of course, we've made significant investments in increasing the level of baseline data that Yukon government develops and brings together. I would point to the investments made in the Rakla region that were underway this summer, which are reflected in this current budget. The investments this government has made in a number of different facets when it comes to Yukon water are significant and, of course, all of that will be brought together under the Yukon water strategy, which I hope to develop very soon.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has elapsed. We will proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 252

Clerk: Motion No. 252, standing in the name of Mr. Elias.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin

THAT this House supports the Minister of Community Services, who is responsible for sport and recreation, in her pan-northern efforts to ensure that the sports of speed skating, figure skating, curling, gymnastics, midget hockey and dog mushing are included in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin my comments by once again thanking each and every Member of the Legislative Assembly because if they didn't vote unanimously to allow me, as an Independent member, to rise on Wednesdays to speak, I would not be able to call this motion today — an important motion to thousands of our territory's citizens.

I'll begin with a couple of quotes. Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1963 said, "Our lives begin to end the day that we become

silent about things that matter." In my first opportunity here as the Independent member for the Vuntut Gwitchin riding, the inclusion of the six sports into the 2016 Arctic Winter Games matters to me, and I know that it matters to thousands of our territory's citizens.

I stand here today seeking the unanimous support of each member of this Assembly for the motion I put forward today because, whether it's our youth who, in the game of midget hockey, have the opportunity for a breakaway and score in overtime to win a medal; or in the game of curling, when it's tied and you know you have that last rock; or in gymnastics, when the pressure's on to make sure that you nail that dismount; or in the sport of speed skating where you're racing the clock and your opponents are around that last corner to the finish line; or in figure skating, where it's absolutely crucial that you land that final jump; or in dog mushing, where the teamwork between a person and an animal to get the fastest time is crucial.

It is my hope that in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games, our athletes, coaches, mentors, parents and the entire Team Yukon have the opportunity to experience that spine-tingling feeling of success in those sports.

I again ask that each MLA here today unite with our words of support on behalf of the Yukoners we represent so that our minister responsible for sport and recreation can say that we speak with one voice to ensure the sports of speed skating, figure skating, curling, gymnastics, midget hockey and dog mushing are included in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games, hosted by Nuuk, Greenland.

There has been a public outcry in our territory to the Arctic Winter Games International Committee's announcement earlier this fall. However, I want to begin by saying that the Arctic Winter Games are a spectacular northern exhibition of sport and culture, and I do recognize the situation the international committee is in and the pressures they have to deal with in achieving another successful Arctic Winter Games in 2016.

The Arctic Winter Games International Committee's tireless efforts in ensuring each and every Arctic Winter Games is better, stronger and bigger than the last does not go unnoticed. I appreciate it very much as I'm sure my colleagues in this House and those around the circumpolar north do.

The great Bobby Orr once said, "Growing up, if I didn't have sports, I don't know where I'd be. God only knows what street corners I'd have been standing on and God only knows what I'd have been doing, but instead I played hockey and went to school and stayed out of trouble."

I searched *Hansard* over the last few days and I couldn't find any reference to the Arctic Winter Games International Committee's vision, mission, governance, guiding principles, values and operating principles. So I am going to speak on each of those topics in the beginning of my response to the motion today.

With regard to the vision, "the Arctic Winter Games is a high-profile, circumpolar sport competition. The games provide an opportunity to strengthen sport development in the participants' jurisdictions to promote the benefits of sport, to build

partnerships and to promote culture and values. The games celebrate sport, social exchange and cultures.”

“For the participant, the games provide an opportunity for the developing athlete to compete in friendly competition while sharing cultural values from regions around the world.

“For sport, the games provide a vehicle for sport development throughout the north and for building a stronger infrastructure between sport organizations and developers at the community, regional and international levels.

“For host communities, the games provide an opportunity for community development and to build confidence and pride. In addition, legacy from hosting the games is the development of leadership, a capable volunteer base and physical facilities to serve the needs of residents and to improve the quality of their lives.

“The games are a source of pride for all partners. The collaboration between communities, governments, sport organizations and the private sector results in significant improvements to people of the north, while promoting unity and cultural understanding.”

“The mission: As stewards of the Arctic Winter Games, the international committee promotes the values symbolized by the three interlocking rings of the Arctic Winter Games logo, which include athletic competition, cultural exchange and social interaction.

The international committee provides leadership through the implementation of policy and the promotion and marketing of the games, thereby building effective partnerships to address the needs of host communities, international partners and the games sponsors.”

With regard to governance, “The permanent partners of the Arctic Winter Games include the governments of Alaska, Alberta, Greenland, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon.

“International government leaders responsible for the games provide policy direction for the games through decisions made during their meetings. These policy decisions for the Arctic Winter Games include, but are not limited to: areas of size and scope, hosting rotation, long-term planning, and membership in the Arctic Winter Games.

“The Arctic Winter Games International Committee is responsible for implementing policies and providing leadership to the games. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to the following: promotion and protection of the vision, principles and values of the Arctic Winter Games; selection of host sites; development of sports technical packages; the selection of sports; to establish and monitor hosting standards and manage and update Arctic Winter Games staging manual.”

With regard to the guiding principles and values, “The Arctic Winter Games bring together young athletes to participate in friendly competition and to share cultural values from countries and regions across the north. The games promote the development and benefits of sports and circumpolar cultures. The development of young athletes is the primary objective of the games. Participation in the games is intended to promote skill development, self-confidence, and self-esteem in the athlete. Arctic sports are a unique and essential element of the games; accordingly, some special conditions may apply. Pro-

motion of cultural understanding and harmony is important to the games. The games provide motivation for young athletes to develop active and healthy lifestyles and to make choices that could lead to the pursuit of personal excellence and provide the opportunity for participants to develop socially and culturally. The games provide an inspiration and motivation for coaches, officials and volunteer development. The games provide a major vehicle of community development and volunteer involvement.”

Our values: “The Arctic Winter Games International Committee believes in the values of fair play, access and equity, integrity, respect for self and others, partnerships, personal growth, community enhancement, cultural diversity awareness and understanding.”

“Operating Principles: The significance of the games as an important sport for development is paramount. However, community development, civic pride and cultural celebration are also recognized as important and desirable outcomes.

“The sports and events on the games program must be practised in most of the jurisdictions (in at least three units), and should benefit sport development in each unit.

“Youth athlete development needs are central to the decision-making of the Arctic Winter Games International Committee.

“Equity and access are supported throughout all aspects of the games and the games’ movement.

“Standards for facilities will be defined by the Arctic Winter Games competition requirements.

“The Arctic Winter Games should capitalize on the human and financial resources of the private sector, while respecting the principles and values of the games.

“In keeping with the vision of the Arctic Winter Games, sport selection for each games will be made based on a balance of interests of the permanent partners and on the games interests ...”

“As close as possible, the total number of male and female athletes selected should be equal. Gender specific sports will be considered on their own merit. For a particular sport, one gender will not carry the other gender into the games.

“Capital development is not an intended component of this program. However, the host community authority is responsible for providing the required facilities for the prescribed list of sports. The Arctic Winter Games International Committee believes that the required sports facility standards should be reasonable and available within eligible communities.

“The games are awarded to a single local authority. Volunteers are the backbone of the games. Cooperation with governments, sport organizations, host societies and the corporate sector are essential to the success of the games.”

“Some of the benefits of the Arctic Winter Games: “The Arctic Winter Games provide lasting legacies to everyone involved. For participants, the games provide an opportunity for the developing athlete to compete in friendly competition while sharing cultural values from northern regions around the world. For sport, the games provide a vehicle for sport development. For host communities, the games provide an opportunity for community development, confidence building and pride. For

governments, the games enhance the establishment of effective partnerships in order to improve the lives of people of the north, while promoting unity and cultural understanding.”

In this regard, the international committee will help to promote the benefits of the games and work effectively with all key partners, including major television and media outlets, in order to ensure the benefits are broadcast to the widest possible audience.

“Providing leadership to safeguard the future games: As stewards of the games, the international committee provides leadership to safeguard the future of the games.”

The international committee is entrusted to integrate a strategic planning process that includes input and participation from all key partners; developing and updating policies that reflect impacts of the changing environment as well as the needs of key partners; ensuring that the structure and decision-making processes reflect the stewardship role entrusted to the international committee by its partners; ensuring that the committee is, and is perceived by others to be, a responsive, professional, accountable and well-managed organization that works to meet the goals and objectives of the organization and the needs of its partners; ensuring that the committee’s financial resources are well-managed and are sufficient to successfully carry out the committee’s mission over the short and long term.

The goal of the Arctic Winter Games is to provide a forum of competition for those other than elite athletes with competitive opportunities elsewhere, to involve as many athletes as possible either in the games themselves or in team trials and to provide an opportunity for our communities to share in the spirit of friendship and goodwill as they showcase their volunteers and their community.

Arctic Winter Games brings our circumpolar world closer together by strengthening and showcasing our communities and providing our young people an international games opportunity to participate, showcase their talent and share in the joy of sport. The Arctic Winter Games is a high-profile circumpolar sport competition for northern and Arctic athletes. The games provide an opportunity to strengthen sport development in the participants’ jurisdictions, to promote the benefits of sport, to build partnerships and to promote cultural values.

The games celebrate sport, social exchange, and cultures. The games provide an opportunity for the developing athlete to compete in friendly competition while sharing cultural values from northern regions around the world.

The funding of the Arctic Winter Games is as follows: the Arctic Winter Games International Committee is funded by annual levy to the five governments having representatives on the board of directors: namely, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Yukon, Alaska, Alberta and Greenland.

In the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Yukon and Alberta, host societies receive substantial cash grants from the Government of Canada, territorial and provincial governments and the host municipalities. Greenland’s participation is funded by the Home Rule Government of Greenland through the Greenland Sports Federation. Of course, in all jurisdictions private sector donations are both very significant and increasingly important to the success of the games. The six permanent member juris-

dictions of the Arctic Winter Games, as I mentioned earlier, are northern Alberta, Alaska, Greenland, Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut.

Mr. Speaker, the leaders of tomorrow are being shaped and moulded in the here and now. The lessons we teach the youth of today will be with them for the rest of their lives, and there is no better place to teach children about the world than on the field of play. It promotes respect for your opponent and teammates. It encourages teamwork and a willingness to work with others toward a common goal.

This especially rings true when I see our youth excel — when they are challenged to succeed for their team, themselves and their jurisdiction, knowing that the athletes hold that responsibility. All of these traits can be beneficial in every aspect of life, not just in the sporting arena.

I’ll tell a story of what I speak, Mr. Speaker — a personal story — of an Arctic Winter Games moment that is etched in my memory. It was in 2004 at the Arctic Winter Games in Wood Buffalo, in Fort McMurray. It was at the Dene Games sports venue, and it was the gold medal finals in the stick-pull event. I was in the final for Team Yukon in open men’s class, and so was my little cousin, Kecia Kassi. She was in the junior female class, and she was 12 years old at the time. It was her first Arctic Winter Games, and it was the first time women were able to compete in the Dene Games event, largely because of the leadership of respected elder Sam Johnston. Anyway, Kecia was against an athlete from the Northwest Territories in the gold medal final and her name was Priscilla, and she was 19 years old at the time.

The stick-pull event emulates the traditional harvesting practices of grasping a live fish in traps with your bare hands. If I can give the context of the actual stick-pull event itself, the stick is actually coated with Crisco grease, and the stick is tapered on both sides from the centre of the stick, and the objective, at that time, in Wood Buffalo, was to pull the stick out of your opponent’s hand.

Traditionally, this event is a very prestigious event in many First Nations and aboriginal groups in the Americas. So Kecia and Priscilla faced each other for round 1, and they started with their right hand, and Kecia lost. So I spoke to her and said, “It’s okay. What you need to do here is focus and think of grandma and use her strength,” because our grandma, Mary Kassi, passed away on July 7 of that year. So they faced each other again, with the left hand this time, and Kecia won. So now they’re tied, and the official asked Priscilla, because she won the first round, “Heads or tails?” Priscilla picked “heads”. The official flipped the coin, and it was “tails”. The official asked Kecia, “Which hand do you want to pull with, because whoever wins this, wins the gold ulu.” Kecia looked at me, and paused for what seemed like an eternity. Then she quietly said, “My right hand.”

I thought, “Oh my goodness. She lost with her right hand,” but she was right-handed herself, and she looked so confident in her eyes, and I told her, “You can do this, Kecia. You can do this.” You could have heard a pin drop in that gymnasium when Kecia had to look up at her opponent because Priscilla was so tall. When the official said, “Pull,” they both struggled

and used all of their techniques and Kecia won. We all celebrated, and then Kecia and Priscilla shook hands and hugged each other.

Kecia still speaks of this moment to this day with pride and she is now eternal friends with Priscilla. Everyone in that gymnasium will remember that day. Kecia, her family, teammates and coaches, and all those in attendance will never forget that powerful moment of achievement. Kecia wrote in her biography — that you fill out prior to attending the games: “I only started in Dene Games on January 6, 2004. This is my first Arctic Winter Games and I am from an isolated community called Old Crow in the Yukon Territory. I am a Vuntut Gwitchin — People of the Lakes. Darius Elias ... and my coach for the Team Yukon Dene Games, is my personal role model.” She wrote that in her biography.

Mr. Speaker, I also won the gold ulu in a very similar situation. When we went back to Old Crow, we hung our medals on our grandmother’s headstone. I want the opportunity for that feeling of participation, accomplishment and competition and being a part of Team Yukon to exist within all the athletes of speed skating, figure skating, curling, gymnastics, midget hockey and dog mushing in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games in Nuuk, Greenland, because competition teaches more than just how to win and lose; it teaches a person how to win with class and at the same time, be gracious in defeat.”

Growing children need inspiration and physical stimulation, and sport is a great way to provide such things. Sport is an important teacher for youngsters. Sports teach them so many things that just can’t be easily learned anywhere else. Parents can teach their children to persevere, to look adversity in the eye and smile right back, to fight the good fight and never give up — but those are lessons that really cannot be learned until they are put into practice. Anyone can say they are going to see something through, but until they actually do it, it’s just talk. Sports give children the chance to work hard and achieve their goals. Hundreds of potential athletes who want to be able to achieve their goals through the sports of speed skating, figure skating, curling, gymnastics, midget hockey and dog mushing are excluded from the 2016 Arctic Winter Games. That is simply unacceptable to me.

It doesn’t matter if the child is not good at their chosen sport, either. They don’t have to be a star to benefit from being on Team Yukon. Athletes have a role on the team and they must play it perfectly if the team is to succeed and bring home an ulu.

