



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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33rd Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, December 10, 2014 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre**

**DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake**

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<b>Hon. Elaine Taylor</b>	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Education; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
<b>Hon. Brad Cathers</b>	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Community Services; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation; Yukon Lottery Commission Government House Leader
<b>Hon. Doug Graham</b>	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
<b>Hon. Scott Kent</b>	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Yukon Energy Corporation; Yukon Development Corporation
<b>Hon. Currie Dixon</b>	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Environment; Public Service Commission
<b>Hon. Wade Istchenko</b>	Kluane	Minister responsible for Highways and Public Works
<b>Hon. Mike Nixon</b>	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Justice; Tourism and Culture

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<b>Stacey Hassard</b>	Pelly-Nisutlin
<b>Hon. David Laxton</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Patti McLeod</b>	Watson Lake

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<b>Jan Stick</b>	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
<b>Kevin Barr</b>	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
<b>Lois Moorcroft</b>	Copperbelt South
<b>Jim Tredger</b>	Mayo-Tatchun
<b>Kate White</b>	Takhini-Kopper King

### Liberal Party

<b>Sandy Silver</b>	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly****Whitehorse, Yukon****Wednesday, December 10, 2014 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers***Withdrawal of motions**

**Speaker:** The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes which have been made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 29, standing in the name of the Member for Riverdale South; Motion No. 498, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin; and Motion No. 728, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition have been removed from the Order Paper as they refer to a bill that has now passed this House.

Also, Motion No. 617, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition and Motion No. 655, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party, have been removed from the Order Paper, as they refer to a bill of the Parliament of Canada that has now received royal assent.

Also, Motion No. 618, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South, has been removed from the Order Paper as it refers in the present tense to a bill that is no longer on the Order Paper of the House of Commons of Canada.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Tributes.

**TRIBUTES****In recognition of the Canadian Rangers**

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** It is with great privilege that I do stand in this House today to pay tribute to the Canadian Rangers. Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss, though, if I didn't talk a little bit first about a couple of our previous units, the Yukon Field Force, which was a unit of 203 officers and men from the Permanent Force of the Canadian Militia back during the gold rush, or Mr. Joe Boyle and his Yukon Motor Machine Gun Company — who in World War I, when it was started — he went after and wired Sam Hughes, the Minister of Defence, and said that he could assemble a 50-man machine gun company to assist in the war effort and off they went.

Mr. Speaker, to start, I guess the first part of the Canadian Rangers actually starts with the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, and that's when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor back in 1941 and the anniversary was just a few days ago. The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers began as coastal defence guards.

Skilled outdoorsman, Colonel Tommy Taylor felt that the coastal homeland could only be defended by experienced men accustomed to rugged timber country. Colonel Taylor found men who had the energy, initiative and independence needed to do this particular type of soldiering. The PCMR Force of

1942 consisted of loggers, trappers, prospectors, woodsmen, lumberjacks, fisherman and ranchers who knew the local topography and terrain. By 1945, at the end of the war, there were over 15,000 men who volunteered to be rangers. They were trained and employed in intelligence duties, anti-sabotage measures, coastal monitoring and protecting of lines of communication and transportation.

Youth or old age was not necessarily a barrier for those who wanted to serve as a ranger. According to *The Ranger*, a training publication issued in September 1942: young lads of 15 years and up who prove to be good shots or can handle an axe, or men considered too old to join the war effort are welcomed. That leads us to where we are today with Canadian Rangers.

The Canadian Rangers, which are sometimes mistaken for the Arctic Rangers, are a subcomponent of the Canadian Forces Reserves that provides a military presence in Canada's sparsely settled northern coastal and isolated areas. They were formally established May 23, 1947. The first patrol was established — for those of you who didn't know that — in Dawson City and the other Yukon communities followed after — then it went across the north. The primary role of the part-time force is to conduct annual type 1 10-day training exercises upon request from headquarters. We do conduct type 2 surveillance or sovereignty patrols.

Some Canadian Rangers also conduct inspections of our North Warning System (NWS) sites and act as guides, scouts, subject matter experts in such disciplines as wilderness survival and other forces, such as Army units, the regular force or primary reserve, that are in the area of operations.

The Canadian Rangers are a volunteer force and they are paid according to the rank they hold within their patrol. An interesting fact is the patrol commanders and the leadership are decided by a patrol vote, not by the military from somewhere else. There are approximately 5,000 Rangers serving in various communities across Canada today. Our patrol group — one Canadian Rangers patrol group — is the largest of the five patrol groups, with 60 patrols, more than 1,500 Rangers and more than 1,300 junior Rangers.

So, Mr. Speaker, a very small percentage of Canada's military protects 40 percent of our great land mass. One CRPG is an especially strategic presence for Canada with the Northwest Passage having four other nations vying for control of the waterway and the potential resources that lie beneath.

As members of the Canadian Forces, the Canadian Rangers — some of the duties that we have to do: we conduct and support sovereignty operations; conduct sovereignty and surveillance patrols and training; conduct north warning site patrols; report suspicious and unusual activities; collect local data of military significance; conduct and assist the Canadian forces in domestic operations; conduct coastal inland water surveillance and border patrols; provide local knowledge and expertise; participate in search and rescue operations; provide support in response to natural or man-made disasters and humanitarian operations; provide assistance to federal, provincial, territorial or municipal authorities; maintain the Canadian forces presence in the local community and in the

north; and instruct and supervise youth in our Canadian Junior Ranger program, a program that has significantly improved the quality of life of young people in some of the most isolated areas in Canada.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't say that we support and participate in just about every event that you see in our local communities.

Activities — and why the Rangers are so important to the Yukon — well, most of the Rangers in their communities also wear other hats. We have fire chiefs, ambulance attendants, presidents of the Lions Clubs, local search and rescue — and just many community volunteers.

One of the key things about being a Ranger is that we are issued the trusty .303 Lee-Enfield rifle with an annual supply of ammunition and are encouraged to shoot. We have been told that we are getting new rifles, and I think maybe our grandkids — when they are Rangers, they might see this come through to fruition — but for now we are pretty content with our tried-and-tested-true .303s.

Some of the activities that we do that are really important to the Yukon. I, as a patrol commander in Haines Junction — we organize an annual Yukon small-arms shooting competition, and that is where we hone our skills. It's comradery among men and we get together once a year in the spring to see our fellow comrades from across the north.

The Yukon Quest — without the Rangers the trails would not be broken. There would be no marking and there would be no proving. The work that the Dawson and Pelly and Carmacks and Whitehorse Rangers have put into that is just really, really important.

In the summertime, we have a summer enhanced training seminar for our Junior Ranger program, and that is where 250 youth come from across the north to Whitehorse, where they learn the skills of trapping, whitewater rafting, rappelling, canoeing, kayaking, horseback riding — just about everything that we Rangers do — and it is all taught by local Rangers from the Yukon.

Our Winterlude exercise in Carmacks, Mr. Speaker — you will remember that, because that is where the Junior Canadian Rangers tricked you into chopping your socks up — you and the senator. You'll remember that, Mr. Speaker.

We've done the trappers course for the Junior Canadian Rangers lots with one of our now passed-away Rangers, Alex Van Bibber. You will see us on Remembrance Day. You'll see us on Canada Day. You will see us on many parades and honours, and some of them we have all been privy to — when the Prime Minister comes, you'll see the Rangers. When the Governor General comes — when Prince William and Kate came, you saw the Rangers. The change of command for the Governor General in Ottawa — there were Rangers on parade. When the City of Edmonton had a parade for their troops coming home from Afghanistan, there were Rangers on parade from my community. It was very interesting to see that there were over 1,000 soldiers there in the city hall, and there were 10 Rangers in red outfits and the rest of them were dressed in the relish-jar look, and I was on the top floor looking down and you could just see nine red spots with

soldiers around them. They were very interested because we had trained with them before.