This may mean they sacrifice personal glory for the greater good, a lesson that is very hard for most to learn, but we all have to do it. Our Team Yukon has a valiant history of doing just that, year after year after year. I want that sacrifice to be experienced by all of our athletes in all sports in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games.

Sport teaches so much more than what is easily seen on the surface. The physical benefits are obvious, as are the social benefits, such as learning to work with others and acceptance of those different from yourself. It allows for participants to find their role, change or adapt their role and redefine who they

are. It can give those who are involved a sense of self-worth and accomplishment.

Sport allows for team and individual success and failure, and young athletes will learn something every time they step on to the field, trail, court, arena and ice surface. Participation in sport does much more for youngsters than just keep their bodies in shape and growing at a healthy rate. It helps them learn the ways of the world, the benefits of hard work and determination, and how to co-exist with others to reach a common goal. These are traits that can be invaluable in the real world and developing such traits at an early age can only increase the chance for success in later life.

It’s no secret that I am an avid amateur sports fan and yes, I am calling on all the circumpolar politicians to find solutions to Nuuk, Greenland’s capacity issues so all sports are included in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games. My motion today is to support our minister of sports and recreation to intervene on Yukoners’ behalf to ensure that the 2016 Arctic Winter Games fulfills its vision and goals in their entirety and that we, the elected parliamentarians of the Yukon, speak with one voice and unanimously support our Minister of Community Services’ pan-northern efforts to ensure that the sports of speed skating, figure skating, curling, gymnastics, midget hockey and dog mushing are included in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games. It is my hope that a united voice from our Legislative Assembly will greatly assist our minister in the successful resolution to what many Yukoners view as a problem and a huge step backward.

I sent out a call for quotes from various organizations — sporting organizations that were scheduled to be excluded from the 2016 Arctic Winter Games, and within minutes I received replies. I’m going to take this opportunity to quote some of those that I received. Christine Benedict, chair of the Arctic Edge Skating Club said, “We do support this motion and have included a quote, which was written to the Hon. Elaine Taylor in support of including figure skating in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games: ‘In a northern jurisdiction such as Yukon, Arctic Winter Games participation and results are perhaps the most tangible and realistic goals that skaters can use to incite them to continue to work hard to develop their skills and abilities in skating. Our skaters skate in a region and section that produces many of the top skaters in Canada. As such, it is unrealistic for many of our skaters to expect to advance through competition at an inter-jurisdictional level. The Arctic Winter Games is the primary method that most Yukon skaters use to reach their inter-jurisdictional levels of competition. It provides the added and most important benefit of being able to forge relationships with individuals from other northern jurisdictions that have both similar and different cultural experiences.’”

Laini Klassen, president of the Yukon Amateur Speed Skating Association, said, “Darius, you can quote me by saying that without the Arctic Winter Games our sport would lose athletes. Many kids at the developmental stages involved in Arctic Winter Games have more than one sport they’re involved in. If our sport isn’t included, they will dedicate their time to something else like volleyball or snowshoeing just so they are able to be a part of the games. For kids in the north,

the Arctic Winter Games are most likely the biggest sporting event they will ever be a part of, so to take that opportunity away from a possible 400 athletes is unimaginable. I have had conversations with the presidents of Speed Skating N.W.T., Nunavut, and Alberta, and we all feel the same way about the loss. There is no doubt we will lose athletes. Thank you for this, and Elaine has been super too. I hope you are successful. I really don't see why anyone would oppose it."

Mr. Doug Hogan, president of the Teslin Minor Hockey Association and president of Hockey Yukon says, "Good morning, Darius. I also encourage Yukon government to step in on behalf of all our young athletes to ensure they have the opportunity to showcase their sport and represent all Yukoners in their pursuit of their chosen sport. Thank you for representing our young athletes."

Mr. Jim Stephens, a former Arctic Winter Games hockey coach went on to say, "I think it is unacceptable that these sports were removed from the Arctic Winter Games. There are many athletes that participate in the Arctic Winter Games, and this is a true highlight in their lives. It is a very special experience and really promotes pride in being a Yukoner. It is also a huge opportunity to make connections with people from other parts of the north. The youth of today are the Yukon's future, and I think the cancelling of these sports sends a very negative message to them. I don't think anyone in the Yukon supports this, and I am really baffled that the Arctic Winter Games organizing committee made this decision."

Tanya Doyle with the Yukon Gymnastics Association says, "Some of our athletes don't attain the high national level. I mean, we have had some in the past, but sometimes this is it. This is the 'big time' for them. This is their Olympics. So if that is not even a possibility, it kind of takes some of that drive out of the athletes."

Linden Mattie, the executive director of Yukon Curling Association says, "The Arctic Winter Games is a very crucial part of the athlete development role model or model for Yukon curlers. Losing the premiere event for athletes of this young an age category, especially one that has prepared for years in advance, presents a very real threat that the sport will lose athletes to other sports that are included in the event, and the odds of getting them back to our sport afterward is very small. Being left out of this developmental event will greatly affect our athletes' results at subsequent events, such as the Canada Winter Games and the Junior Nationals, all of which serve to build competitive adult athletes to represent our territory. Hopefully these few points are of some help to you in understanding how the decision affects our sport specifically."

Fabian Schmitz of the Dog Powered Sports Association of the Yukon, said, "We believe that mushing represents a lot of the key values and traditions associated with the north and the Arctic by many people around the world. To find out that mushing as a sport, among others, is not being supported at the Arctic Winter Games 2016 in Greenland, is incredibly disappointing. Mushing is the only winter sport that involves cooperation between human and animal, which makes it unique among all the other winter sports. The mushing competition at the Arctic Winter Games in 2012 in Whitehorse showed how

important these international events are to our youth. We support all politicians in the Yukon Territory to promote mushing as one of the most significant northern traditions in sports. Let's see dog teams and mushers compete at the Arctic Winter Games in 2016."

On the local CBC Radio 7:40 a.m. special report on Monday, September 19, 2012, reporter Sandi Coleman asked Tracey Bilsky, the executive director of Sport Yukon, the question: "Have you been hearing from parents as well in reference to the dropping of the sports in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games in Nuuk, Greenland?" Ms. Bilsky replied, "Absolutely. And there are especially those who have done the math and have figured out that my figure skater, that would be the year they would be able to go to the Arctic Winter Games, and really I'm not over-exaggerating when I state that these kids do really look forward to these games. It's their marquee event; it's their moment of a lifetime — usually a lot of the time, and its coaches can use it as a motivation to train and showcase their talent every two years. So, for those sports that won't be included in 2016, it will be more difficult to retain those athletes and to motivate them to prepare for competition."

I want to conclude my opening comments with one more quotation relevant to today's debate, and it's from our minister responsible for sport and recreation, who recently said, "Never have we seen in the games' history a reduction of 25 per cent of the sports. It would impact over 400 athletes in the north. These games are an integral part of sport development of any young athlete across the circumpolar North. They're more than games. It's about providing that venue of competition for young athletes. It's effectively our Olympics for northern circumpolar north." I can't agree more, and I want to thank the minister for her commitment to finding an amicable resolution to this issue, because it means so much to so many Yukoners. I hope that our minister can take our words of support here today and use them in her meetings as she seeks to include the sports of speed skating, figure skating, curling, gymnastics, midget hockey and dog mushing in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games.

I say let's unanimously support our minister and Team Yukon here today in this House so that during the 2016 Arctic Winter Games our aspiring athletes and those athletes across the north have the opportunity in all the sports to excel, to live healthy lives and come home with ulus around their necks and, most importantly, cherish the memories and experiences that will last them a lifetime. Again, my paramount consideration in presenting this motion to the Chamber today is to help ensure that the vision of the Arctic Winter Games is realized in its entirety in 2016.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I want to start by thanking the member opposite for putting this motion forward today for debate for all members' consideration and hopefully for unanimous consent. It is a motion that was tabled, ironically, on the same day as a motion that was tabled from our side of the Legislature, literally to the same effect, which is basically to work toward resolving the very situation at hand.

I want to thank the member opposite for enabling this discussion to take place because I think it's truly an opportune

time to do just that. First off, I really wanted to come in here with a hockey jersey from our own boys midget hockey team. The reason why I say that is because I am pretty darned proud of that hockey jersey; more importantly, I am pretty proud of the team effort that was put forward by the boys midget hockey team during the Arctic Winter Games held earlier this year. I can say that was probably the most intense game I have ever been to in my entire life.

Part of the reason why I say that is that just before — it was the day before I was meeting with the ministers responsible for sport and recreation in Northwest Territories and Nunavut — we had a meeting to talk about infrastructure, ironically, including sport infrastructure — the member opposite will be pleased to hear — and we were also talking about the games, of course, and the big game that was set to occur between Northwest Territories and the Yukon. Being a bit of the competitive soul that I am, I thought, “Well, you know what? Our team is as good as gold, so let’s just make a friendly wager,” so we did; I did just do that in front of our officials.

That was to put our faith and our confidence in that boys hockey team, the game and the job they were going to do the next day. If, in fact, we were successful, the minister responsible in the Northwest Territories would have to wear our hockey jersey with my name on the back in the Legislature on the first day of their sitting and they would have to reference our win during a tribute. Of course, the reciprocal would be asked of me as minister responsible. So, after I said that, you know I started thinking, “Good God, I really hope it goes our way.” It was an interesting game and it was a fantastic game. Yukon did come through. My colleague from Northwest Territories didn’t like it, but he did wear that jersey. I thank CBC Radio and CBC Television for actually showing that on their website. It was a great shot, and he did not look happy, I have to say. That was just an example of one event among a litany of events that occurred during the Arctic Winter Games. It’s really why we’re here today.

As I’ve stated on the floor of the Legislature, we all believe that sport and recreation contributes enormously to healthy lifestyles and that major games like the Arctic Winter Games provide our youth, in particular, with a really important opportunity to compete on an international stage. They are an essential part of the sport development system in the north and they were really formed for the purpose of providing our northern young athletes with the opportunity to compete among each other on a circumpolar stage like no other games have provided in the past. As a result, it has really helped shape the lives of many young athletes like Zach Bell, Jeane Lassen — and I’ll get to them in a bit here.

First of all, I just want to recognize all the individuals and representatives of the sport organizations who have come here today in the gallery, as they’re represented here — and not only those who are present here today — to thank them for their input and for their passion over the past couple of months.

I had an opportunity to meet with many of them yesterday to give them another update as to where we are with respect to this matter. I was just saying that in all my years as an elected representative, there have been, to be sure, many issues that

have caught the passion of Yukoners. But, I have to say, when the press release was issued by the international committee of the Arctic Winter Games about their decision to reduce the sports significantly, that’s when I started receiving phone calls, e-mails and letters. I was stopped on the street a number of occasions as well, and even approached at the hockey rink Saturday and Sunday morning. That’s what I call passion. That’s really what continues to motivate each and every one of us to do the best that we can do and to be the best that we can be. I just want to, again, thank each of the organizations and the members who have taken the time to be here today to offer their feedback and to offer their input ever since the announcement by the committee was made. I also want to thank the feedback from the administrators, the parents, the coaches, the athletes — it has been significant, bar none, and I thank them.

The member opposite has articulated some of those thoughtful deliberations by way of correspondence and I, too, would like to reference some of the correspondence I have received.

Again, I just want to say thank you for being here today because it really demonstrates your ongoing dedication and your passion for sport and recreation in healthy lifestyles and active living and all that that contributes to our territory, and ensuring that their respective sports are represented in games such as the Arctic Winter Games, as well as just showing that the games are a very important part of the sport development program here in the territory and across the north.

Earlier this year, as I said, the 2012 Arctic Winter Games were held here in Whitehorse and I was so proud to be the Minister of Community Services and, as such, responsible for sport and recreation. As I just referenced earlier, I watched a number of the competitions and I got to see, first-hand, just how excited and how passionate each of our athletes was — and the professionalism that was certainly demonstrated by each of our young athletes — and the pride, just to be part of the games. It was a fantastic experience. I would say it was the best games ever to be delivered in the Arctic Winter Games’ history.

I just want to say that, you know, it kind of all started there at the pep rally, back just before the games were officially launched. I remember I was there at the pep rally at the Yukon Arts Centre. It was great to have everybody there within the Arts Centre. It was a very good reminder of just how important these games are — how they bring us together to celebrate sporting excellence, but also it’s an opportunity to showcase our cultural heritage, our traditions, and who we are as northerners and to celebrate that.

It’s really our common experiences and our northern lifestyles that brings us together on the international stage and has made a positive impact throughout many lives over the years, including the member’s.

One of the best track cyclists in the world today, I would say, is Zach Bell. Zach Bell is a young man — he is a young man in my eyes — from my home town of Watson Lake. I want to say that this was earlier this year, but after winning bronze at a World Cup track cycling event back in London, Zach had this to say, and I think it’s really important to reflect

on this, because this is what he had to say about the Arctic Winter Games, in particular. He said, I competed at three Arctic Winter Games and they all gave opportunities to learn how to compete, fall in love with the sporting life and to be a fitting ambassador for my home. This event will inspire and shape the young people of the north in a way that has the potential to change the entire northern community, and that's worth getting involved in, however which way you can."

I thought that was a really fantastic way that Zach had summed up his experience at the Arctic Winter Games.

At the pep rally, Jeane Lassen, of course, another Olympian, who started off — she competed in the Arctic Winter Games and she reflected upon her experiences as well during the rally. Again, it's just about grasping that moment. Even for those who don't make it to the Arctic Winter Games, it's about trying and going to those trial events. That in itself is a spectacular opportunity for athletes throughout the north. So I just wanted to make reference to that.

All in all, it was really, truly the moment of our athletes' lives and it was truly an important step in each of their athletic careers. Each of our athletes worked so hard to be able to represent our territory, but so did every other jurisdiction represented on the international stage. I know for many it took years and years of dedication to get there.

The games that were held here in Whitehorse were really, in part, attributed to various partners getting involved, and Yukon government, to be sure, was a very proud sponsor, as was the City of Whitehorse, the business community, the corporate sponsors, Kwanlin Dun First Nation for hosting spectacular Arctic and Dene games at their new cultural centre. The Government of Canada was also a proud partner in the games.

And thanks go to all the parents, the friends, the families, the fans, and to all of the volunteers who also made the games spectacular. All told, our Team Yukon was comprised of about 345 people. It was a big team, and it included mission staff and coaches, chaperones and athletes, the cultural participants, and everyone else. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the 2,000-plus volunteers who contributed to the games and the very success of the games.