We do operational stuff. We have these big exercises and Op N 14. I know some of my fellow colleagues have participated in some of this, but the Rangers were there. The Rangers had mass exercise last year, and Rangers from each community went — from Dawson up the Old Crow winter road that was put through, on to Herschel Island to prove sovereignty. I can remember that the first big operation when they brought all the units together was magnetic North Pole. Three or four Rangers from the Yukon got to participate, and I remember that when they came back, they said they spent 17 days on the land. The warmest it got was minus 33, and that was in the tents at night. They also said that when they laid their compasses down, they just went in circles at the magnetic North Pole and they were pretty much useless.

Mr. Speaker, one highlight in my career as a Canadian Ranger, and highlighted with a few of the Rangers who are in the House here today, was that most people would know that the coldest recorded temperature ever in North America was February 3, 1947 and that was in the Snag area and Wellesley Lake area. It was minus 63 Celsius. Back a few years ago, every Ranger patrol in the Yukon travelled from their communities — from Dawson, from Pelly, from Mayo — by snowmobile to Wellesley Lake and it took them days to get there. When we got there, we were there for five days and set up camp. We built airstrips, landed military planes to bring fuel in — just did what the Rangers are supposed to do. The interesting point about that was we were basically gone for seven to nine days — some of the patrols. It stayed at minus 50 Celsius the whole time we were there. Mr. Speaker, I'm probably the only Canadian soldier to be given a medal — my NATO medal — at minus 50 Celsius on parade with 100 rangers on Wellesley Lake.

Our unit motto "vigilans" means "the watchers." We are the eyes and ears of the north. The *National Post* just ran a story recently about one of our Rangers who had passed away, Mr. Alex Van Bibber. They said: "Alex Van Bibber, an incredible Yukon trapper, just may have been the toughest man in Canada." To that point, we have a long line of Rangers, many of whom were at Alex's funeral and I thank them for being there, following in his footsteps, protecting Canada's true north, strong and free, proud to serve our country, to serve our fellow Rangers, making Canada's north and the Yukon a great place to live.

Mr. Speaker, if you'll indulge me in welcoming most of the Whitehorse patrol here under the leadership of Sergeant Art Birss. I would like to thank them for coming.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Human Rights Day**

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Today, I rise on behalf of my government caucus colleagues to recognize Human Rights Day. It was on December 10, 1948, that the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was adopted. Since that day, every year we have commemorated Human Rights Day worldwide.

Human Rights Day is an opportunity to celebrate human rights achievements, raise global awareness of human rights issues and advocate for the full enjoyment of all human rights by everyone, everywhere.

“Human Rights 365” is this year’s slogan. It highlights the fundamentals outlined in the universal declaration that each one of us as global citizens should enjoy to a full range of human rights without compromise. This common standard of achievement for all people and nations is not always evident. We see this in our daily global news and even in our own communities. We must work to make sure that, every day, all persons, including children, are extended the same dignities without any regard to differences such as ethnic origin, colour of skin, sex, or beliefs.

Tonight, the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination — a committee that advises city council and city administration on best practices to eliminate racism and discrimination — invites residents to an open house at the Frank Slim building at Shipyards Park from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. to meet committee members and contribute ideas to address human rights’ needs. Educational community events that advance our understanding of human rights issues in Yukon and beyond are important and I thank those organizations for holding these events.

Mr. Speaker, we’ve talked about Malala Yousafzai in this House before. The facts of her life are well known to members of this Legislative Assembly and to Yukoners. At just 17, Malala is the youngest person to ever receive a Nobel Prize and I congratulate her for receiving this honour. Malala learned of her prize when her teacher came to pull her out of her chemistry class.

The fact that this young girl would be in a chemistry class that she could be pulled out of may seem ordinary and unremarkable to us, but the right to an education for girls and women cannot be taken for granted. The ideology that drove assailants to put a bullet into Malala’s head on that day two years ago is the same one that is currently shocking and stunning the world with its brutality and its barbarism.

Make no mistake — there are forces which would seek to remove all girls from chemistry classes and from all classes everywhere. Women in Canada are so very fortunate to live in a country which respects and defends their basic rights to education, to be equal before the law, to run for office and to represent constituents in a Chamber such as this.

The rights and freedoms we take for granted — the very ones that so many have died defending — are mere dreams to girls, women and people around the world. Women and girls who live under any system but democracy do not thrive. A free and democratic system protects and defends our rights.

In closing, I would like to thank those Yukoners who work to promote human rights in our territory. I encourage all Yukoners and all members of this House to join us in recognizing December 10 as Human Rights Day.

I would also like to recognize a couple guests in the gallery: the former executive director of the Human Rights Commission, Heather MacFadgen, and her partner Rod Snow — welcome.

### Applause

**Ms. Moorcroft:** “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Those are beautiful words from an international agreement, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which, since its adoption in 1948, has become accepted as international law.

On December 10, we pay tribute to *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, because it promises to all people the economic, social, political, cultural and civil rights which underpin a life free from want and fear.

I would like to read an excerpt of the message from United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, issued today: “The power of the Universal Declaration is the power of ideas to change the world. It tells us that human rights are essential and indivisible — 365 days a year. Every day is Human Rights day: a day on which we work to ensure that all people can gain equality, dignity and freedom.

“The UN Human Rights Office stands with the millions of people around the world whose voices are denied.”

“Together, we must demand what should be guaranteed: our human rights, universal, indivisible, inalienable, for everyone, 365 days a year.”

These human rights “are not a reward for good behaviour, or particular to a certain era or social group. They are the inalienable entitlements of all people, at all times and everywhere...”

Mr. Speaker, what can we do to advance human rights every day of the year? To start with, we can recognize when human rights are being violated around us. When First Nations, Inuit and Métis women are being sexually assaulted, trafficked, murdered, stolen from their families and communities all around us, we can demand a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women. We can join the Native Women’s Association of Canada’s call for all levels of government to work with aboriginal women and representative organizations to hold an independent national public inquiry to address the discrimination, marginalization and impoverishment that puts indigenous women and girls in harm’s way or denies them the chance to escape this violence.

We can support organizations like the Yukon Council on DisABILITY and the Yukon Human Rights Commission, which had the vision to hold a disability rights summit at Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre last week for national Disability Awareness Week. The summit emphasized the need for an independent human rights monitoring mechanism for persons living with disabilities in the Yukon.

We must accept that transsexual and transgender people deserve the same respect as every other person.

On December 1, World AIDS Day, we can agree to work for collaborative health care and supportive housing. We can support organizations like Blood Ties Four Directions who offer information and support, prevention and harm reduction services for people living with HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C.

For December 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, we can commit to work

for change. This worldwide epidemic of violence against women is a human rights violation that touches everyone's lives. Communities can consider concrete actions to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, and I want to thank and congratulate Kaushee's Place and the RCMP for launching their initiative to support third-party reporting of sexual assault as one of those concrete actions to advance women's right to safety and equality.

On December 10, Human Rights Day, when we commemorate the UN declaration on human rights, we can determine to speak out for dignity and protect human rights.

Mr. Speaker, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's statement for 2014 reads: "I call on states to honour their obligation to protect human rights every day of the year. I call on people to hold their governments to account."

People educate about and protect human rights when we teach our children about justice and human rights, listen to others, treat other people with dignity and when we speak out for justice.

Mr. Speaker, human rights are what make us human, and each of us are guardians of human rights. Their fate is in our hands. On December 10, let us make a commitment to celebrate, educate and renew our commitment to human rights, on every day of the year.

Mr. Speaker, before I end my tribute to Human Rights Day 2014, I would like to recognize in the gallery someone who has worked very hard to educate people on their human rights and the importance of upholding them in their own communities and beyond.

As the executive director of the Yukon Human Rights Commission over many years, Heather MacFadgen has worked to advance human rights locally and nationally. She has advocated for human rights law reform, spearheaded research and outreach to youth, worked with Yukon First Nations, supported and encouraged members of the Yukon Human Rights Commission to speak at community events, advocated for the rights of persons with disabilities and for the accommodation of people with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in society and in the criminal Justice system and much more.

I would like to thank Heather MacFadgen and congratulate her on her retirement this month, although I am sure she will continue to put in many volunteer hours as a member of the Yukon legal community and an advocate for human rights.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and please welcome Heather MacFadgen.

*Applause*

**Mr. Silver:** I also rise on behalf of the Liberal caucus to pay tribute to International Human Rights Day. As mentioned, the theme this year is "Human Rights 365," encompassing the idea that Human Rights Day should be every day and not just once a year. The day marks the anniversary of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, signed on December 10, 1949. The day was proclaimed to bring attention to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, setting the standard for what human rights should be in all countries. Unfortunately,

globally, the fight for basic human rights still has a long way to go.

As United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said today in his statements this morning — and I quote: "Violations of human rights are more than personal tragedies. They are alarm bells that may warn of a much bigger crisis." The removal of basic human rights is all too often the warning alarms of a much more endemic problem in a nation. Once basic freedoms are removed, violations can spiral from despotism to massacres to even genocide. Here in Canada, we are fortunate enough that our human rights are entrenched in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Today we must reaffirm our commitment to continue the fight for basic human rights 365 days a year.

**Speaker:** Introduction of visitors.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

## REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

**Mr. Hassard:** I have for presentation the 13<sup>th</sup> report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees.

**Speaker:** Are there any further reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure the 2015-16 budget contains funding to replace old infrastructure attached to the \$25-million Dawson waste-water treatment facility, a facility that has not worked properly since the day it opened.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to call for debate on Thursday, December 11, 2014, the Department of Highways and Public Works.

**Speaker:** Is there a statement by a minister?

This brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

**Question re: First Nations/government relations**

**Ms. Hanson:** During yesterday's budget debate, the Premier said — and I quote: "With the ongoing threat of legal action by First Nations, it does not create certainty in itself" and that the Yukon government is not threatening legal action.

Suggesting that Yukon First Nations are creating uncertainty is victim blaming at its worst and is insulting to First Nations. While Yukon government may not initiate court cases, it is the Yukon government's actions that have triggered the court challenges. That the Yukon Party consistently loses shows the legitimacy of First Nation's grievances against this

government. The Yukon government's approach to creating certainty in Yukon by telling First Nations to stop taking them to court when this government blatantly disrespects the relationships forged in Yukon land claims has not gotten them very far so far.

When will the Premier stop blaming First Nation governments and begin a process of reconciliation to foster the certainty so necessary to Yukon's future?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** It certainly is disappointing that, at this point in this debate, the Leader of the NDP still doesn't understand that this is federal legislation. This was tabled in Ottawa, initially in the Senate. It is now in second reading and on to Committee in the House of Commons. We were one of the parties that were consulted. This was almost a seven-year process. Our comments were to ensure that we had an assessment process that was comparable — that was consistent — with other jurisdictions, giving us the opportunity to ensure that we can remain competitive and, with that, to create investment opportunities, having money come into this territory, which creates good jobs and opportunities for Yukon citizens.

**Ms. Hanson:** Yesterday was not the first time that the Premier has accused Yukon First Nation governments of creating uncertainty just because they are willing to stand up for their rights under final agreements. Yukon First Nations have threatened legal action over Bill S-6 because the amendments to YESAA are fundamentally inconsistent with final agreements. The federal Minister of Aboriginal Affairs told them not to worry because the final agreements take precedence over Bill S-6 if there is any inconsistency with those agreements.

What neither the Premier nor the minister has explained is how First Nations prove that these amendments are not consistent with the final agreements without taking the government to court. Does the Premier really think that Yukon First Nations should take either his word or that of the federal minister after he demonstrated his complete misunderstanding of Yukon final agreements and his contempt for Yukon First Nations by saying that they are not real governments?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** Section 4 of the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* states: "In the event of an inconsistency or conflict between a final agreement and this act, the agreement prevails to the extent of the inconsistency or conflict." This is very clear. This statement is not in Bill S-6, simply because there is no amendment to this section of the act.

Bill S-6 is proposed changes to the YESAA. This is not changing. Section 4 clearly articulates that if there is a conflict between a final agreement and YESAA, the final agreement prevails.

**Ms. Hanson:** And the Premier will take their word for it.

Yesterday, the Premier also said that Yukon First Nations received compensation for their participation in both the five-year review of YESAA and Bill S-6. Compensation means something, typically money, awarded to someone as a recompense for loss, injury or suffering. It appears that the

Premier knew that the changes he proposed to YESAA would cause loss, injury or suffering. It has certainly done nothing to build a relationship of trust between Yukon First Nations and the Yukon government. The Premier has suggested that money provided to Yukon First Nations for their participation replaces his responsibility to engage in meaningful consultation.

Does the Premier think that providing an average of \$7,000 per year for each Yukon First Nation and the CYFN is sufficient compensation for giving Yukon First Nations the runaround so this government can request last-minute amendments to YESAA, putting Yukon's economy at risk and undermining the final agreements?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** It is my understanding that, through the five-year review that the federal government provided to the First Nations — \$647,000 for their participation in the consultation process and an additional \$100,000 to extend the consultation through Canada's action plan to improve Canada's northern regulatory regimes.

Of course, again, the Leader of the NDP forgets that this is federal legislation. The federal government is responsible for the consultation. The Yukon government feels we were adequately consulted. Did we get everything that we had requested? No, we didn't — but we feel that they did consider our comments prior to drafting Bill S-6.

It's quite clear that this leader still doesn't even understand what Bill S-6 is all about.

#### **Question re: Mountain View Golf Course leased land buyback**

**Ms. Hanson:** Yesterday this government stuck to its tired refrain of "I wasn't there; it's not my fault" — their line of defense to avoid responsibility for the golf club backroom deal. Yukoners still want to know where the \$750,000 of bailout money came from. Whistle Bend lots were priced at the cost of development, including trails and storm-water management cost, which is exactly what the minister repeats the land was intended for. Yukoners want to know how this deal was financed.

Will this minister tell Yukoners if families who bought land in Whistle Bend picked up the tab for this government's backroom deal?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** It's again unfortunate how the member chooses to characterize this. I would remind the member that two letters written by Yukon's conflicts commissioner were tabled in the Legislative Assembly, clearing the Premier of any conflict in this matter and advising him not to speak to the matter.

I have reminded the member again that Yukoners across this territory serve on NGOs and contribute to their communities. It's a bad message that the member sends that, if they then later choose to enter municipal or territorial politics, the NDP will attack them for their previous contributions to the community.

In this case, it's clear from the file that the minister of the day in February 2011 made a decision to help this NGO. The agreement was signed in February 2011 and the payment was

made that same month — \$500,000 to discharge the mortgage and \$250,000 to the NGO. Again, it's unfortunate the member is choosing to play politics and misrepresent the facts.

**Ms. Hanson:** This is not an issue about golf or NGO funding; this is an issue about government transparency and accountability. The fact is not a single member of this Yukon Party government will stand up and take responsibility for this deal. It's an embarrassment. They can't take credit for actions of past Yukon Party governments without taking responsibility for past mistakes as well.

This government's actions make it clear that, when it comes to helping out friends of the Yukon Party, fiscal accountability just doesn't matter. Will the minister explain to Yukoners why his government thought it was okay to subsidize an organization, to the tune of three-quarters of a million dollars, outside the public eye?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** This gives me the opportunity to speak to the NDP responsibility here. Yesterday we mentioned that the original lease was signed in 1997 under an NDP government. One of the sitting members of the NDP currently was a member of that government — the Member for Copperbelt South. It was a 60-year lease and it gave the golf course exclusive control of the area, as though it were private property. It was necessary for the government to purchase it at an appraised value, which is exactly what was done in 2011, as mentioned by my colleague, the Minister of Community Services.