It was really well-planned. It was well-managed. It was well-articulated. It was a huge success, and that's why Yukon has really taken a leadership role in working with international communities when it comes to the continuation of the games — because of the successes, our experience, and our expertise we have been able to garner over the years.

Our next generation of athletes also deserves this same opportunity and experience when it comes to 2016. The motion before us today is really an opportunity for each and every one of us as legislators to support the ongoing work that our sport organizations do in the Yukon — and I talk about every sport organization — for sport development and for the provision of a consistent program that has allowed our athletes to excel at the regional, national and international level.

The Arctic Winter Games have existed for some 42 years and have offered athletes from circumpolar north with unsurpassed opportunities for development and social and cultural interchange. The games are the world's largest northern multi-

sport and cultural event. They have six permanent partners, including our Yukon Territory, Northwest Territories, Alaska and northern Alberta, Greenland and Nunavut. They currently also have three guest units from Nunavik, Quebec; Yamal, Russia; and the Sami people from Scandinavia.

The games combine athletic competition, cultural exchange and social interaction between the northern contingents, and they also serve to develop stronger economic and social ties between our participating units and lend considerable international exposure to the region in which they're hosted.

The hosting rotation for the games has already been stated; it occurs every two years; it has been in place since 1970, which includes the games being hosted in the Yukon six times. They are a key part of our sport development system in the Yukon. As I referenced earlier, the games were originally established to give our athletes that important multi-sport game environment and exposure to a competitive environment that has not necessarily been made available to northerners in the past and which would also allow them to take the next step in their athletic careers. We just have to take a look at Jeane Lassen and Zach Bell, and there are many, many others to be sure.

The Arctic Winter Games, as I mentioned, have existed since 1970. They've offered athletes unsurpassed opportunities on many different spectrums. There is an opportunity every two years to have the privilege of hosting the games. The 2016 games will mark the first time that Greenland will be hosting on their own. It's an opportunity that Yukon and the other permanent members strongly support. I want to make that very clear because it was a decision that was made years ago and we appreciate each and every permanent partner having that opportunity to host the sports.

In Greenland, 15 sports will be part of the program in 2016 as was announced by the international committee earlier this fall. Of course, this includes ice hockey, which will be held in Iqaluit, Nunavut, under what I would coin as a "special contract" arrangement made by the host society. The decision was to reduce, eliminate, five major sports from the sport program, and I referenced those: curling, figure skating, speed skating, gymnastics and dog mushing. In addition, hockey has also been reduced to two categories with the elimination of the midget category. According to the Arctic Winter Games International Committee, it was really a decision that was based around circumstances that transpired back in 2002.

At that time, there was an actual co-hosting arrangement between Nuuk, Greenland and Iqaluit in Nunavut. The two jurisdictions came together and co-hosted the event for the first time ever. Back in that day, as you can appreciate, being a relatively new territory — Nunavut, that is — and not having had the opportunity to ever host the games before, coupled with the fact of Greenland not having had the opportunity to host the games either, it led to some organizational challenges. According to the committee, led to some difficulties and some logistical challenges.

Since then, as a result of the 2002 games experience, the international committee — all-inclusive of the governments, as well — made a decision back in 2004 to no longer entertain co-hosting opportunities, that in effect only each jurisdiction, each

permanent participant, would have the ability to host the games on a rotational basis, that similar partnerships between two jurisdictions would no longer be entertained.

Of course, that has led us to where we are today. There are a number of jurisdictions in the queue, to be sure — 2016, as I just referenced, will be the first time that Greenland will be hosting the games on its own.

That has resulted in some logistical and financial challenges for Greenland to host those games in their entirety. Hence the decision of the host society to really work with the City of Iqaluit in looking at hosting some of the games — such as those two categories of hockey in Iqaluit — as a satellite venue versus the co-hosting arrangement. That's really key.

When the decision came out, I can say, as I mentioned before, there was quite a significant amount of feedback from Yukon citizens and, not just Yukon stakeholders, but, to be sure, we were the first out of the gate. I can say that served as a catalyst for every other jurisdiction to get on board.

When that happened, immediately what came to mind after having received numerous letters and pieces of correspondence and e-mails from parents — from Haines Junction, for example — from coaches to organizations, some of which were referenced by the member opposite — to the athletes themselves. I actually received an e-mail that I was responding to last night from a nine-year-old individual who has been a strong advocate of the games — again, another reminder of why we are here today.

I just want to reference some of the feedback we got because it does speak volumes. I'm not going to actually list off the names or make reference to the individual names because I just haven't had time to contact those individuals. I can say, though, that for one individual who has really had a lot of experience in coaching during the 2003, 2007 and 2011 Canada Winter Games, as well as three Arctic Winter Games in curling — this individual said that the loss of this one cycle for this sport — curling, that is — will have a four- to six-year impact on the athlete development capacity in the sports affected.

That's a really key point because, you know, in working with my colleagues from Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, it's about effectively removing a whole generation of sports. When you put it that way, the severity of a decision such as this really hits home. It says, "I do not feel that our youth will be hurt by this decision, as those interested in sport will simply migrate to the next best option for them." That's another interesting point because there are, to be sure, a number of athletes — young individuals — who are just waiting to hear if in fact their sport will be represented at 2016 because, if it isn't, if those individuals have that ability and that experience, they will gravitate to the next best sport that is on the docket in 2016. That has a ripple effect on those sports organizations that have worked so hard. Our government, previous governments and all the sport governing organizations have worked really hard to nurture and to build capacity in our sport environment.

That is a key thing to consider because the ripple effect of this is not just about 2016, but it has significant impact on a whole generation and even potential generations because of future games down the road — 2018 and 2020 — when there

are other smaller communities that are also on the docket to host these games.

This individual also said that sports will be hurt, as they will not have the same carrot at the end of the string as the other sports. Less engagement leads to perhaps less funding, and a vicious spiral begins. This individual then goes on and just reminds us of how the gold medal curling skips from the 2006, 2008 and 2010 Arctic Winter Games all have progressed to represent Canada at either the World Junior Curling Championships — which they have won — or the Youth Olympic Games, and have become the first Canadians to ever win a Youth Olympic medal.

So what other Arctic Winter Games sports can attest to that record in recent years? I'm not going to get into that battle of who wins the sports, because I will never win that battle, but it is interesting.

It talks about the very importance of these games and how it has nurtured our athletes to go on and compete on the national and international levels and that's important.

I want to talk about a piece of correspondence that I received from a nine-year-old boy, who states in his e-mail — it's fantastic; it's actually an e-mail to the president of the international committee, which he then sent to me and asked me to change their mind — no small feat.

He says, "I love speed skating and I would be eligible to speed skate in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games. I am really disappointed that speed skating will be taken out of the Arctic Winter Games in Greenland." He says, "When I watched the Arctic Winter Games here in Whitehorse this year, I saw how important it was for the kids in the games. I have been really excited about having the chance to travel to Greenland and who wouldn't? I want to know what it is like to skate on a different rink so that I can adjust if I start travelling to the Canada Winter Games or other competitions. I want to race with people outside our own club so that I can feel what it's like to race with someone I've just met or don't know at all. I don't get the chance to skate with other people in a pack, a group skating close together. I want to be able to make new friends from around the north."

I'll just perhaps reference correspondence that the member opposite has not referenced — because I don't want to be repetitive here. Another individual contacted me back in September, and I'll just reference that. It said, "My three children have participated in the games on a number of occasions. It has truly been a highlight in their lives and supporting careers. My husband has attended the games at least twice as a coach. I've been a volunteer. We're huge fans of the Arctic Winter Games. It's a reality that sports like speed skating will be very negatively influenced by the decision not to include them in the games. These small clubs will lose their athletes to other sports that will be attending. The games are the pinnacle event for developing skaters. There are few outside competitions for speed skaters to attend and the loss of the pinnacle event is like a nail in the coffin."

She talks about her daughter and how her attendance at the two previous Arctic Winter Games were significant in helping her to develop as an athlete and giving her a really fine goal to

work toward, giving her the experience of being part of the games, which she took to the Canada Winter Games in 2010 — and of course, having fun.

This resonates with all of us. It's about meeting a ton of other kids, hanging out together, sharing Facebook addresses, watching friends participate at the sports, taking in the cultural events; it's all about that.

When it comes to the Yukon Curling Association, it again references how the games have been a very integral part in the development of young curlers in Yukon and how the preparation for the trials and participation in the games is a key part of the coaching plan for our youth. For many youth, the Arctic Winter Games is their first opportunity for competition outside their community and, as such, acts as preparation for further national competitions.

Another piece of correspondence I received from some parents in rural Yukon talks about how they are firm believers in the benefit of sport throughout rural Yukon and how they are disappointed to hear that there will be no speed skating, nor five other sports, at the Arctic Winter Games in 2016, in Greenland. They talked about their two sons who took up speed skating two years ago. They trained hard each winter and they thoroughly enjoyed their time at the 2012 games in Whitehorse. We believe that when they took up speed skating that they had chosen a sport that would take them to a number of future Arctic Winter Games and Canada Winter Games. A four-year gap in the games will have a very negative impact on their motivation to continue with the sport.

Again, it talks about an experience of a lifetime and how — as firm believers in the benefits of sport, culture, recreation for young athletes — they believe that the long-term development of northern athletes in these particular sports will suffer as a result of the four-year gap.

I also received a letter from Speed Skating Canada and they are all very well-written letters, but Speed Skating Canada was very detailed in their response and offering their support for the inclusion of speed skating in the games.

It talked about speed skating as only one of four sports to have all three northern territories participate competitively in both the Arctic Winter Games and the Canada Winter Games and how the success of northern athletes at the Canada Winter Games is really a direct result of development opportunities leading into them, with most athletes having participated in the Arctic Winter Games and how it's significant that the games are an essential part of the four-year planning cycle prepared by coaches and territorial sports organizations for Canada Games participation.

The letter goes on to say that there's no question that the Arctic Winter Games serve as a major recruitment tool for skaters, coaches and officials to the sport of speed skating, the games being the pinnacle sports event for most northern athletes. There's pride in making the team and representing one's community and contingent. It also talks about club development as a challenge everywhere, yet the Arctic Winter Games has served as a great attraction to many potential skaters.

It also references the success of Arctic Winter Games past participants, the most notable being Yellowknife's Michael

Gilday. This individual was a participant in the games in 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004. Michael competed in the 2003 Canada Winter Games and was actually named to the national short track men's team during the 2006-07 season, an achievement that he credits directly to the Arctic Winter Games experience. To date, he has won 10 individual medals in world cup events, skated on Canada's world championship gold medal team, and in 2007 he established a new world record. He is also currently the Canadian record holder in a number of events which is a testament to the success of the games.

In 2010, four officials from Nunavut and Yukon were also selected as short track minor officials at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics after years of officiating in local, national and Arctic Winter Games events. So to be sure there's no question of the positive impact that these games have really credited to each of these individuals — our athletes, officials and our sports organizations.

Perhaps the one other correspondence that I received from Sport Yukon — again I want to tribute Sport Yukon in particular because they have really served as the umbrella organization, working with each and every one of the sports organizations over the past couple of months and with our office in coming up with options for consideration by the international committee — but really giving me the confidence — 100 percent — that what we are presenting at the table are, in fact, the preferred options to be presented.

Sport Yukon's letter talks about how Arctic Winter Games are crucial to sport development in Yukon. This multi-sport competition serves as the marquee event for Yukon athletes to work toward to compete in an appropriate level and expand their competitive abilities in a safe, vibrant setting. The Arctic Winter Games are commonly described as Yukon athletes' version of the Olympics. Their highest level of competition is strived for. With a four-year break between Arctic Winter Games for these particular sports, we anticipate the development in these sports to be set back and the recruitment and retention of athletes hindered.

So, it's just an example of some of the correspondence that I have received, never mind the phone calls or the individual visits that I received on the street and in public venues — again, that's the beautiful thing about the Yukon; we all know everybody and if we don't, we're going to soon find out who we are.

I just want to thank the individuals, the parents, the coaches and these organizations that really take the time to put pen to paper and have taken the time to voice their concerns and to put forth their passion and for being here today to also build upon that support.

When the decision came about, there was of course significant feedback, as I have just articulated, and no wonder — as I stated in a number of different venues over the course of the past couple of months. Cutting this many sports from one Arctic Winter Games is truly an unprecedented decision and will eliminate, as it stands today, approximately 25 percent of the potential sport events — that's significant and in no other games have we seen a reduction to that level.

We have seen, from time to time, perhaps a reduction in one sport, maybe two, because of the lay of the land — the geographic challenges and so forth, but we haven't seen this many sports being reduced all in one fell swoop. As such, that is why we have received significant input from Yukoners.

When we started receiving correspondence and started working with the stakeholders, one of the first things that came to mind was the ability to work with my colleagues from Northwest Territories and Nunavut. We have worked with them on many occasions over the past years, and we have been very successful because power is in numbers when it comes to the pan-north approach to many issues, and this was not an exception.

When I put the call through to my ministerial colleagues from Northwest Territories and Nunavut, at that time the word had just started coming out and they hadn't necessarily been approached as much as perhaps we had, but rest assured, within a day they too were also receiving significant feedback from their stakeholders. Over the past couple of months there have been numerous phone calls with my colleagues from Northwest Territories and Nunavut. There have been some discussions as well with the international committee, but really, for the sole purpose of really making it known what we have heard.

The overwhelming feedback that all of us have received from our respective sports communities across the north in response to the recent announcement clearly indicates the significance of the games and the integral role that they have and continue to play in the development of our athletes across the circumpolar north. As I mentioned, we recognize the limitations that Greenland faces in hosting these particular games, and we are not asking for Greenland to build additional facilities that aren't within their fiscal realities. We all appreciate that. We all have fiscal restraints in each of our jurisdictions, and we work hard to meet the needs of each and every citizen, but that's not what these games are about.

As I mentioned, we support their opportunity to host the games, which all permanent partners deserve. We believe, however, that there are options available for the partners to consider — other than eliminating these sports entirely from the program in 2016 — that will ensure the complete sport development model is preserved and that athletes are able to participate in a full experience as has been offered in previous games.

We very much recognize that while the decision is for the international committee to make, we, as ministers responsible for sport and recreation in Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon, want to ensure that all the reasonable options are presented and that they're examined while there's still time to adjust the format of the games. We recognize the very importance of this issue, and that is why we've gone to work with the international committee and all the other political leaders from all the other jurisdictions over the course of the past month to help resolve these very issues that have been brought forward by our dedicated athletes, our parents and our sport organizations. That's in fact what we have been doing since then.