Furthermore, this NDP lease that was entered into did not include conditions that would enable the government to break the lease without compensation. Therefore, as I said, it was necessary to purchase the parcel at an appraised value. The government came to the aid of an NGO that benefits Yukoners — I'm sure there are even a few NDP golfers out there — and freed up land to facilitate the development of Whistle Bend, something that was important to Yukoners who were looking for lots in the day — and we still have a golf course that is an incredibly important piece of recreational infrastructure for this community.

**Ms. Hanson:** That is interesting. It has taken three weeks to come up with a new interpretation of a lease that was \$125 — an annual lease.

Clearly this government doesn't want to tell Yukoners where the money came from. The cheques had to be cut and signed by someone. The monies had to be pulled from somewhere and allocated to some account in the government's books. The government's budget documents don't clarify which department cut the cheques and to which accounts the expenditures were committed.

Will the minister tell us which government department or departments cut each of the cheques for the payment to Mountain View Golf Club, and who had the authority to sign those cheques?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Again, as I reminded the member earlier, we have, upon investigating this matter — which, again, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and I were not ministers responsible at the time — it is clear from the file that the minister of the day made a decision to help

this NGO. As I stated to the member earlier, upon investigation and asking officials for the information, we have determined that the agreement was not only signed in February 2011, but the money was transferred in February 2011. Again, the minister and I were not in our current roles, and, of course, the Premier was a private citizen at that time.

Again I remind members that, across this territory, Yukon citizens contribute to a great many NGOs and provide their time and their service, and that includes, in many cases, lobbying government for assistance for those NGOs. The list of NGOs that government has assisted includes Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon; it includes Kaushee's Place; it includes Teegatha'Oh Zzeh; it includes the Outreach van.

I would remind the member, as my colleague did earlier, that it was in fact the NDP in 1997, when the Member for Copperbelt South, sitting right to the side of the Leader of the NDP — the question is: Why did the NDP structure the lease in the way they did, under the McDonald-Moorcroft government?

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Before I turn the question over to the Leader of the Third Party, heckling on both sides is getting to the point where it is very difficult for me to hear what everybody is saying, so bring it down a notch. I need to be able to hear what is being said so I can rule on it if there is a concern or a problem.

### Question re: Ketza River mine project

**Mr. Silver:** A few weeks ago, I asked a question of this government about the Ketza River mine property near Ross River. It concerned the government accessing a \$3-million reclamation fund attached to the property to fund maintenance work on the access road and bridges. There is also work with respect to the tailing facilities on-site. I would argue that this money was supposed to be used to close the mine and not finance maintenance work.

The minister mentioned that the government had retained the services of a consulting firm to manage the project. What he didn't say was that the contract to this firm was awarded without competition. Why did the government bypass the competitive bidding process and give out a \$2.8-million contract without competition?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** I thank the member opposite for the question. When it came to this particular issue, the normal bid-solicitation methods favoured by the Yukon government were not employed because immediate action was necessary to prevent the tailings storage pond from failing in the next freshet, or the next runoff or spring melt.

Department officials in Compliance Monitoring and Inspections brought all this information to me, as the minister, and we had to make a decision. Obviously we didn't want to jeopardize or put at risk any environmental or human health and safety aspects with respect to this tailings pond. Of course we are all familiar with recent events in British Columbia.



So, again, the work was required to be undertaken as soon as possible and that is why we awarded this contract outside of what the normal and the preferred tendering process is.

**Mr. Silver:** I do appreciate the answer from the minister, but one of the comments that this government made to Yukoners is to maintain a level playing field and support businesses and ensure that government funding or government actions does not foster unfair competition within the business community. Picking one company and deciding to give out \$2.8 million without asking anyone else if they would like the opportunity to bid on this is hardly a fair playing field. I am sure that there are many local businesses in the Pelly-Nisutlin riding who would have jumped on the opportunity to bid on this work.

When it comes down to the decision-making process here — who did make this decision? Was this a Cabinet decision, or was this the minister himself making the decision to directly award this contract?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** The firm that the member opposite refers to was selected by the branch as the project manager for the Ketza mine interim work project. The company, as mentioned, was selected on the basis of expertise in the fields of site assessment and remediation, as well as its familiarity with the Ketza River mine site.

As mentioned, we would have preferred to have gone through a normal tendering process, but given advice that I received from the Compliance Monitoring and Inspections branch, there is a real possibility that the tailings dam could have failed in the spring freshet and that is why I made the decision, based on the recommendation from departmental officials, to proceed with the direct-award process to this environmental firm to manage the project.

That said, we did ask them to ensure that local companies were provided with opportunities to bid on work. There are several local companies that are working on the site, including one referenced by the Leader of the NDP recently, Dakwakada, or Castle Rock Enterprises. They are also working on-site and providing assistance to Hemmera to ensure that we don't see any environmental concerns with respect to this tailings facility in the spring freshet period.

**Mr. Silver:** It is very refreshing to hear the minister take responsibility for this, so I do applaud him for that. I do have to put it on the record, again, that it is disappointing to see a government bypass the competitive bidding process and simply awarding this contract without competition. There are plenty of local companies who would have been qualified to do this work, but were never given the opportunity to bid on this \$2.8 million — no bids were required.

Mr. Speaker, the government's decision to spend reclamation dollars on road and bridge maintenance begs the question of: Who will be paying the bill for the actual reclamation? When I asked this question earlier this sitting, the minister said that the purpose of the work being done is to bring — and I quote: “the site back to compliance.” It begs the question: What laws or licences is the property not in compliance with currently?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** The project, totalling \$2.79 million, is broken into a number of specific tasks. One, of course, is the site access upgrades that the member opposite referred to, totalling \$1.4 million. Occupational Health and Safety required that work be done and we obviously needed the road to be in shape so that the people working on-site could access the mine site. The second is with respect to on-site infrastructure; third, tailings dam seepage control; and fourth, surface-water management.

I think the member opposite, when he raised this question earlier in this sitting asked about a water licence with respect to the site access upgrades. There wasn't one required for that. The Ketza mine — the proprietor of the company that has the Ketza mine has not had a water licence on that site for a number of years, so there is no water licence in position.

Again, just back to what the member opposite started with — with respect to the tendering aspects for this project — of course I would have much preferred to have seen this go to a competitive bid and have that process honoured but, again, after receiving advice from officials in Compliance Monitoring and Inspections — again, this was my call as the minister. I had to approve the master services agreement. I felt that the environmental consequences outweighed the opportunity to go through the regular tendering process.

#### **Question re: Mental health services**

**Ms. Stick:** Effective mental health services reduce hospitalizations and improve health outcomes and quality of life. In the Yukon, mental health problems and impacts are deemed a major issue in the 2014 clinical services plan. Despite community efforts to provide needed supports, emergency department visits continue to increase for patients with mental health issues. Yukoners experiencing mental health crises do not have adequate access to clinical services and must resort to Emergency. The recently launched Yukon distress and support line is an excellent complementary support service, but does not displace the need for clinical services and support.

Will the minister support services provided by Yukon professionals by increasing after-hour and weekend clinical mental health support for Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** Mental health is a very key priority for our department and for me personally as minister. We already provide a wide range of services and supports to our clients. We will be providing a plan — a mental health plan, strategic plan — to the Yukon public in the very near future. We also realize that, as part of the clinical services plan, we do have gaps.

We know that mental health in the territory is a growing demand and that we will have to provide additional services. To that end, I have taken several proposals forward to our government and we are very happy to say we have had some success and will be announcing those successes in the very near future. So yes, we believe that mental health is very key to the development of the territory's health system and we are continuing to improve them as we go.

**Ms. Stick:** It is good to hear that there is a mental health plan coming, but again we wait. The Health and Social Services strategic plan for 2009 to 2014 — the only strategic plan available — states that access to services will be improved by increasing the number of mental health professionals and support workers in rural Yukon. There are just two mental health workers serving every single rural Yukon community.

Can the minister indicate if two mental health workers for all rural communities is an increase compared to the 2009 numbers, and can we expect more?

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** Once again, I don't understand how the member opposite can expect me to know, or to have at my fingertips, how many rural mental health workers we had in the territory in 2009. I will endeavour to get that information to her. However, the current rural health workers were funded through a program under THSSI by the federal government. That federal government funding lapsed in March of 2014 and, since that time, this government has agreed to pick up the tab for those resources. We've done that. We're looking at expanding services in a number of areas and, as I said, we will have a strategy approved in the very near future and we look forward to continuing our efforts in this area.

**Ms. Stick:** The Yukon's rate of self-injury hospitalization is more than double the Canadian average. Our hospitalization rates for mental illness are also significantly higher. The clinical services plan notes that patients with mental illness in the Yukon have greater hospitalization rates but shorter stays, due to early discharges or the absence of community supports.

A 2014 coroner's judgment of inquiry recommended the minister develop a protocol for follow-up when people are released from hospital following a suicide attempt. Team-based mental health care and treatment, with multi-disciplinary providers working together, improves discharge planning and community support.

Will the minister please tell this House whether a protocol is in place for patients with mental health issues discharged from Yukon hospitals?

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** I'm only too happy to talk about the discharge planning that takes place at the present time at Whitehorse General Hospital. The Hospital Corporation and the Health and Social Services people work together in a number of areas to plan discharges of patients from the hospital. Home care works with staff at the Whitehorse General Hospital to facilitate planning for patients requiring additional services after they leave the hospital. Planning between the department and the Hospital Corporation to discharge, specifically mental health patients — and Mental Health Services — they make sure they are required and they are discussed regularly during the hospital discharge rounds.

Community Nursing is also collaborating with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to improve discharge planning policies and processes. So we are working constantly with the Yukon Hospital Corporation — as well as Yukon First Nation health

programs throughout the territory. It is a high priority for us and we continue to work in that area as well.

#### **Question re: Veterans' disability pensions**

**Ms. White:** I would like to return to the subject of veterans' benefits. It seems that the last time we asked about this, the question about supporting our veterans became a debate about terminology and not about the support that veterans have earned. To clarify, we're talking about non-taxable disability benefits to compensate for pain and suffering.

The Yukon Housing Corporation's decision to exclude these benefits is a good thing. My hope is that their forward-thinking decision to respect our veterans will be extended to other branches of the Yukon government.

Will the government commit to excluding Yukon veterans' non-taxable disability benefits that compensate for pain or suffering from calculations of any government assistance?

**Hon. Mr. Pasloski:** The Government of Yukon fully understands the sacrifices that are being made by veterans and supports what they have done, and certainly we were privileged today to have a number of Rangers who were in our presence. Some of them were also veterans and, as I have stated in this House many times, we acknowledge — in fact, this is the party that has tributed our portion of the Alaska Highway to our veterans and the work that they have done. The sacrifices that not only veterans, but also their families, have made for all of us cannot and will not be forgotten by any of us.

This government supports all people in need and, as we have said on many occasions, people who are in need, whether they are veterans or from whatever line of work or profession they had — we will continue to ensure that their needs will be met.

**Ms. White:** I was referencing a very specific case here with the veterans' non-taxable disability benefits.

I know a veteran who receives \$1,400 a month in tax-free benefits. Of that money, \$300 is in their spouses name to compensate her for what she has to endure as a result of the pain and suffering she endures as a veteran's spouse. The Yukon government should not be in the business of clawing back benefits intended to offset pain and suffering inflicted as a result of military service. Our veterans deserve better from a government that claims to stand behind them.

Will the minister commit to ensure that his department, or all departments, will follow the Yukon Housing Corporation's lead and exclude non-taxable compensation payments for pain or suffering issued by Veterans Affairs Canada when calculating how much help a Yukon veteran receives?

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** I'm not exactly sure which minister this was directed at, but I assume that we are talking about social assistance payments — perhaps. Under the social assistance regulations, certain payments are not considered income for purposes of calculation under the social assistance regulation. Payments provided for pain, suffering, hardship or wrongdoing are exempted income. Therefore, they are not

calculated as part of the social services calculation. We are also including compensation payments provided by either the federal, territorial or any provincial government under a settlement of compensation to be paid out under compensation acts.

I'm not sure yet which payments the member opposite feels are being clawed back by some kind of Yukon regulation, and I would be happy to know exactly what she's talking about because currently, under the social services regulation, we do not claw back any of those payments.

**Ms. White:** We spoke about this at length. I'm referring to the veterans' disability pension under the federal government, Veterans Affairs. The disability pension that I've referred to before is actually a compensation payment for pain or suffering as described by the website.

My question remains. Will this government acknowledge that as a benefit for pain or suffering and exclude it from all calculations of government support?

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what government support payments the member opposite is talking about.

I've just explained to her that, if it's a compensation payment that is non-taxable, provided by a federal, provincial or territorial government for compensation and it's non-taxable by the federal government, it is not used in calculation of social assistance or payments of that type from the Department of Health and Social Services.

If the member has another payment that would be due to this disabled veteran that she feels is being clawed back, I would be happy to know about it. But since this was discussed last time in the Legislature, I've heard nothing.

#### **Question re: Mining regulations**

**Mr. Tredger:** On Monday, several Yukon First Nations expressed their concerns about Northern Cross' proposed exploratory drilling in the Eagle Plains area. Eagle Plains is of significant concern to Yukon First Nations as it is the wintering ground for the Porcupine caribou herd. One of the concerns raised by Yukon First Nations is the proposed storage of drill waste in clay-lined ponds. These sumps can be a source of contamination to surface and groundwater through runoff or a breach in the sump walls. It is the government's responsibility to ensure that strong regulations are in place so that any pollution can be prevented, rather than cleaned up.

What Yukon regulations has the Government of Yukon put in place to ensure that sump sites containing drill waste do not contaminate or affect the surrounding area?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Of course, the Yukon is aware of the concerns expressed by the First Nations in the area with respect to this project. The project is currently under evaluation by the YESAB-designated office. I believe it is being conducted by the office located in Dawson City as that project is located within that evaluation area.

Part of the evaluation will consider if it can determine the potential adverse effects of the project. If it cannot, the DO may refer the project for screening by the YESAB executive committee. That's where we're at, Mr. Speaker. The period

for seeking views and information closed last week, and now we have to allow the YESA Board to do their work prior to it becoming the responsibility of the various decision bodies that are responsible for this project.

**Mr. Tredger:** It is the government's responsibility to ensure appropriate environmental regulation when it comes to a fragile ecosystem like Eagle Plains. Several other jurisdictions in Canada have enacted more stringent standards for sump protection. It has been shown that even double-lined ponds can leak over time. Other Canadian jurisdictions have ruled out storing waste in open pits as there is no guarantee that they will not leak, and they have turned to storing waste in tanks.

Given the experiences of other jurisdictions, has this government given any consideration to following the lead of those jurisdictions in adapting more stringent requirements for drill waste storage?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Of course, the government is very committed to the responsible and sustainable development of our oil and gas resources. We continue to develop and modernize oil and gas regulations to achieve clarity, certainty and transparency. As I mentioned in my previous answer, this particular project is currently being assessed and evaluated by the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board.

We await their recommendations, but one of the interesting things that I would like to add to the debate here this afternoon is that, when the Yukon government entered into an MOU with the BC Oil and Gas Commission, it was soundly criticized by the Leader of the NDP via social media.

Now we have the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, the critic for Energy, Mines and Resources, out of step with his leader, so perhaps they would like to get together after Question Period today and get their story straight.

**Mr. Tredger:** We have seen that storage of drill waste in the Northwest Territories has led to the melting of permafrost and the subsequent contamination of the surrounding area. Yukon's permafrost is very fragile. It is significantly warmer than the permafrost found in the Northwest Territories, and its continued existence is essential to the northern climate ecosystem. Once the permafrost is compromised, there is no way of getting it back.