The announced sports that are currently not included for 2016 are core sports, and I think that's also important to note.

They have been in the Arctic Winter Games program since the very beginning. These sports include curling, midget hockey, speed skating, dog mushing, figure skating and gymnastics.

We do not want to see these sports have to sit out a full rotation of the games. Instead, we want to look at, and we need to look at all the options to ensure the young athletes from these sports get this development opportunity that the 2016 games will provide to them. That is why the Yukon government has and will continue to work with the permanent partners to review options that allow Greenland to host while also including these other sports.

When we came together as three northern territories is when we put in the request to have a meeting with the international committee. At that time, we were encouraged to garner the support of all the partners, of all the political leaders, to come together to have a meeting. After I garnered the support of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, then I was on the phone with the Greenland minister — very key to ensure that it is not our intent to remove the games from Greenland's ability and their right to host these games, but really wanting to look at other options.

I got on the phone and actually spoke in person to the minister responsible for sport in Alberta as well as with the Lieutenant Governor in the State of Alaska and spoke with him about the very importance of this issue. Once we had that consensus, then we went to work with the international committee to arrive at a meeting. It just so happened to be that there was an M1 mission staff meeting being held in Fairbanks, Alaska in mid-October that certainly involved the entire international committee. At that time we proposed that we arrange to meet with them during that time as a means of cost savings.

Some attended by way of conference call. Of course, when it came to the three northern territories, we felt it very important to attend face to face with the international committee in Fairbanks, Alaska and that is, in fact, what we did. We had a meeting and, more importantly, we were able to table some concrete options for the committee's consideration.

Prior to that meeting, I can also say that in one of my many discussions with Sport Yukon over the past couple of months, I asked Sport Yukon to really work with all of the affected sports organizations, inclusive of Yukon Gymnastic Association, Arctic Edge Skating Club, Yukon Curling Association, Whitehorse Cross-Country Ski Club, Whitehorse Rapids Speed Skating Club, Yukon Amateur Speed Skating Association, Whitehorse Minor Hockey Association, Yukon Amateur Hockey Association, and many other representatives with Sport Yukon.

I had asked Sport Yukon to convene a meeting of all of these associations to come up with a set of proposed options for the committee's consideration that I would be able to take to that meeting to table with great confidence. Thankfully, I can say that on October 11 they did convene a meeting and they came up with a number of options for consideration. The first one they came up with was a co-hosting arrangement with Iqaluit. I think this is really key in my eyes — perhaps not co-hosting but looking at a satellite venue for Iqaluit, Nunavut.

For me, the door was already open and I am sure that all these other organizations saw that as well. The door has already

been opened with the two sports that have been accommodated through a special contracting arrangement with the host society, and those were the two categories of hockey being hosted in Iqaluit. We thought that this would be the natural fit because the door is already opened, there are two categories being hosted in Iqaluit, and also because of the experience that was generated in 2002 between Nuuk, Greenland and Iqaluit, Nunavut.

Of course, concerns had been put forth by the international committee about the experience back in 2002. What was articulated by Sport Yukon and all of these organizations and me, as well, is that it was a decade ago and we believe that we have come a long way since then. There has been significant capacity. The territory of Nunavut has grown in leaps and bounds and all of our capacity for hosting these Arctic Winter Games throughout the north has really grown. We feel that there is the capacity.

We feel that it's something that should be considered and it should be one of those primary options to be considered. In terms of the costs associated with going with that particular option, one idea that has been put forth was to take a look at instead of transporting the teams, the hockey players, from Greenland, or from Nunavut over to Greenland, for the opening and closing ceremonies, why not have those individuals stay put and we could instead telecast by way of video conference those opening and closing ceremonies. That's one creative way of addressing the costs, and also looking at being responsible.

When I put that question to the organizations and to Sport Yukon, "Is it very important that you all physically attend the opening and closing ceremonies," they said, "You know, when it comes down to those ceremonies or when it comes down to competing in my sport, it's competing in my sport. That's why I'm here." And to be able to enjoy the opening and closing ceremonies by way of video conference or other means, it makes a lot of sense. So it's a win-win situation.

So in that case, again, the sports affected would not have to fly to Greenland for those ceremonies, but instead would arrive in Iqaluit to begin the schedule that would enable all those sports to compete. Of course, this would include up to 400 and some athletes, maximum. It should also be noted that with these games — with these individuals being hosted in Iqaluit — it would actually be fewer individuals than in 2002. So we know that there is capacity there.

To be sure, we need to ensure and respect the wishes of Iqaluit and Nunavut and the government and to ensure that everyone is fully comfortable and on board with this option. Again, the way that the organization saw this option, it could reduce the financial and hosting pressure on Greenland as well. The other option put forward was to use Iqaluit, as I mentioned before, as an alternate venue — so the satellite venue for the sports to compete — with Greenland as the primary host. I think that is something that we continue to go with.

There were other options put forward, including holding a joint event with all six sports, all the divisions of hockey included, in another community and another territory outside of Greenland hosting the contract. So, again, that could be putting the host responsibilities on to that community alone, but main-

taining the access to the ulus and the uniforms and being part of the games experience.

Then there was another option and, of course, it's the last option and that was, if need be, to reduce the number of participants in those sports currently included in 2016 and to reduce the financial burden, perhaps to reduce the contingent of all the sports, but enable all the sports to be represented. There was also discussion about having another single-sport competition as a replacement for inclusion in the Arctic Winter Games, and there was no interest in that by Yukoners.

So, again, some very thoughtful options put forward, some very reasonable — what I would coin as reasonable — options and those are the options that I took to Fairbanks when we sat down, face to face, with the international committee.

I am pleased to report that there were options put forth as well by the governments of Nunavut and Northwest Territories — inclusive of even an Arctic Summer Games. The idea was that if you had a summer games, you would be able to draw some of those sports, such as gymnastics, that would take place indoor anyways — have them during the summer — then you reduce the pressure during the winter and reduce the pressure on any smaller jurisdiction, as we're seeing here today with Greenland in 2016.

It's a great idea and I think that perhaps the committee will review and investigate that option, but for the purpose of 2016, probably not likely within that small time frame ahead.

I just want to thank the organizations and my colleagues for joining in, but primarily there is that genuine interest in having that satellite venue, looking to Iqaluit; if not Iqaluit, perhaps another community; it could even be in the Northwest Territories — Fort Smith — it could be in another community, if that is what it takes. But what we're saying is let's be creative; let's take a look at this; let's work on this together.

So what we have done since then when we left the meeting, we presented those options for the committee to do research, to review those options, and I know that this work will proceed because, by recent correspondence we received from the international committee, they have agreed to set a framework and a time frame, in which they'll complete that research and they will come forward.

What we're saying is that they're proposing a meeting next May and even looking to have it in Iqaluit, Nunavut. So, to be sure, if the House is sitting in May, I'm hoping that someone from the opposition will perhaps pair with me to facilitate that.

In terms of coming back in May to really look at those options and to take a look at the benefits and the implications of every option to include those sports and to get them back in the program in 2016, what we are saying is that we would also like to have a check-in point, perhaps halfway through. So in February, we understand there is going to be another meeting of the committee to review some of these options — carry on its work. So we would really appreciate having an update, just to make sure we are carrying on and that we are moving forward.

As I mentioned, we're expecting to receive a progress report in February. It will help assure us that the work is progressing in a very favourable direction.

As I mentioned, I had the opportunity to touch base with my two northern counterparts on the phone yesterday. We are working on a pan-north letter of response to the letter we received from the international committee. They are looking for further direction on these options. We will continue to elaborate on some of these options going forward as our preferred choice. I was able to talk about that letter and talk about our proposed response with the organizations yesterday in a meeting — again, to receive any additional input that each of these organizations had. I thank them for that. So rest assured it will not be the last meeting. It will be the first of many to come, to be sure.

As I mentioned, I feel positive that there will be a positive outcome at the end of this meeting in May. There has been great input provided by Alaska, and I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor for thinking outside of the box and coming forward with innovative solutions to addressing some of these as well. An idea that was put forward by the State of Alaska was to take a look at —

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: I wanted to do an introduction in the House today. We have Sierra Oakley, Maya Oakley and Emma Warren. They are Junior Rangers from around the Yukon. Two are from my riding, and two are from the Klondike riding. Also, Sierra was on the Arctic Winter Games team last year. They did very well out there, and she made a bet with her father about scoring goals that developed a nice Mohawk for him. So a round of applause, please.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Thank you — and welcome.

As I mentioned, I want to just pay credit to the State of Alaska for their outside-of-the-box thinking.

They have come forward with some innovative solutions and perhaps if Iqaluit is not able to host, perhaps there may be other locations within Greenland that Alaska could even contribute to helping sponsor, or there's even the discussion of taking the sports to Iceland because of the added enhanced air connectivity between Iceland and Greenland.

As you can see, there are a lot of different options being considered here. I think it's fantastic because that's what happens when we're able to resolve some of these differences and go to work. I also just want to be very clear that I support the international committee. I support the ongoing work that the president and all participants have contributed to the committee over the years. They have been difficult decisions, to be sure. They have done a great job in working with the host societies over the years. We support the work and we support their independent role that they also play in administering these games and carrying forth with the vision of these games.

I think it's also helpful, though, to have this input from our jurisdictions. Perhaps this is the first time we've had a really significant dialogue going on, not just with the political leaders and the committee, but with all of our stakeholders. To be sure, it's a good reminder for all of us that we can't take these games for granted. We need to keep our eye on the ball and treat them

with great importance, as we have been reminded by our stakeholders.

Again, I feel very comfortable and am very thankful to be able to work with the ministers from Nunavut and Northwest Territories to be able to respond to the committee with a common voice — I think that's really critical — with common concerns and a united approach as to what the next steps are and what those options should look like. I think that's really important. I posed that question to my colleagues yesterday and said, "You know, we can go on it alone from here if you wish, but I think we've come so far." We all agreed that it's far more effective to go with a common voice. We very much share the same concerns. I've heard from our stakeholders, and N.W.T. and Nunavut have also heard significant concerns as well. Our shared belief is that the outcome of the work being done to explore options will be a positive one for our organizations, our governments, the international committee and, most importantly, for each of our young athletes.

The future of the Arctic Winter Games is really important to the Yukon, not only in 2016, but also for the subsequent games in 2018 and 2020. We want to ensure that the next generation of Yukon athletes will also have the opportunity and the reward of participating in the Arctic Winter Games in their sport of choice. We'll continue to work diligently on this issue until we feel satisfied that all the options and the creative solutions that I've been talking to have been reviewed and that stakeholders' feedback is included in that process too.

The support for this motion by everyone here today is crucial to this ongoing work and is much appreciated by all of our constituents. I can say that.

I want to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing forward this important motion. I have a lot more that I can add, but I also feel that it is very important to hear from other members here this afternoon. I look forward to hearing the remainder of the discussion today and hope that we can all continue to show unanimous support for our young athletes as they seek the chance to participate in their sport at the 2016 Arctic Winter Games.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I just want to draw to the members' attention a number of the people in the gallery. I know a lot have come and gone this afternoon. I want to thank each of them: Lauren Muir, who is there, and beside her is Bailey Muir-Cressman — a junior curler, I might add, whom I had the opportunity to meet during the recent breakfast, which was a significant success, I might add. I also want to draw members' attention to Tracey Bilsky, as well, from Sport Yukon, and thank her for her leadership and that of George Arcand over the course of the last couple of months in working with me.

I'll just ask all members to give them a round of support. Thank you.

Applause

Ms. Hanson: I am very pleased today to stand on behalf of the New Democratic Party to first of all thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing forward this motion and

to say with pride that the NDP of course supports the Minister of Community Services in her endeavours to work as she has described this afternoon with her pan-northern partners and, indeed, with the international partners to find a reasonable solution to the dilemma that the international committee has found itself in over recent times. I commend the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin on his eloquence in setting out with passion the importance of not just hockey, although hockey is clearly his —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. Hanson: I was not going to talk about his skills or lack of skills; I am simply saying he is very passionate about that sport. It is not my place to suggest that he does it with great skill, but I'm sure he does. Indeed, he also epitomizes that important role of both the parent who supports their children as they get engaged in sports and that healthy lifestyle that is so important to the success of the Arctic Winter Games. The other aspect of that is the volunteering that is an incredibly important aspect of the success of the Arctic Winter Games, and I will come back to that in a moment.

I was thinking about the Arctic Winter Games — I don't know how many events or places I've been to, and the Arctic Winter Games comes up — with the minister introducing Ms. Bilsky in the gallery today. I can recall when I did a brief stint on an assignment interchange with the Canada Winter Games and there were a number of times when a person familiar to this Chamber was at meetings — Ken McKinnon — and he spoke often and with passion about the importance of the Arctic Winter Games and its links. There are links to the kinds of transitions that some athletes are able to make to winter games and to summer games. I was very interested in the minister's comments about the notion of maybe looking at the option of a Canada Games model of a winter and a summer games. So as we all do these days, I went and looked and asked, "So when did they start and where were they?" There's a fascinating video that describes and basically goes through the first week of the first Arctic Winter Games held on Frame Lake in Yellowknife in 1970.

What it describes and what it so accurately captured is the excitement that small community of Yellowknife in 1970 with a population of 6,000, which, overnight, had 7,500 people. Of that increase, 750 of them were athletes.

The minister spoke about how these are such important games and how they have been accorded a high level of importance by many people. I think it's significant to note that the very first games were opened by the Prime Minister of Canada. It was the federal minister responsible for the north who was sort of created as a sponsor for those games, so we had Prime Minister Trudeau, we had John Munro there, and we had Ken McKinnon from the Yukon as President of the Arctic Winter Games Corporation.

Over the course of the 42 years, as the minister has spoken and as the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has alluded to, these games have grown. With growth come many challenges. They've grown from 10 sports to currently about 15. The language that we use to describe these games has changed. We're no longer calling them Native Games and we would never get away with the kind of descriptors they did then with respect to

one of the organizers suggesting that if they took all the banners that were stretched across all the streets in Yellowknife they would be able to make miniskirts for every young girl who was participating — kind of interesting comment about where their heads were,

But you notice the philosophy and the overall vision of those people who thought in the late 1960s that this should occur has not changed. The notion of offering an opportunity for athletes and artists and those involved in the cultural aspect of our society to come together was so important. When you look at the videos of those days in terms of the harpoon throw and the little kid who won one of the boxing matches — weighing like 65 pounds — his helmet and his gloves were almost as big as he was; he won a gold medal. You would love to know where these children are now, 42 years later — how many of their lives have been so positively influenced in terms of healthy lifestyles — well, most of them have been influenced — with respect to healthy lifestyles.

The games then and the games now engage the whole of the community and that is what is so important. You cannot stage an Arctic Winter Games without just everybody having some role in terms of volunteerism. That is a hugely important aspect of these games, as well as the cultural contribution that was there from the very, very beginning. Although, I have to again remark that the unique excellence of northern fashion in 1970 was very interesting.

I was very pleased to hear the options that were being looked at as a result of — as the minister described — the pulling together of people with a mutual goal of trying to find a resolution to what seemed to be, perhaps at the time, some insurmountable challenges for the international committee. It is good to hear about these options and I am hopeful — and I am sure everybody in this Legislature is hopeful — that some of those creative options will be resolved in the coming months that will see the ability for all the athletes who would like to be able to participate having that opportunity. As both of the speakers preceding me have identified, for many young athletes, many young participants, in terms of the cultural aspects of the events that are associated with the games this is one of the highlights of their young lives.

I know that from my own experience with my own family — both my immediate family and nieces and nephews. We had the opportunity to attend those games in Wood Buffalo — in Fort McMurray, in fact. The aspect of working, and the kids who played in those games and what I observed over and over again, was that aspect of fair play and the importance of integrity, of working in terms of respecting the other teams and working within themselves. Even if they didn't do well on the field or in the court of play, they were supportive of each other and they were supportive of the other teams.

As you do in any of the volunteer stuff, you get pulled into these things and sometimes the local committees don't have enough volunteers — I got commandeered to be involved in the biathlon event, which was held out on an old shooting range outside Fort McMurray someplace, mainly because the relatives were involved. I watched my niece and nephew, who I hadn't seen involved in any sports because I didn't know,

really, what they were about. That's another thing about these games, they allow communities to come together. We live in Whitehorse, many of us raise our families here, and our extended families are not able to come together, so it was fascinating to watch these young people exert themselves in this very intense sport and then to realize that from those Arctic Winter Games, those two athletes have gone on to Canada Winter Games and subsequently on to be members of the Canadian biathlon teams. So these are really tangible results of the kinds of opportunities that young Canadians north of 55 get as a result of these games and being able to offer the full array of engagement and opportunities for all the sports that these games have grown into.

As I mentioned earlier, when the games started in 1970, they only had 750 athletes. It has grown — I think this year there were about 2,000 in Whitehorse. As the minister opposite has pointed out, that puts incredible pressures on small communities in terms of the hosting obligations that they have and the financial obligations. One of the challenges that we face when we are successful, sometimes that success brings challenges that people may not have anticipated because the more we encourage our young people to engage in these activities, if we're successful in encouraging them, we have to deal with how we're going to ensure that they have that opportunity.

There's understanding of the disappointment young people in particular — and their supporters, the parents and the volunteers — will have felt as they learned that the current situation is that those particular sports are not to be made available, or not to be carried out during the 2016 games. And there's gratitude for the efforts of the minister opposite and the organizing committee and the many volunteers and stakeholder organizations that she cited as they continue to work toward finding a resolution that may not be exactly what everyone wants, but then that's the name of the game. We work to try to find a resolution that most people will be satisfied with and will allow as many people as possible — as many young athletes and their families — to feel that they've had an opportunity to be fully engaged in this.

I realize that there is no doubt many people have their own experiences of being involved in the Arctic Winter Games and would like to talk about why it's so important.

I just want to reiterate, as the Leader of the New Democratic Party — and I know that my caucus colleagues join in supporting this motion made by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. We look forward to providing whatever support we can to the Minister of Community Services as she pursues her objective of trying to find the creative option that will allow the sports of speed skating, figure skating, curling, gymnastics, midget hockey and, most of all — for some — dog mushing, to be included in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Silver: I will be very brief, as it seems we are going to get unanimous consent here, and there are other issues. The Liberal caucus will be supporting this motion. I know that participation in the Arctic Winter Games is the highlight of the athletic careers of many young Yukoners, and there was great

disappointment when the announcement was made that several sports would not be part of the 2016 games. I know that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin is passionate about sports and supporting our young people in sports.

I want to thank him today for the very touching tribute, and for taking us back to his times in the Arctic Winter Games with a very powerful story. I quite thoroughly enjoyed that. Thank you very much.

I want to thank him for bringing forward, more importantly, this motion today, as well. I know the Government of Yukon has been making the case to the Arctic Winter Games organizers about the need to expand the list of sports that will be part of the games as well. I believe this motion will be supported unanimously, and I hope it carries some weight as we continue to try to have all Yukon athletes participate in the upcoming games.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I rise in support of this motion put forward by the Independent Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, and I want to thank the member for putting forward this very important motion for Yukoners and for his support of the minister, as well, in terms of the hard work and great work that she has been doing on behalf of all Yukoners, and specifically young Yukon athletes. I'd also like to acknowledge the comments made by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin and that he has that opportunity now to move forward with motions because of the change that was brought forward as a result of the unanimous motion that was supported, which the member opposite had put forward.

It really began with a motion put forward by me from this side of the House by me on the first day of this session that was supporting independent members and their ability to represent their constituents by giving them an opportunity to call motions and bills for debate on Wednesdays.

We're very thankful that that opportunity has come about, as a result of which he was able to stand up and very passionately speak of the importance of this motion and the importance of these sports and the Arctic Winter Games for many Yukoners.

I thought I would just take a minute to talk about a little bit of the background of Arctic Winter Games. It was really in 1969, under the leadership of Yukon Commissioner James Smith, Stuart M. Hodgson, who was the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, and Governor Walter Hickel of Alaska that the Arctic Winter Games was founded.

Cal Miller, an advisor with the Yukon team at the 1967 Canada Winter Games, had the idea to provide a forum where athletes from the circumpolar north would compete on their own terms and on their own turf. As we're aware, the first Arctic Winter Games were held in 1970 in Yellowknife and have been occurring every two years since then.

Five hundred athletes, trainers and officials came from the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Alaska to those first games in 1970. Since then, the games have been held in 15 locations in different places with ever more participation from more and more places within the Arctic region. As the minister has al-

ready stated, Whitehorse has, in fact, hosted the games now six times since their inception.

The games in 2002 were the first jointly hosted Arctic Winter Games by Nuuk, Greenland and Iqaluit, Nunavut. The Arctic Winter Games is the world's largest northern multi-sport and cultural event. The games include the participation from teams from Alaska, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Alberta north, Nunavut, Greenland, Yamal in Russia, Nunavik, Quebec and Sapmi, which is the cultural region of the indigenous peoples of Norway, Sweden and Finland. The Arctic Winter Games are a celebration of athletic competition, culture, friendship and cooperation between northern contingents.

Over the years, there have been many different sports that have been involved from Arctic sports, to Dene games, to many indoor and outdoor sports that really have given kids over the years an opportunity to compete. As athletes, you have to put in the practice and you have to do the training, but it is really about the competition. It's really about getting out there and having that ability to compete and also being able to measure yourself and see through subsequent competitions the improvement in your own abilities. I think that that's very important.

I also think that, with respect to these games, it's certainly about the camaraderie. For everybody, it's not so much about winning, but it's about being there. It's about participating; it's about having a lot fun; it's about the networking, the cultural exchange and making new friends. I was certainly a first-hand witness because, as an official for men's and women's hockey, you could see that just on the ice. The play was intense, people wanted to win, but they were also concerned about and very respectful of their opponents and of the officials and the people who were watching. I think that that is a real reflection of the culture and what Arctic Winter Games really is about.

We have four children. Only one of my children had the opportunity to be involved in Arctic Winter Games, and that was my son, Taylor, who was part of the midget hockey team in 2006 that travelled to the Kenai-Soldotna area of Alaska where they were successful in winning the gold medal. He has memories that will be cherished forever, but there are also memories for us as parents, because Tammie and I did travel down; in fact, we went with some other good friends of ours whose sons played on that team. We stayed together in Soldotna. We had a great time and it was also a great experience.

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Hon. Mr. Dixon: Sorry to interrupt the Premier, but I did want to take a moment to recognize a visitor to the gallery, Ms. Claire Immega is an associate with Singleton Urquhart, a firm in Vancouver. She's up doing some work in Whitehorse for the week and is the most recent to be called to the Yukon bar. So I would ask that members join me in welcoming her to the Legislature.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Welcome.

The event in Soldotna in 2006 was a great event, something we can cherish with our son going forward in the excitement

of that. It was also an ability to share and cheer on Yukon kids in many other events that occurred during those games. Unfortunately, my daughters — who are all into athletics, as well — were swimmers, so until we put competitive swimming in Arctic Winter Games, I guess they didn't have that opportunity to do that. Certainly, many of their friends were engaged in many of the sports, as well, and we certainly were excited to see them train hard and be able to participate and gain those memories as a part of their development. There are many things that do shape us as individuals. The ability to participate in such events is certainly something that helps shape us in a very positive sense.

I wanted to talk for a couple minutes just about the Arctic Winter Games that we just hosted this year in 2012, and how proud I was as a Yukoner and as a citizen of Whitehorse to see the tremendous games, as the minister had talked about as well, that we hosted this year here in Whitehorse.

Not only were there 2,000 participants, but there were equal numbers of volunteers as well. My wife was involved with care and comfort and providing food for the volunteers, for the officials and for athletes. My daughter was involved with volleyball as an official as well. Again, the camaraderie was incredible. One of the things that I really took out of it was the opportunity to go down to the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre to witness some of the Dene games. They also had a cultural event which was sort of the "soft" opening for the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre. They allowed the games to go on there while it wasn't actually officially open. So, they had a cultural event as well during that time which was truly incredible. It had many different artists partaking and for those people who were fortunate enough to be there at the unique opportunity to see me do a very colourful dance with Grandma Susie — the grouse dance. I think that that's still out there on YouTube somewhere for those who haven't had the opportunity to see that.

I was also very fortunate to be able to present some ulus to some of the winners. While I talk about the participation, certainly I know that some of the younger athletes who were in figure skating — I just remember the thrill and how excited they were, and watching the parents and the teammates around them as they were getting their medals. It was truly an experience for them that they'll never forget.

The opening ceremonies and the closing ceremonies were, again — I think I haven't acknowledged the tremendous amount of organization that went on by so many of those volunteers. But to put together such memorable ceremonies at the opening and the closing and the difference that you could actually feel between the teams coming in as teams at the beginning and kind of hanging out with their teammates, and then how it had changed and evolved so that by the time they all marched in for the closing ceremonies — you didn't see that sort of definition between the teams. Everybody was together and they made all these new friends. There really was unity. It was a great, moving experience.

It was one of those things that all of us who get to witness it can't measure the impact for those individuals to be able to go through those experiences. It's truly something that is very

beneficial for all of us. We learn a lot of things from such games. While my daughters were not able to compete in those games, they have competed in Canada Summer Games, so I can tell you from talking to them with those experiences that it's not just the competition. It's the travel. It's going to this new place, especially if you're coming from some of these small areas in northern Finland or from Russia to come to Whitehorse — what a thrill that would be — or the children who would might otherwise miss that opportunity to go to Greenland in 2016. There is the cultural exposure of going to a different part of our circumpolar north and the travel.

We can also talk about the economic impacts and the truly positive impact on our community to host these games — all of the people coming in really had a very positive effect. As I mentioned, friendships that we've heard the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin talk about — a lifelong fostering of friendships occurred.

I also want to actually mention the doll exhibit — the doll presentation that occurred at Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre — make special note of Annie Smith who is from Kwanlin Dun First Nation and an elder for Kwanlin Dun and a constituent of mine and some of the great work that she has done over the years, not only in producing such work as dolls and leather work, but being a mentor. Passing this on is part of the experience that we gain from such events.

I also would like to acknowledge the senior minister for the north, Leona Aglukkaq, who was here as well to support. I know the Member for Whitehorse Centre had mentioned the Prime Minister being at Arctic Winter Games on previous occasions and we're just going to have to work hard to make those things happen again. But I know there are other people who wanted to talk, Mr. Speaker.

There is one more thing I do want to mention. While the minister remains very modest in terms of the stuff that is being done, I have to say for the record that as soon as this announcement came about, it was our Minister of Community Services who grabbed this ball and began to run with this ball, did the due diligence, helping to coordinate talks among the other leaders from the other jurisdictions. She has been working tirelessly with sport organizing bodies, and meeting with the actual sports as well. She has worked tirelessly to make sure that we can resolve the issue that we have before us, and I really do want to recognize the extraordinary amount of work that she has done.

Ms. Stick: I would like to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing forth this very important motion for debate today and for bringing such personal passion and stories to make this motion alive for the people in here. I, like my colleagues in the Official Opposition, support this motion. It is an important one. These games that were founded in 1969 with Commissioners James Smith and Stuart Hodgson from the Northwest Territories and Governor Hickel of Alaska, have become a living, breathing part of our community and of the culture of the north. We have them to thank for having that vision back then.

I don't think they realized when they first started what an impact it would have on the youth of not just the two territories at the time, and one state — but that it's now a pan-northern endeavour that covers Alaska, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik, or northern Quebec, northern Alberta, Greenland, Russia — I don't think that was even in their dreams back then. I'm sure they're still struck by that today. I hope I haven't forgotten any country when listing those. I'm sure I'll hear about it if I did.

It is about the athletes, and it is about the young people. For many, this is going to be their first time — their first opportunity — to experience, to participate and hopefully win in competition at an international level. That's amazing — international level. It's not just Canadian; it's not just territorial or provincial, but this is international. I know that athletes in southern Ontario or southern B.C. — they don't have the same opportunity that these young people do. We are really fortunate that our children get this chance to participate on a global level like that.

For many, this will maybe be the culmination of their athletic career; this might be their pinnacle, their big moment, their big chance and they love it and they glorify in that. Other athletes kind of get inspired by it and want to do more; they're motivated. They go on, perhaps, to the Canada Winter Games and experience that. Others maybe vie for scholarships that will take them on to post-secondary college or university — maybe a volleyball scholarship, maybe a basketball scholarship — and it's a way for them to get an education, but carry on with their athletic career.

For others, it's an inspiration for continued training, personal sacrifice of the athlete and their families to bigger ambitions, even the Olympics. I'm going to take a moment here to speak personally of two young athletes I have known since the day they were born, and that's Graham and Emily Nishikawa; I'm so proud of them.