If the waste in the sumps proposed by Northern Cross were to breach the clay walls, it could have an additional impact on the permafrost and lead to wider contamination. What studies has the Government of Yukon undertaken to ensure that the sumps used by Northern Cross at Eagle Plains do not leak into and degrade the surrounding permafrost?

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** As I mentioned, the Yukon government continues to engage and collaborate with First Nations, other governments, regulators, industry and the public on oil and gas legislation, as well as proposed oil and gas activities within our borders.

I will re-emphasize that, earlier this year, when an MOU was signed with the BC Oil and Gas Commission for them to provide assistance to us, that decision by the Yukon government was soundly criticized by the Leader of the New

Democrats on social media, even suggesting that we were pre-empting discussions. Of course, this was in the days when everything led to fracking.

Earlier in this legislative sitting, we saw the Leader of the NDP even question the need for the Oil and Gas Resources branch staff, criticizing government officials and asking — I believe she asked: What do they do?

This is the type of thing that those officials do. They look after the environment. They ensure that the oil and gas industry is regulated safely. With respect to this specific question, we'll await the evaluation and the assessment being conducted by the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. At that point, the decision body and the regulators will determine whether or not those recommendations should be accepted, rejected or varied.

Another position by the NDP — taking away the opportunity to reject or vary YESAB decisions.

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

We will proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

#### MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

##### Motion No. 725

**Clerk:** Motion No. 725, standing in the name of Mr. Elias.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to continue to support the Canadian Rangers and their Yukon Patrols in local exercises that provide skills and abilities in order that the Rangers can help support local functions such as the Yukon Quest among many others.

**Mr. Elias:** I'm honoured to rise today in support of Motion No. 725, urging "...the Yukon government to continue to support the Canadian Rangers and their Yukon patrols in local exercises that provide skills and abilities in order that the Rangers can help support local functions such as the Yukon Quest among many others".

The Canadian Rangers are a subcomponent of the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves. They provide patrols and detachments for national security and public safety missions in sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada. These men and women are easily identified by their distinctive red t-shirt, red sweatshirt, combat pants and ball cap — emblazoned with the Ranger crest. They are the Canadian Armed Forces' eyes and ears in the sparsely-settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada. Appropriately, their motto is "vigilans" meaning "the watchers". Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to speak to the proud history of the Canadian Rangers.

Modern Canadian Rangers can trace their history back to the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. Formed on March 3, 1942, these rangers were volunteers who patrolled, performed military surveillance and provided local defence of the coastline of British Columbia and in the Yukon against the wartime threat of a possible Japanese invasion.

A skilled outdoorsman, Colonel Tommy Taylor, felt that the coastal homeland could be defended by experienced men accustomed to rugged timbered country. Colonel Taylor found men who had energy, initiative, and independence needed to do this particular type of soldiering. The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers of 1942 consisted of loggers, trappers, prospectors, woodsmen, lumberjacks, fishermen and ranchers who knew the local terrain. At their height, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers consisted of 15,000 volunteers in 138 companies across three major patrol areas of Vancouver Island, the lower Fraser Valley, and the Bridge River area. They were trained in intelligence duties, anti-sabotage measures, coastal monitoring, and protection of lines of communication and transportation. Youth or old-age was not necessarily a barrier for those who wanted to serve as rangers. According to *The Ranger*, a training publication issued on September 1, 1942, young lads of 15 years and up who proved to be good shots, could handle an axe, or men considered too old to join the war effort, were welcomed.

Some of the principle officers of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were Lieutenant-Colonel C.W. Peck, Lieutenant-Colonel A.L. Coote and Major H. Ashby. The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were officially disbanded on September 30, 1945.

The modern Canadian Rangers were formally established on May 23, 1947, and a primary role of this part-time force is to conduct surveillance or sovereignty patrols as required. The modern rangers are diverse. There are currently approximately 5,000 active Canadian Rangers who live in over 200 communities. Many are aboriginal and they represent 26 different dialects and languages. The Rangers serve a number of important roles as the watchers for the military. They conduct and support operations to protect Canada's sovereignty by reporting suspicious and unusual activities and sightings, collecting local data of significance to the Canadian Armed Forces, conducting surveillance or sovereignty patrols and training as required and conducting north warning sight patrols.

They conduct and assist in Canadian Armed Forces domestic operations by conducting coastal and inland water surveillance, providing local knowledge and expertise, participating in search and rescue and retrieval operations and providing support in response to natural or man-made disasters and humanitarian operations. They also assist by providing assistance to federal, provincial, territorial or municipal authorities.

On a personal note, in talking about the Canadian Rangers and their role in the local community, a thought comes to mind. In my graduating year — so 1990 I think it was — in our community of Old Crow we had a very severe forest fire that came very close to the community and our

citizens of Old Crow had to be evacuated to Inuvik, but it was the Rangers who stayed behind and looked after people's homes and their pets and fed all the dog teams and helped out with the fire and with the firefighters and all the workers who were trying to save our community. It's that type of effort that continues to this day.

One story I remember was from — I believe he was a Corporal — Dennis Frost Sr. was working for the Canadian Rangers at that time and airplanes couldn't land at the airport because of the smoke. They needed to go hunting and so Dennis Frost Sr. decided to take some of the Rangers and go look for a moose across the river from Old Crow. They spotted a moose, but it got into an area where they couldn't see it above the brush and so Dennis Frost Sr. climbed up a spruce tree almost to the top with his rifle and shot the moose because he could see it over the brush. All the other Rangers from across Canada thought that was just utterly amazing, because he went above and beyond, literally, to help feed the Rangers and the firefighters at that time. That story just came to mind. I thought I would slip that in.

The Rangers maintained a Canadian Armed Forces presence in the local community, instructing and supervising youth in the Junior Canadian Rangers program — a program that has significantly improve the quality of life of young people in most isolated areas in Canada, I might add. They supported and participated in events in the local community, such as the Yukon Quest, Canada Day and Remembrance Day and, as the Member for Kluane said, with almost anything that happens in the territory, you'll see a Canadian Ranger presence there.

I would like to take a moment to speak to the organizational structure of the Rangers. The Canadian Army consists of the regular force and the reserve force. The reserve force supports deployed forces and provides a base for expansion or mobilization. The reserve force is organized into four subcomponents: the primary reserve, the supplementary reserve, the Cadet Instructors Cadre and the Canadian Rangers. The Canadian Rangers are non-commissioned members of the Canadian Armed Forces Reserve. They are members who are always ready for service, but who are not required to undergo annual training. They serve only when placed on active service or when called out in an emergency. The Canadian Rangers are divided into five Canadian Ranger patrol groups. Each Canadian Ranger patrol group covers a distinct geographical area. Each has a headquarters and staff that is responsible for overseeing the Rangers and Junior Canadian Rangers in their area.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group encompasses Nunavut, Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories, and is headquartered in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group covers the entire Province of Quebec, and is headquartered in St. Jean sur Richelieu Quebec.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group is responsible for Ontario, and is headquartered in Borden, Ontario.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group covers British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and is headquartered in Victoria, British Columbia.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group encompasses Newfoundland and Labrador, and is headquartered in Gander, Newfoundland.

Each Canadian Ranger patrol group has a regular force or reserve member that is responsible for performing periodic reviews, visits and inspections of the patrols. Each new member of the Canadian Rangers undergoes training. This is a standard 10 days of orientation and no other training is mandatory for regular members. Additional training is required, however, for instructors and patrol leaders. All training is flexible and may vary from patrol to patrol or from one area of the country to another.

The common areas of training for all Canadian Rangers include flood or fire evacuation planning, sovereignty patrols of Canada's remote coastal areas, major air disaster assistance, self-sufficiency, leadership and traditional skills. These are defined according to the culture and historical practices in the local community.

In terms of regular Canadian Armed Forces training, Canadian Rangers participate in marksmanship and learn about the history and traditions of the Canadian Armed Forces. Each Canadian Ranger patrol undertakes a minimum of one on-land exercise per year. These exercises differ from one area to another and allow the Canadian Rangers to brush up on their skills, work as a team in a controlled environment, take inventory of wear and tear on issued equipment and discuss new policy and directions for their sergeants.