I've watched them — Emily in gymnastics, Graham cross-country skiing — young people. Where are they today? Both of them went to the Canada Winter Games. They were in the Arctic Winter Games. They are now in Canmore. They are on the national cross-country ski team. They represent Canada, but they represent us. They represent the Yukon. I'm so proud of them. Their goal is the Olympics. That's where they're heading — the next Winter Olympics in Russia. That's what they're working for. That's what they have sacrificed for. That's what their family has supported them to do — and this government, sponsors and friends. It's a community effort to keep doing what they are so passionate about. It started with the Arctic Winter Games. They come back, and they volunteer and their parents volunteer. Their dad is an official. He is trained in all the timing. They show up. They're there.

It's the same with other parents. It's not just this family — and I'm not just singling out this family. It's all families with athletes. It's the parents who get up for hockey at — I don't know what time in the morning because I wouldn't let my kids join. It had to be an after-school activity. It's money — it costs parents money to be able to support their athletes.

We have great coaches in this territory, and they coach at the Arctic Winter Games level and at the Canada Winter Games, and even are assistant coaches at the Olympic level. We're so lucky.

They're so lucky they have had these opportunities. They get to visit countries I haven't been to. I would love to be able to go to Greenland as a volunteer — well, obviously, not as an athlete. They get to places that I haven't been, and they're fortunate. This is their chance. This is their chance of a lifetime — to represent us and to do their very best. I don't want to deny any of those young athletes that opportunity in 2016.

They already have the goal in mind. The ones who are planning — they already have it laid out as to how they're going to get there, what they have to do, what they have to achieve, what they have to train at. We would all do well to have a plan as clear as theirs of what we were going to do for the next four years.

My own experiences with the Arctic Winter Games have been wonderful. I am no athlete — I'll be really clear about that — but I am a great volunteer. Give me a job, and I will do it, and I don't care whether it's picking up garbage or standing in a cold field and just standing there — if that's my job I'll do it. I'm a great volunteer.

My first Arctic Winter Games was in 1986. I still have my jacket — Curragh Resources, Faro. It's at my cabin. It's my camping jacket. I made friends at my first Arctic Winter Games who are still good friends today. I met people I'd never met in Whitehorse. That was part of that community.

I got to work behind the scenes helping with the medal presentations. I didn't present medals, but I got to help do it at the parking lot at the *SS Klondike*. We built a structure there, and that's where the medals were handed out. It was fun. What an honour in 1992 to be able to sing the national anthems of the different countries and to sing *O Canada* in Southern Tutchone at the opening ceremonies, along with the Whitehorse Community Choir and the Whitehorse Elementary School students.

What a thrill. I always will remember that opening, because that was the one where Greenland first showed up and they walked in wearing sealskin jackets and boots and hats and mitts and we all went, "Ahhh". It just took your breath away; they were so beautiful, and we, in our polyester gym suits — and these guys walk in with sealskins and we all wanted them. We all wanted those jackets: they were gorgeous. I've also, as a business owner, had the pleasure to be able to be a sponsor of the Arctic Winter Games and to donate to them. I was lucky enough to be able to host cultural events in my store. I had throat singers there and I was able to display artwork that had come with the cultural contingent. That was my contribution. I didn't get throngs of athletes into a used bookstore; it's not likely, but I did get a few and I got parents and I got visitors and that was good. I was proud to be able to do that. I have a tray of pins that I have collected over the years, and when it's Arctic Winter Games time I bring it out at the store and I trade. I'm happy to do that: it's part of that culture.

The cultural events are important; it's not just the athletes, but it's also those youth who maybe don't excel at athletics, but they excel in other ways — they're storytellers; they're singers;

they're crafters; they're artists. To me, that's another wonderful piece of the Arctic Winter Games that we get to see. It's part of those three rings that represent the Arctic Winter Games. There are amazing things to be seen, stuff you would never see anywhere else in the country — the sled jumping event and the whip. I remember an elder from Greenland out in the parking lot here with a whip that had to be 40-foot long demonstrating how he could do it — how he could make that crack and it was awe-inspiring to see that. We're so fortunate. It's our chance to learn, to share — our athletes' chance to learn and to share so much from our circumpolar neighbours. Language becomes secondary. It doesn't matter if everyone doesn't speak the same language. We share. We share our sport; we share our arts, our music, our theatre and we share our community.

When we talk about removing speed skating, figure skating, curling, gymnastics, midget hockey and dog mushing for 2016, it just feels like one of those rings has been broken or is incomplete. I'm not sure how many of those sports were in the original Arctic Winter Games — I'm not sure. I bet most of them were. I know dog mushing was for sure. But it is about change and, at one time adults participated in the Arctic Winter Games. They were the athletes — and I can see him, but I can't remember his name, he's from the Klondike, a snowshoer — Chester Kelly participated for years as an adult in the Arctic Winter Games and won many ulus. Then it got too big so we took the adults out and we focused on youth.

Air travel is no longer a DC-3, thank goodness, and culture today is not just traditional, but it's hip hop, it's break dancing, it's graffiti art, it's things we never could have imagined. I commend the Arctic Winter Games International Committee on this unenviable job they have and the many difficult decisions that they are faced with. It's their job to be inclusive, respectful of all countries and communities and encouraging to all athletes.

I don't have any doubt that a lot of thought and discussion went into this decision. I don't think they maybe anticipated the protest they would have, and I'm sure they're feeling dismayed by it. It's great to hear from the minister about different solutions, because I had the same thoughts myself. We are in such a time of social media, technology, giant screens and satellites and communications, there's no reason why we can't have one opening ceremony in three communities across the circumpolar north. We could do it. You know that people here would show up, even if it was live somewhere else. We would fill the Canada Games Centre, if asked. We would be there and we would volunteer, even if was just for a few games or a few sports here. Of course we would, because we love this and we love the Arctic Winter Games.

I'm glad to see that there is new thought, because change is constant. No one dreamt that we'd have all these countries, all these athletes and all these sports. Arctic Summer Games? Why not? Maybe we can split it out a little and make it more manageable so that some of the sports in the winter happen in the summer. It makes sense to me.

Anyway, it's encouraging to know that people are trying to be creative, trying to be helpful and come up with good solutions. I am happy to support this motion. I support this and

what the government and what this minister has talked about and what they're trying to do and offer our help if there's anything — letters to be written, phone calls to be made. The opposition is happy to do that. This is something that's important and I thank the member from Old Crow for having this chance to speak to this. That's it.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I want to also thank the member from Old Crow for this opportunity. I also want to make sure on behalf of my colleague to my left, the Minister of Community Services, that we also thank the hard-working members of her department who, she informed me, worked very diligently alongside her throughout this whole issue so far. I know on behalf of all of us here we want to thank them for the good work that they've done on our behalf.

I was going to take a little longer, but I'll cut back a lot now because I have all kinds of stories about Arctic Winter Games that I could tell you here for hours, everything from when the Russian hockey team showed up in Whitehorse one year with no hockey gear and the generosity and the support given by residents of Whitehorse, as well as other hockey teams from around the north, was absolutely amazing.

I think it has been stated by everyone — Arctic Winter Games did start in 1970. It was interesting to hear the conflicting reports, one of 500 and one of roughly 750 athletes. I can tell you it was somewhere in that range of 500 to 750. Nobody was really sure, but it was an interesting set of games because, as the previous speaker said, the majority of the athletes in those days were adults. It's one of the really great things that have happened in the games, I think, since I've been involved is that transition has taken place so more and more young people are involved in the games and, to this point now, adults are only involved as officials, coaches, mentors and the viewing public, you might say. I think that's one of the great transitions that we've made over the years.

I was involved the very first time as a participant in 1972. Since that time, I've been involved as an official, as a coach. I'm still wondering if I coached the Member for Kopper King in 1992 in indoor soccer; I'm not sure. I know I had her in outdoor soccer on a Yukon team and I know I have refereed the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin as well as the member behind me here — so some wonderful memories from those games. I also participated in the games as the minister of sport and recreation for the Yukon some time ago. Of course, I have had the pleasure of serving on city council and we were the host society for a number of games as well.

So I've done a number of things over the years, but my most satisfying games of all was when I participated as an official in a set of games; I don't even remember which ones.

I think it was the very first year — it had to be one of the years that women's hockey was included in the Arctic Winter Games. I refereed hockey games at all levels at those games. I'll never forget the intense level of competition, but the true spirit of sportsmanship, too, that went through those games. Because you are involved in a number of different age groups and — in this case, men and women — it was really interesting to see the sense of excitement with athletes, and anticipation —

the great joy they had just being there at an Arctic Winter Games. One of those stories that I will never forget was when I made a call — it was an offside call and it wasn't like it was a close call or anything — and I blew the whistle and we went to line up. I was going to drop the puck and a young lady came skating up to me and she said, "Oh, Mr. Ref, I am so sorry. I guess I wasn't supposed to do that, eh? I won't do it again, honest." She was the player that had been offside. I've often thought since then if the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin and my colleague behind me here could emulate that behaviour, it would make our job — as the Premier and I know, it would make our job as referees much better.

As many have said, the Arctic Winter Games are often the ultimate competition for some of our athletes and, for others, it will be simply a stepping stone to higher levels of competition. It isn't only the participants in these games who will be set back. I remember some years ago, I was referee-in-chief of the Yukon and, as the Premier knows, it is very difficult to have officials at any level join the system, and hockey was especially bad in those years. One of the carrots that we were able to hold up in front of many of these young officials as we trained them and encouraged them to move on in the system was to get their level 1. Then come out and participate and get their level 2. Then they would be eligible to referee at the Arctic Winter Games. That was something that all those young officials were so excited about it. It was something that they could do that would get them out, and they never had to referee Yukon kids, so that made it even better for them. They didn't have to referee their friends and they didn't get yelled at when they came home, so it was wonderful.

Especially since we've been instituting new rules for coaches like them having to get their certification for the various sports before they can participate, we've really encouraged a number of people who used to go out, stand around there and let the kids skate around the ice or kick the soccer ball or figure skate.

Now those people have an idea of actually how to train these kids. I credit that whole system and Sport Yukon bringing that system of certification of coaches in to the great strides that our athletes have taken here in Yukon.

We simply can't let these cuts go ahead without first taking a second look, as my colleague has said, and taking another look at what we're doing here and coming up with alternatives.

I also had the opportunity to take a look at the Arctic Winter Games International Committee webpage and I found on there a very interesting part that provides one of the benefits of the Arctic Winter Games and one of the duties of the international committee: "As stewards of the games, the international committee provides leadership to safeguard the future of the games. The international committee is entrusted to: Integrate a strategic planning process ... Develop and update policies that reflect the impacts of the changing environment as well as the needs of key partners; Ensure that the structure and decision making processes reflect the stewardship role entrusted to the international committee by its partners; Ensure that the committee is and is perceived by others to be a responsive, professional, accountable and well-managed organization."

I read those things and I thought, my goodness, perhaps it's time we reminded the committee — the same as many of us here in political life have to be reminded sometimes — that we have to respond to those participants, our partners and all of the others who are involved in this great organization we call the Arctic Winter Games.

I trust that my colleague, the minister, will remind those members of the international committee that they do have a responsibility to the people who not only fund that organization but who participate. It's not only the athletes. It's the officials, it's the coaches, the managers and all of those other people who are involved and contribute immensely to the whole process of the Arctic Winter Games.

I see that the House Leader is giving me the eye over there, so I'll end this that point and thank you very much for this opportunity.

Mr. Barr: I rise definitely in support of the Minister of Community Services, who has been working hard to overcome the obstacles to have inclusive games for everyone, and I'd like to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing forward this motion today.

What I feel here, at this point, is a lightness in this House that feels great. We are talking about helping everyone and to also help overcome — you know, with the 2016 games in Greenland — a situation where things aren't all in place for everybody there — to be inclusive, to have this feeling and excitement, not only to go to, but to come back to and have the memories the minister opposite was just speaking of — the lasting memories that, as was stated here today, that might be the only time. The Minister of Community Services was alluding to the intergenerational opportunities — that if this opportunity is missed for some of those to be able to attend this time, they may not get another chance.

I think, as a parent myself, of my granddaughter who was able to be part of soccer and who just went to have fun to start. That was a part of the games. They went on to the Cowichan games. They had the gold medal. It brought her places. I think back to when speaking with her about that. I remember saying, "Taylor, maybe you're going to end up at the Olympics." "Oh, never, Grandpa." You know? But to have even the thought that maybe her life was going to be, as it was stated here today, larger than the initial conception of these games — at the beginning — to be where it is today.

The dreams are real and alive. Without hope, without dreams, without thinking of an ultimate possibility of infiniteness, where are we? Hope is so important in our lives and for our spirit.

I think back to my son, Jona, when I was a single dad and he was a midget hockey player. Looking back at my own hockey experience, it was traumatic. I wanted to be so much with my friends and I couldn't skate very well. But my friends wanted me to be with them. So I went there, and the first tournament — after I crossed — I didn't even really know much about the rules — I crossed. We had a breakaway. I crossed the blue line in front of the guy who had the puck and I blew it for our team. I was crushed when the coach the next day said,

"Here's some food coupons, but maybe you should take your skates and go home." Oh, my. That was so awful. I was traumatized by this. The coach actually had the corner store that sold the candies in our community. I never went back in that store again.

But I think of my son, then — when we think about the opportunity that may be lost for some of these kids — as a single dad, we spent a year on, a year off. He wanted to play hockey. When we think about costs, when we think about times and opportunities and the sacrifices that the families make to be able to have this become a reality for their children. He played hockey too. He got the last goal of the last game — the only goal that winter.

That was worth everything — to be able to see the glow on his face, the slaps from everybody. As a parent, I can't tell you how proud I was of that moment. That was enough hockey for him. Like we say, where are you going to end up?

These opportunities bring us to where, maybe, we're going in our lives. I'm so happy to hear of the minister's efforts to bring forward solutions to these obstacles because I think it's so important that we look at these struggles — as we can maybe in the House — as really opportunities to grow; to come together as we did with the totem raising; as we do when community comes together with the volunteers of all the different aspects.

The cultural aspect to this, when I think back to the games here, that we had — and I'm not sure if it was the winter games or the Arctic Winter Games that had the First Nation tent that I remember Katie Johnson put together just out of — "Well, we don't have so much aboriginal content here." It was an afterthought — forethought on her part — but when that tent was raised all the communities came. That particular tent had line-ups morning, noon and night. It didn't end.

And that's the vision that — you know, when we talk about visioning and following them through — went on to the next group of people who ended up going to the world Olympics in Vancouver. It spawned an aboriginal contingent of 45 that I was so honoured to be part of. It was voted number one in the world Olympics — the aboriginal group to present on that level on the world stage.

So I just commend the work of the volunteers, this House's members, the international committee that is faced with obstacles here. However, we can support this. I would like to say that, as my colleague — who forgot to mention that she does sell music in her store too. You know, it just showcases so much. It's so inclusive that it extends to business, it extends to our children, our family, our past and the strengthening of our culture.

It's such an important endeavour. I wonder where it's going to be in 50 years from now.

I would just like to thank everyone for their time and the opportunity to speak and for the hard work that has been done — the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing this forward and for all the work from everybody. Thank you.

Ms. White: I'm going to speak about the Arctic Winter Games from a very personal standpoint and the Minister of

Health and Social Services — I still can't remember if he was my coach for the Arctic Winter Games in 1992, but I can tell you that he coached me for a really long time and I used to play competitive soccer with his daughter. I had a good kick — I really did.

I played competitive soccer for a really long time and I'm sure he can remember some of these tournaments, because there were a couple times when he actually had to leave the field, but we used to play sometimes in Anchorage. The one tournament that I remember, it was 110 degrees Fahrenheit and kids from the Yukon — we don't do very well in that kind of heat. I have to tell you it's a little bit demoralizing to get tarred and feathered on the field. It's not a lot of fun, so you'd play your hardest, but you just didn't have the stamina in the heat. You know where you did have the stamina was in the gymnasium in indoor soccer.

In 1992, I was 15 years old. I was in grade 9 and I went to Jeckell Junior High — back when we had junior high schools. The soccer team had been playing for a number of years at that point. We probably started when we were 11 or 12 and it was pretty much the same girls all the time, so you'd become very familiar with each other. We could change into shorts on the soccer field without having to take off pants and we spent a lot of time together. It is grade 9 at Jeckell Junior High and the tryouts were going to be in Faro.

Almost all the kids — okay it was the Minister of Health and Social Services, because he's nodding now because he remembers Faro. So the tryouts were going to be held in Faro. That meant essentially that all the kids got on a bus, I believe, and we went off to Faro. It's memorable because we got to stay in a hotel and normally when we travelled, we slept on floors in all sorts of places, but it typically wasn't a hotel. We were in Faro and we got to stay at the Faro Hotel and I remember this because it was such a novel thing. You could put the soccer ball on one side of the floor in the hallway and the ball would roll down the hallway and then it might roll up a hill and it would hit a bump and it would roll down. We spent a long time rolling balls in the hallway. So it was in Faro and it was pretty much the same players. I can't remember even if there were any girls in Faro who came out for the tryouts, but we were there. I can tell you that the soundtrack was Nirvana — Teen Spirit was the song of the day and it holds a lot of memories. At that point, at 15, you remember stuff like that.

We were in Faro and we had the tryouts, and it was pretty much the same rigours, and I can tell you that the Minister of Health and Social Services was a great coach. There would have been a lot of effort involved and there would have been a lot of fun and a lot of sweating and a lot of yelling and probably a little bit of backtalk from our side, because we'd been playing together for a long time at that point. In the end, the team was selected and was pretty much the same players as it always was. Then the real work started.

So we had the normal soccer league that we played in, and then we also practised twice a week. It was fun. You think about the dedication of coaches, because at that point in time, we would have probably had a practice for an hour to two hours a night, twice a week, on top of the fact that the Minister

of Health and Social Services would have coached a regular team, at that point, I'm sure, because his daughter was actively involved in soccer.

So we played soccer all winter and it was so much fun and it was so great. Then when we got closer to March, it kicked up, so we had two games a week; we had two practices a week and we added the third practice on the weekend. You also need to know at this point in time that I was the goalie. I have to tell you, I never liked being the goalie. As the goalie, the ball gets passed to every other person and you're the only one left.

In indoor soccer, if you've never played it, is fast and hard. The ball is a little bit fuzzy and the crease is very close to where you are. It's always very, very intense.

We were getting closer and there were pep talks and all this excitement. At 15, this was our first time to be able to participate in the Arctic Winter Games. Then we got the uniforms. I am just going to point this out. I forgot about Greenland until the minister from the other side talked about it, but I can tell you about the Yukon uniforms. It was kind of around the same time that the Yukon tartan was released. It's a beautiful thing. Everyone understands the Yukon tartan. So if you can imagine these uniforms — they were teal and fuchsia. They had stripes down the leg. They were blue pants with fuchsia stripes and white stripes down those. The jackets were awful. They were pretty hideous. I am not going to lie to you. You know how everyone trades and they change? It was not a hot commodity. I am actually pretty confident — my friends can correct me — that we all ended up with our uniforms at the end. No amount of bribery — like take my sleeping bag and my uniform if I can have that jacket — I am pretty sure we ended up with all our same kit.

The really interesting thing about the 1992 Arctic Winter Games is that they were held in Whitehorse, so it's sad that the one time that I was involved, I didn't actually get to go anywhere. We did get to camp out at the Yukon College and I remember it was like a big old sleepover. I remember when we got our uniforms and we were finally allowed to wear them, and we got our sleeping bags, we got assigned our room, and we had all these things and got to hang out together for a week. I'm not going to lie to you, I think that is partially the reason the Minister of Health and Social Services' hair is the colour that it is, because he spent a lot of time with teenaged girls at that point, and we were rambunctious. I mean that only in the term of "coach", thank you very much. He was an excellent coach.

The Arctic Winter Games were in Whitehorse and we were staying at Yukon College, and I don't think we had another soccer team in with us, but we had another girls team. I remember things like Karaoke and going to the airport to welcome other teams. I remember the song, *Bertha is a Truck*, that someone was singing to welcome teams. I have all these memories, and on top of those memories, I remember how happy I was to be hanging out with my teammates and how it felt to be part of this team. This was before we even started to play.

The one interesting thing about playing outdoor soccer and going to places like Juneau, Anchorage or Fairbanks, is that we

never had the leg up. In Juneau we played on clay fields and it rained. If you've never played on a clay field in the rain, then I can only tell you that it is not what you expect.

If you have never played outdoor soccer at 110 degrees Fahrenheit, I can only tell you that is not what you expect either. But indoor soccer always has walls; it always has door jambs; it always has things that you can look at, but it was consistent and the temperature was even and we were on equal footing.

I liked that hockey was a really polite sport, but indoor soccer was not. The Alaskan and Alberta teams were a lot bigger than we were and they were a lot more aggressive. There were times where girls were going down at all points and the coach would pick us up and be like, "Okay. You have to be faster; you have to be quicker; you have to get the balls around." So we advanced in the round robin. We would win and then we might lose and that would be hard. Then you have to get your head back in the game for the next one.

We kept going and we kept playing. Then you played the teams more than once by the time you are in toward the finals. You start to see things — especially as the goalie, because I had the entire field of play to look at. Then you're expecting the shots from some of them and I'm sure you've probably realized this here, but I'm quite loud, and I could carry my voice on a pitch. So I was the cheerleader also in the back.

You know, the week was great and I can't remember where we ate, because it was certainly not set up like it is now. I can't remember those things, but I do know that we played for the gold medal, and I can tell you that we lost. I can tell you that was really, really hard, but we did win silver, and that was important. But more than that is that, when we played that gold-medal game, there were tons of people watching — not just soccer players — because that's the really important part. You start to go and watch other Team Yukon teams. We played that game and we played the hardest we could, and we played the best we could, and that day we just didn't win. We had a great coach and he told us we did awesome, and we did. We did great.

It's interesting because I was still of an age that I could play the next year, and I tried out for the team for 1994. Around the same time, I started snowboarding. I made the soccer team, and I actually decided that I wasn't that into soccer and I certainly didn't want to be the goalie. So I remember going to the team — I think we were at Whitehorse Elementary for a practice — and I said, "Look guys. I'm just not into that any more." I recanted — I can't even remember who they had as goalie. I feel bad for them and I apologize.

Then at that point, snowboarding was dominating my life. It's really exciting, because the first time that snowboarding was involved in the Arctic Winter Games, I was an official. I got to be a judge. So I did the prerequisite training to be a judge and I got to be in support of snowboarding, which is still one of my passions. I got to be involved in that way, and that was really incredible because, unlike a lot of other sports, snowboarding is pretty individual. It's kind of like figure skating and things like that, where it's all you against yourself. That's something I've always appreciated about snowboarding.

So now to see a sport involved in a more mainstream thing, where it's sometimes not a lot of mainstream kids who are involved, I really appreciate that. I see a lot of the kids now who are on the Yukon snowboarding team, and I know what a big effect it has on them. I also know in the world of snowboarding that it continues on into the Canada Winter Games, and they've done quite well. So that's really exciting.

There is so much to be said about volunteering. My dad, Don, is a runner, and if you guys don't know him through running, then maybe you know him through snowshoeing. My dad retired six years ago and he volunteers now, running and snowshoeing. I figure probably two hours a day every day is what it seems like. My dad has nurtured traditional snowshoeing, so they are wooden snowshoes with the hide. They are traditional mukluks. My dad has kids who run all summer and he takes them snowshoeing in the winter.

The greatest thing about snowshoeing is that pretty little guys can compete — so, 11, 12 — they are pretty small when they can start and they run with the bigger kids and you know, they get all these things going on. My dad has quite the collection of jackets, so if you were to come to my mom and dad's house, not only would you see about 23 sleeping bags, all with a different year — and they're great because you can always hand away an Arctic Winter Games sleeping bag to someone who needs the emergency bag in the back. I always thought that was really quite interesting and quite awesome — you got your sleeping bag; that was cool; that was great.

So at my mom and dad's house, you can see a collection of jackets and you can see how things have changed and how substantially more fashionable the Yukon is now than they were back in the early 1990s. I'm sure that the kids today who participate have a lot easier time changing — trading their outfits — than they used to. This year it was great because we had decided that we were not going to be in session for the Arctic Winter Games and I was really excited and I got to volunteer for snowshoeing. I was a snowshoeing course marshal.

I had never done this before and a lot of the volunteers had not done it either so we went through a bit of a "snowshoeing boot camp" about what you could and could not do on the snowshoeing course — understanding that the kids couldn't cross lines in a certain spot, but could cross lines in another spot — trying to get people to the start line who do not speak English in any way, shape or form.

So between motions and smiles and increasing volume in trying to get people to where they had to be, it was really exciting. The snowshoeing competition this year was really incredible, because it was in LaPage Park, downtown. It was really near the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre, which was great, because sometimes the sports crossed. What was really incredible about it was that this year, the snowshoeing course was on the river. It has been a really long time since that happened. So it wasn't on a soccer field. It wasn't on a cross-country ski field. It was on the river. It's interesting, because my dad had to do a lot to convince people that it was thick enough to be safe. The City of Whitehorse went out and made sure that, yes, it was indeed thick enough and it was safe.

So, for the first time in the Yukon, the snowshoeing was held on the river, and it was incredible, because we have the park now — Shipyards Park, sorry, not LaPage Park — and the cultural centre and we had the snowshoeing. I've never been involved with something like that. My involvement before was in snowboarding and then, of course, in soccer. Snowshoeing is completely different, because you have the solo aspect and you have the team aspect. I hadn't really seen that before. The long course was longer than I'd like to run unless something really big was chasing me, and it went across the river and up the hill by Long Lake Road, and it went all around.

I got placed on the far corner, so I would see kids crest the hill. They had to get to the hob of the hill before I'd see them, and I would cheer like crazy as they came huffing and puffing past me and went back into the woods. It was so exciting. I got to watch young athletes struggle — because I knew they were tired — and sometimes I knew they were done. And when they were doing multiple laps, I knew how many they had to go, so I'd be like — “You're so close.” It was incredible.

Then when I saw athletes come up — one team come up to pass another team — they always offered words of encouragement. So it wasn't — “I'm going to pass you, and I'm going to beat you.” It was — “You can do this, you're almost there, you can do this.” It was an incredible thing in snowshoeing.

And then we have my mom — her name is Marg. She's also a super volunteer, and she has been on the mission staff on more than one occasion for the Arctic Winter Games. She's a high-ranking official in curling. You guys actually might know my mom. She has volunteered for every Arctic Winter Games since as far as I can remember. She does it in the capacity of mission staff or support staff or regular volunteer, or sometimes she's the curling official, and sometimes she's an official for something that involves timing, because she does a lot of that. I'm always really grateful that I grew up in a family where volunteering was so important.

I continue to see the changes. The difference in the games from the 1990s, when I participated, to the one recently, in 2012, that I was involved in an official capacity, was astronomical.

In 1992, I am not really sure that they knew where we were going or how we were supposed to get from point A to point B. I'm pretty sure that parents would drive us at times, and I'm sure at times we would walk between venues. It was not the organization that it is now. There were volunteers, but there was not three volunteers per athlete.

I think what Whitehorse did — or, the Yukon did — in the last games was because of our practice with the Canada Winter Games — I mean, we can host anything — “We can bring the Olympics here and we've got it sorted out.” So, the differences I've seen from the 1990s to now are incredible.

When I listen to the minister talk about all the options that she has put forward, I know we can do it. I know that video screens between two places and all the hoopla that can go along with that — the lights and the action and all that — can be incredible. I know that when it was my opening — I think it was at the Takhini Arena — it was probably the biggest venue we had at that point of time. It was okay, but it certainly wasn't the

2012 opening and closing ceremonies. There wasn't hip hop and there wasn't lighting and there wasn't music. I think it was a little bit more subdued.

I thank the minister for all the work that she is doing, and I know that, with your help, this can happen. I thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing it forward. To any kid who is not sure if they want to work hard enough to be in the Arctic Winter Games — you totally should; it's totally worth it. I'm glad I did and I'm glad I had the support of my community when it happened. I look forward to voting for this.

Mr. Tredger: The member beside me here mentioned the atmosphere and the feeling in the Legislature today. It reminds me of the Canada Winter Games. Communities come together from across the circumpolar north, from disparate backgrounds, from different cultures — some things in common, some things not in common — and they build a team and they build a community. They take the strength of that community to the host community as well as to the respective communities that they visit. I want to thank everyone in here for sharing their experiences, for supporting the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin in his motion, and for supporting the Minister of Community Services in her endeavours to make the games just a little bit better for athletes this year.

I speak from a number of different perspectives. I was a principal in Pelly Crossing for many years when I first heard of the games and the experiences of a small community and how they affected them. I was also a principal in Whitehorse and many of my students there participated. I was a coach — sorry, I wasn't a coach of Canada Winter Games, I was a coach of a feeder group that got in there. I never did make it to be the coach of the big teams.

I was a father. I was a volunteer and I was a spectator. Each one of those capacities made me a better person. When I hear the stories shared today, that's not a unique feeling. Of the people in the House, all of us have been affected by the games. All of us had our lives enriched by the games. We all stand proud to be Yukoners and proud to support the Arctic Winter Games.