Canadian Ranger exercises can last a few hours to over a week or more, depending on the skills being practiced. Of course, here in the Yukon, we focus on the first Canadian patrol group. This group encompasses — like I said earlier — Nunavut, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Atlin, B.C. and its headquarters are located in Yellowknife. There are over 1,750 Rangers in 60 patrols and more than 1,600 Junior Rangers in 41 communities across the north.

In the north, their main tasks include participation in northern operations, conducting northern warning site patrols, reporting suspicious and unusual activities, assisting in search and rescue and retrieval when tasked, and collecting local area data of military significance.

Here in the Yukon, the Rangers provide invaluable services supporting the Yukon Quest. Last year, they were instrumental in providing emergency assistance to an injured musher and safely rescued him. Many Canadian Rangers in the first Canadian Ranger patrol group are Inuit and speak Inuktitut as their first language. Others speak Dene or other native languages. The Canadian Rangers have a tremendous impact on the lives of people in their communities. It is important to recognize that a significant number of Rangers throughout the north hold leadership positions as well, including mayors, chiefs or MLAs — like the Member for Kluane — or presidents or hold many chairmanships.

From helping to recover lost persons to representing the Canadian Forces to setting a positive example for youth,

Canadian Rangers in the north are always ready and willing to participate. Rangers are active community members who have positive influence on their peers and are often seen as role models for the youth.

In closing my opening comments at this time, I would like to sit down and welcome my distinguished colleagues to expand further on my motion and delve into the many intriguing details of the Canadian Ranger patrols across the north.

**Mr. Barr:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Official Opposition in support of Motion No. 725 and I thank the member from Old Crow for bringing forward this motion.

As members of the Canadian Armed Forces, the Canadian Rangers are a tremendous asset to communities throughout Canada. In the north, the members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group contribute to the well-being of their communities located throughout the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Atlin, B.C.

In the Yukon, the patrol groups also take on key roles at community events, such as Canada Day, Remembrance Day and disaster situations — just to name a few. Between Whitehorse and Dawson City, the collective manpower and womanpower of many Canadian Rangers contributes to the success of the Yukon Quest each February. I have several friends who are always letting me know about the adventures that they are on, breaking the trail for the Yukon Quest, and some of the situations that the member from Old Crow mentioned.

Rangers are active community members who usually have a positive influence on their peers and the young people in their communities. In their official capacity, Rangers also instruct and supervise youth in the Junior Canadian Rangers Program. This program can have a significant influence on the quality of life of young people in communities throughout Yukon. I did have the privilege to attend Remembrance Day ceremonies in Carcross again this year. I do believe that, if it wasn't for the Canadian Rangers, this wouldn't happen and the Junior Canadian Rangers are a visible part. It is always great to see the confidence and the display of earnestness they show while they are in those ceremonies and others — the camaraderie among all those who are in attendance and their pride as they walk in each step.

Many aboriginals are members of the Canadian Rangers, depending on their community's demographics. Being a Ranger provides elders another opportunity to share their knowledge with younger generations, as there are no age barriers. The late Alex Van Bibber was a fine example of this diversity within the Rangers.

Yukon government supports the Rangers by allowing an employee to take paid time away to participate in training and emergency volunteer services as a Canadian Ranger. Ideally, any employee of any agency within Yukon would have the same benefit. Perhaps this is something that could be worked toward.

In closing, once again I would like to thank the member from Old Crow for bringing this motion forward. I recall — at one point, I was going to become a member of the Rangers and went out and fired my .303 Lee Enfield. I was a pretty good shot; however, Elder Art Johns shot after me, and he was deadeye — bull's eye, right on target — and he was many years beyond. I believe you receive a specific emblem for that — a double rifle pin for excellent marksmanship.

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to continue on because of my time constraints and never actually being able to attend manoeuvres and such. I do commend all the Rangers and the Junior Rangers who are out there, as well as other volunteers, in our territory, when we're asleep, safe at home in our beds, and just thank them for all the due diligence they pay in taking care of us — and the Member for Kluane for his active role.

**Mr. Silver:** It gives me great pleasure to stand here and speak on Motion No. 725. I just want to start with a quick story as well, and I'm sure the Member for Kluane will appreciate this one.

One of my first days in Dawson was the first time I ever saw the red sweater. It was actually in the Westminster, known as the Pit. I was sitting there with a man — who quickly became a friend of mine, but I didn't know him very well — and he was very distracted, because he kept on looking over my shoulder at this sweater. It turns out the person I was sitting with was an actual Ranger. I said, what's the issue? He said, for one, that sweater should not be in a bar, and two, I don't know who that person is. So this Ranger got up from the table, excused himself, walked over — I didn't hear the conversation, but it was a little bit of an argument, and then the whole bar kind of looked over and, by the time the guy realized everybody was staring at him, he took his red sweater off — it clearly wasn't his — gave it to one of these Rangers and — this is the great part of the story — the man walked away but, halfway from walking away, he turned around and realized, I just left a guy without a sweater, took the shirt off his back and walked up to him and gave it to him, and then walked back again.

So, I think that was a good introduction story to me to the teamwork and to the team approach of these Rangers. I thought I would share that story with the Member for Kluane here.

I, like many other members of this Legislature, recognize the invaluable role the Canadian Rangers play in our communities. Their presence in the Yukon obviously dates back, as we were told today in the tribute, beginning in 1947, when they were mandated to be the eyes and the ears of the Canadian military in the Arctic.

During World War II, their predecessor, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, patrolled western Canada and kept a military presence along the Pacific, in case there were any invasion attempts made by Japanese soldiers. The Canadian Rangers continue to play an important role for the Canadian military in the north. They are locals with a long background in traditional knowledge of the land, the weather and — most importantly — the survival skills needed for some of

Canada's most remote frontiers. They support search and rescue missions in the Arctic and they report any suspicious activity that they do see as well.

For many years, the Canadian Rangers have provided support to the Yukon Quest. Although they are in place to help break trail for the Yukon Quest mushers, last year they played an even more important role. When race leader Brent Sass fell on the trail in the 2014 quest, it was the Rangers who came to his rescue, providing first aid on-site and assisting him with getting into the Braeburn checkpoint.

Similarly when musher Tony Angelo pushed his emergency help button between 40-Mile and Dawson City, the Canadian Rangers were the first ones on scene and they were not only able to transport Tony, but also 12 of his dogs to safety.

A May letter to the editor from Yukon Quest executive director Laurie Parris stated that — and I quote: “The 31st annual Yukon Quest 1,000 Mile International Sled Dog Race overcame many challenges en route to a successful finish in 2014. That success would not have been possible without the support of the Canadian Rangers.”

Unfortunately the relationship between the Yukon Quest and many other community events that lie outside of the primary mandate of the Canadian Rangers can be very unpredictable. We have seen announcements in the past where, for budgetary reasons, Ottawa has removed the Rangers from participating in the Yukon Quest. I have heard from some of my constituents that this is a concern and that it might also be a concern for the upcoming 2015 race. In response to these concerns I took a proactive approach of contacting the commanding officer.

I would just like to read into the record a letter that I sent to Major Craig Volstad, the commanding officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group on October 24 of this year. It says, “Dear Major Volstad: It is my understanding that the Department of National Defence is considering reducing or withdrawing completely Canadian Ranger support for the Yukon Quest for budgetary purposes. For many reasons this isn't good for the Yukon, the Yukon Quest or the public image of the Rangers, for that matter.

“I am writing to request this vital service be continued. These trails provide for the greater community, not just the Yukon Quest. They are used by school hunting programs, for example, and they are an important part of the Trek Over the Top tourism event.

“The trail is also used by Arctic Ultra race and tourist outfitters also use the route after the Yukon Quest for dog sled tourism.