When I was in Pelly, the people there weren't as actively involved, but they were involved. I must commend the Sport Yukon teams that came out to our community: the badminton team that worked with the kids in my school; the soccer team; Frank Turner, whom we saw earlier, for coming by and talking about dog mushing; the volleyball team; and particularly the Arctic sports team who came out involving the children in Pelly, the students at Pelly, and giving them a goal and something to shoot for.

A number of the students did participate in teams and years later when they came into Whitehorse for high school they had friends. That's huge — that's huge when you're coming from a small community to a large centre like Whitehorse and you find somebody who smiles at you; somebody with whom you can share an experience — how important that is. Many of the governing bodies may not have realized the difference they made in children's lives, but they did, and I thank them for that.

The other aspect that people from Pelly were involved in was in the cultural exchanges. The cultural component of the Arctic Winter Games is huge. It affects us all and gives us another reason to be proud of who we are and where we came from, and to share those experiences, not only across cultures, but intergenerationally. When the elders get a chance to share their stories, when the drummers come to town and can talk about their culture and drum in athletes, it makes a difference.

The games have expanded and involve more people all the time, as they should. People have recognized the value and the importance of them.

My daughter was a soccer player and I can remember her training all year long to get ready and hopefully make the soccer team. There was preparation, dedication and work that she and her teammates put in to coalesce. You know, as a teacher, one of the things I realized was how important a peer group is to kids as they grow up. My daughter's soccer peer group — and neighbours have talked about hockey peer groups; we have talked about different athletes and their peer groups and the difference they make. As a parent or as a teacher, knowing who your children are going out with and where they are going makes a huge difference. As a parent, I was lucky enough to be able to drive my children to athletic activities. At first I thought I was spending a lot of time driving and then I realized how fortunate I was to have that time with my daughter captive beside me so she couldn't run away. There are little things like that that a lot of people don't think about when they think about the Arctic Winter Games or other competitions — how important they are to building family and building community.

I got to be a volunteer several times and saw the athletes as they went to their venue and worked on things with intensity and excitement. I watched the crowds as they worked with the athletes. As I said earlier, it humbled me and made me much richer for it. We're very fortunate to live in a community that has hosted and is able to host the Arctic Winter Games on a fairly regular basis. I watched my community in Whitehorse and my community in Pelly grow and take pride in what they were able to put on. I was also fortunate enough to travel to the games in Grande Prairie and in the Kenai Peninsula, and I saw that same thing happening in their communities. When we were in the Kenai Peninsula, the people there took pride in showing us around and showing us their community.

Despite the work that it takes to host the games, the effect lasts a long time.

When the Arctic Winter Games were here last, I was volunteering on the ski hill. The ski hill itself developed a community around it. I'll never forget one young girl from Greenland who was quite scared leaving the tent and I was the guard of the tent, standing around as Jan mentioned. When she came back down she was puffed and out of breath and she looked at me with these big eyes and this incredulity and said, "I won." A few minutes later, the Minister of Community Services was putting a gold medal around her neck. That girl beamed from ear to ear and that memory will live with me and will live with many of the spectators.

In Grande Prairie I remember talking to some of my students who were in speed skating and how happy they were.

While principal of this school, many of my students were involved in figure skating and hockey, leaving school early sometimes for a practice. It was sort of a stick to hold over them because they made sure their homework was done before they left. It works — it built community and the dedication shown by athletes carries through into all their lives.

Last year when the dog mushers were here I was at Takhini Elementary School as a host and the dog mushers were there. There were dog mushers and their parents who had come from Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. This was a big event for them. I couldn't quite fathom somebody bringing their dog team all the way from Nunavut, and the dedication and the perseverance they must have shown to do that. But there they were, keen and raring to go and having the time of their lives.

I would like to commend the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing forth this motion. I wholeheartedly support it. I would like to thank the Minister of Community Services for taking this forth and for looking at alternatives and creative solutions. I'd like to encourage all the athletes in all of the events not to give up, but to keep their hopes up. Thank you.

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

Mr. Elias: It's a pleasure and I'm proud to be in here today, because our words today — I'm thinking up to 2016, when hopefully everybody is still here. We're going to look back on our words today and be proud of what we did in here. We gave support to our minister so that she can work on behalf of our territory's citizens and those athletes who are aspiring to be the best that they can be. The eloquence and the words today fill my heart, so thank you.

I want to go over a couple of things that I thought were important about how sport has the power to save lives. In 1986, it was my first Arctic Winter Games as well. I was playing pee-wee hockey. I credit my coaches and Mr. Wayne Peace and Mr. Mike House because there were two paths I could have taken during that time in my life. One path wasn't so good and the other one was to stick with hockey and to play sports. I'm confident today that decision I made to continue playing sports saved my life; I can say that with confidence. So when we talk about the power of sport in here today, that's what it means.

I also wanted to mention that my son played at his first Arctic Winter Games last year. I think he scored two or three goals and he's always going to remember that. They ended up in the bronze medal final with Alaska and unfortunately they didn't make it, but again, it builds solid young citizens — to be able to win and lose with grace. So I said, "You're going to have another opportunity, son. You don't worry about that."

It was a pleasure to hear the minister's options that she put forward on the floor today, because I didn't realize some of those options had already been spoken about at such a high level, and I think some of them are very intriguing, especially having Iceland possibly as a venue — that's the first I've ever heard of that.

In my discussions with Yukoners in the stores and in the hockey rinks and in my office, there are a couple of interesting options that haven't been mentioned here today. One of them is actually from two totally different people, both involved in hockey, however. It's with regard to the Winter Classic hockey — the National Hockey League game that was recently cancelled. The possibility there was to have the biggest hockey crowd in the history of the NHL, and how they do that is they have the ability to have artificial ice made wherever with plants. So a couple of people came up to me and said, "Why can't we do this in Nuuk? Why can't we approach the National Hockey League Players' Association and the National Hockey League — because they do need some positive exposure right now — to help ensure that midget hockey and speed skating and curling are in the 2016 Arctic Winter Games?"

I thought, "Wow, they're thinking about the details and about ways of solving this issue for our citizenry." I think that's amazing.

Another Yukoner came up to me and said, "Look, Greenland has sea lifts, or barges. We could transport a whole removable arena for the ice sports to Nuuk and take it back out." So those are some of the things that were mentioned to me.

Back in 1986, again — I also have a lasting relationship with someone, who was then an athlete and is now on the international committee. So it's no surprise to me that Fort Smith came up. So I say this with a smile on my face that that member of the international committee is lobbying for her own town. I support that as well. She knows who she is.

One of the challenges the Arctic Winter Games International Committee is faced with in regard to an issue in dog mushing is that it's actually illegal to import dogs above the Arctic Circle in Greenland.

If a dog is flown below Greenland's Arctic Circle it will never be allowed back again. "Why?" people ask. It is because they want to ensure that the Greenland dog breed is pure. Those are the kinds of things that the Arctic Winter Games International Committee has to think about and deal with in their decisions. That's just one issue and there are many. I wanted to bring that to light.

Mr. Frank Turner gave me a letter today and I want to quote a couple of sections from it with regard to dog mushing. He said, "In my opinion to not include dog teams in the 'Arctic' games would be a travesty.

"Please do not deny our youth the opportunity to come together with their dogs and build friendships that transcend time and geography. Respectfully, Frank Turner."

He hand-delivered that letter to me today.

In conclusion, I would just like to thank everybody today. I think we can be proud of the words that hopefully will transcend time and help our Minister of Community Services in achieving her goal on behalf of the citizens of this territory.

I almost forgot something, Mr. Speaker: I was walking through Wal-Mart last night and I was stopped about six times because I guess word spreads pretty quickly that this was being debated today and they said, "Darius, while you're at it, can you try to include judo, weight-lifting and boxing and these

sports into the games as well?" I said, "Okay, I'll make sure it gets on the permanent Hansard." So I just did that.

Thank you to those citizens who also care about their sports and their inclusion in the Arctic Winter Games.

Over the years of my participation in the Arctic Winter Games and watching our citizenry over the decades, I've had the privilege of observing the Arctic Winter Games and the athletes oath, when they stand up and represent their jurisdiction and on behalf of the athletes say, "In the name of all participants, I pledge to embrace the Arctic Winter Games in the spirit of fair play and cultural exchange, respecting the traditions that govern them and celebrating the honour and excellence of our teams." I think that in itself says a lot. So thank you to each and every one of the MLAs here today. Mahsi' cho.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Barr: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yeas, nil nays.

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

Motion No. 252 agreed to

Motion No. 275

Clerk: Motion No. 275, standing in the name of Mr. Tredger.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to:

(1) implement an immediate moratorium;

(2) conduct a full and rigorous scientific review; and

(3) conduct a public consultation on the effects and desirability of hydraulic fracturing, also known as "fracking", before any regulatory approvals or permitting is allowed in Yukon.

Mr. Tredger: It is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to speak to Motion No. 275. This motion calls upon the Government of Yukon to implement an immediate moratorium on the controversial practice of hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking.” The motion further calls on the government to conduct a full and rigorous scientific review of the potential impacts of fracking. Finally, the motion calls on the government to conduct a public consultation on the practice of fracking. The scientific review and public consultation should take place before any regulatory approvals or permits are granted for fracking.

The Yukon NDP has a proud history of supporting responsible resource extraction in the territory.

We believe, as do many Yukoners, that we can build a prosperous economy that benefits everyone without destroying the environment. We understand and embrace the role of a responsible, competitive resource extraction industry in our territory and its contributions to our economy. We also take the role of government as steward of our environment and our natural resources very seriously. There is no doubt that government plays an important role in creating an attractive business environment in the territory. Yet this role as economic facilitator must not come second to that of an environmental steward. As we all know, economic opportunities in the resource sector come and go. They are subject to inevitable fluctuations in world commodity prices and, of course, once those resources are gone, they are gone forever. They are also subject to natural cyclical variances where resource industries build up and then go away.

As we noticed in the past five years with mining, there has been a gradual buildup of activity. Last year, exploration activity peaked for this cycle. It’s important as stewards of the environment and stewards of our territory to look at these cycles. When we had peak exploration, who benefited? Who didn’t? How did our resources stand up? How did the communities fare? Did this new-found economic surplus benefit everyone? How much of it stayed in our territory? How many of our children got permanent jobs? Now is the time for an audit of the activity as we prepare for the next wave of mining activity. We’re moving from exploration into confirmation of that and into actual mining.

How, without checking — without doing a serious look at our experiences — can we ensure that the extraction of our natural resources benefits all our territory and that we leave no one behind?

Our environment — our one environment that’s home to people, animals and plants alike — is forever. The elders tell us we are part of the land and part of the water. A book was even written about that. Yukoners know that our wilderness is unique in the world. We and all living beings depend on the land, the water and the air to sustain us.

Yukon First Nations have depended on this environment since time immemorial. They are an important part of our identity and our deep attachment to the Yukon’s vast sprawling landscape, from the Southern Lakes to the North Slope, is an important part of our history.

I would go further and say that our land and our water are critical to all of us. The First Nations have shown us the way. They’ve shown us and told stories and told us about the importance of our land and where we are from and the importance of cooperating and collaborating and living together — learning from our experiences, growing from our experiences and sharing our experiences. Our children, our children’s children, and future generations will all depend on our environment to sustain them. We must not sacrifice our irreplaceable environment in the name of making a quick buck. What we enjoy today should also be a vital part of our legacy for future generations.

Economic opportunities in the resource sector come and go as world markets rise and fall. Our environment, our home, is forever and while we need and embrace economic activity, it must be done in such a way as to preserve the integrity of our land, our people and our resources.

As I was writing this, Mr. Speaker, the Peel River watershed came to mind. In many ways, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It’s unique in the world. It is the largest relatively undisturbed boreal forest river watershed in the world. We have an incredible jewel and an incredible opportunity to keep the Peel sound and whole. I would remind the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Environment that it is a jewel and people will come from far and wide to visit it and the First Nations gather strength from it.

We all can have a spiritual touch to it. Yukoners throughout the territory are recognizing how special and how unique in the world our land is. I remember watching a movie called *A River Runs Through It*. I don’t want to see the movie about the Peel called “A Road Runs Through It”. Yukoners throughout the territory are calling for greater respect for the values of conservation and protection and for actions that are based on the sound and responsible management of the Yukon environment. Yukoners support and seek sustainable development — development that knows and respects environmental limits and that will benefit all Yukoners today and in the years to come.

Yukon New Democrats understand that. That is why a Yukon New Democratic government passed the Yukon *Environment Act* 20 years ago. It is in this context of understanding and supporting the role of a strong resource industry in our territory, while at the same time, taking the role of government as environmental steward seriously that we bring this motion forward.

The Yukon Party government has repeatedly refused requests for a full public discussion, informed by evidence, on the issue of fracking. They have argued that since there are no current proposals on the table for fracking in the Yukon, we ought not to discuss the issue. They have been dismissive and accusatory, going so far as to call us “alarmist” for even raising the issues.

As I said in Question Period, it is the Yukon Party government that is causing alarm and polarization among Yukoners by refusing to discuss the issue. A public discussion, a consultation process, that currently is supported by both the Yukon Conservation Society and Northern Cross — those opposite ends of the spectrum, as the Premier likes to say — a public

discussion that is informed by good, objective, scientific evidence.

The government's reluctance to engage Yukoners on this important issue and to allow their voices to be heard is disconcerting. By denying calls for a public discussion on fracking on the grounds that no fracking is currently proposed suggests a peculiar approach to governing. Instead of addressing the issue of fracking head on, this government seems to be burrowing its collective head in the sand. They say that since there is no fracking planned for tomorrow, we shouldn't bother discussing it today. This strikes me as incredibly shortsighted and counterproductive.

As long as the Yukon Party government continues to deny that fracking is on the horizon — while most Yukoners and industry can see it coming — members of the public will continue to be concerned. Mistrust and doubt in the government will continue to grow. This isn't in anyone's best interest.

The way to engage and embrace industry is to ensure — through public discussion and public participation; through scientific, rigorous examination of both the pros and the cons, the positives and the negatives of industrial extraction — that Yukoners will have the benefit of that extraction. That is the way to cease the polarization, the way to engage Yukoners and the way to engage the industry and have productive and valuable resources.

Speaker: As the time is 5:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on Motion No. 275 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following document was filed November 7, 2012:

33-1-25

Climate Change Action Plan, Yukon Government:
Progress Report (dated September 2012) (Dixon)