“Thank you for your consideration of this request.”  
Sincerely, MLA for Klondike.

As we debate this motion, I do encourage the Premier to contact his counterparts in Ottawa to ensure that the Rangers continue to be a part of the Yukon Quest this year and going forward and also let his counterpart in Ottawa know how vital the Rangers are to Yukoners, not just for the Yukon Quest, but for all of their endeavours.

The Rangers are not just a significant symbol of life in the north, but they are an important active part of it. I want to keep it that way.

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** It is a pleasure and I do thank my fellow colleague for bringing this Motion No. 725 forward. I did a tribute earlier in the House today, so I don't want to repeat the tribute, but I want to elaborate a little bit on some of this.

Basically, it said that some of the requirements are: is a good shot, can handle an axe, or men considered too old to join the war effort were welcome, or young people. When the Canadian Rangers got started in 1947, some of the history behind it is — I have fourth-generation Rangers in my patrol — one of my Rangers — Jon Widney's father, Clint McCuaig, his uncle Chuck Hume, and Chuck's dad, Dave Hume — and they were all Rangers. So, we have fourth-generation Rangers in the patrol there.

My grandfather also was a Ranger after World War II. Many of the soldiers picked up the cause, like Alex Van Bibber did, and became Rangers. Some of the tales that we hear back in the day from that — to put a little on it — the Rangers kept very busy across the North. The DEW line sites — of course with the Cold War, it became apparent that those were our priority, with the Russians becoming our enemy after World War II. They concentrated on those sites and there were soldiers like Alex Van Bibber who had 60-some years in the military who had gone to those DEW line sites, checking the DEW line sites as an activity through until the day that they passed away.

The portion of the Yukon Rangers kind of died down toward the 70s and 80s and then it was re-enacted in the 90s. Before I get started, I want to read you a little article. I talked about when the Rangers first were established. The first patrol was the 1<sup>st</sup> patrol and that is where you will see the number one on Sergeant Mitchell's shoulder — very proud of that — and was in the Yukon. Our patrol in our area was actually No. 40 Company in Destruction Bay and I want to read you something out of the militia newsletter No. 8, Western Command in 1954. It described how No. 40 Company, which was actually Destruction Bay, Haines Junction — the whole outlying area — helped the RCMP capture three bandits the previous April. There was a report that three armed bandits were driving south on the northwest highway in a stolen Alaskan vehicle. They had broken down and held up a second vehicle at Mile 1165. This was received by Captain Don Bakke — they had a different rank structure back in the day and some of the names you'll hear are still in the Yukon today. Captain Don Bakke was the officer commanding No. 40 Company in Yukon Territory.

Don alerted his company and the progress of the vehicle was closely followed and reported on by his Rangers to the RCMP detachment in Haines Junction. Three Rangers were detailed to proceed to the Airport Lodge at Mile 1095, which is at Silver City, in order to take such action as might be necessary to protect the owner's family. These Rangers watched the criminals enter the lodge peacefully, so they held

their fire and allowed them to proceed as per Captain Bakke's instructions. The RCMP detachment commander in Haines Junction meanwhile requested further assistance from the Rangers for the actual apprehension of the bandits. So Lieutenant Wally Wandga, the Ranger platoon commander and camp foreman at 1016, which is Haines Junction, mustered 10 Rangers and placed a roadblock of two graders, with a third vehicle throwing its lights across the highway. The 10 Rangers took up a defensive position and covered the block. The bandits approached the block and — looking down the business end of 10 .303s — realized that the game was up. So the RCMP constable, covered by the Rangers, stepped forward and quietly effected the arrest.

In that article it says: We would like to wish and congratulate Captain Bakke and Lieutenant Wandga and his company for their ticklish job well done.

Mr. Speaker, to continue on, I spoke earlier in my tribute that the Canadian Rangers were a volunteer force or they were paid according to rank. Our rank structure has changed a little bit in the last few years, but we're paid when we're on duty — which is, you know, a Ranger who puts a lot of time and effort into the Rangers might get 30-days' pay, and a day's pay is like \$104 or something. They do pay for equipment rentals and everything else. We're actually wearing a red sweatshirt and not a camouflaged white one, because we want to be seen, unlike every other military where they have camouflage to try to hide from their enemy. We don't want to hide from our enemy; we want to be visible and seen across the north. The red sweatshirt stands out.

Rangers are on duty 24/7, 365 days of the year, so I think the Canadian Armed Forces gets a good bang for their buck there with that. But Mr. Speaker, any Ranger I ever talked to would never ask for any more. They're just dedicated to their community. They have jobs. This job does not pay their mortgage or pay the fuel bill; this is something that they like to do.

We talked a little bit about — and I've seen an increase in the last — and this is key to some of the stuff the Member for Klondike spoke to. We need to make sure that there are Rangers out there and they keep training, especially with the Northwest Passage and the opening of it and seeing the increase. I know a lot of Rangers from across the north and I'll talk to some of the incident reports that they've followed on. I know our Prime Minister has been up here and concentrated on the north quite a bit, so the Rangers are highly important to him. He actually sent a handwritten letter to Kathleen Van Bibber at the funeral for Alex, which was very touching. It was nice of him.

Some of the stuff that we do that maybe Yukoners or Canadians would not think of is that we conduct and support sovereignty operations, which means that, if there is a need for the military in the north, they're going to bring their regular army units from the south that are going to come to the north. What that means is that we're their eyes and ears and their guides. We take them and train them in how to build and improvise shelters, how to stay warm in the winter — stuff like that. I've had three regular army units in my community

for a month at a time — a little economic boost there — but they're trained in winter warfare, so they're prepared if they have to come up. The good thing with us is that whether you're in Dawson City, Pelly Crossing, or Haines Junction — if the unit wants to decide and go and "recky" something and they decide to walk through the bush, one of the Rangers might say, "There's a trail just over here. It's probably easier." That's why we're here, okay?

Some of the other stuff that we do — and I'll speak a little bit on sovereignty and surveillance patrols and border patrols. I know the Dawson Ranger patrol at one time was out on the Sixty Mile when they come across — basically, there were drug dealers hauling drugs back and forth. They found guns, they found a lot of drugs and some very, very cold folks and they rescued them and took them to the RCMP. I know there have been breaches at the border up in Beaver Creek that my patrol has been on and we've seen people coming back and forth across the border without anything. What happens, Mr. Speaker, when we come across something, we do an incident report. We'll put it into one's CRPG. It goes into CSIS which is — then it never comes out. I've asked on many occasions at leadership training and, to show us that we're not unheard and that we are heard and they take this carefully — they don't just preach back to us what they've done and how they've done it. We're an invaluable service.

I'll talk a little bit about some of the Ranger stuff. I'm not going to talk about the Winterlude in Carmacks, because I think some of the other members from the opposite side there who were up there with me will probably speak to that.

You know, at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alaska Highway, we had the Rangers baton, and that is where Rangers from different communities snowmobiled every road in the Yukon and passed a baton back and forth. It was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and I know my patrol, with much support from other patrols, set up tents at Soldiers Summit and Sheep Mountain and there was a big parade. The weather was exactly the same as it was 50 years before that; it was cold.

All the dignitaries who showed up got a beautiful pork chop, steak and potato dinner. The Rangers got soup at the end and were told to take the tents down, but that is okay.

The Yukon Quest, I cannot reiterate much more than what the Member for Klondike brought up on how important that is. That is an activity that is key. Our summer ETS — I spoke about that in my tribute for the JCRs. I have taught the trapping on it countless times, but there are Rangers who come from all the different patrols to teach the youth stuff. When it comes to teaching youth in the Junior Rangers in those programs, it just reminds me of a phone call from the RCMP about four years ago where some Junior Rangers went out late snowmobiling and they didn't try to come back. They lit a fire and they had a cellphone and they called. It was something that we taught them — to stay in one place.

A couple of other things that will tell you how highly respected the Rangers are — I had the opportunity — 16 Rangers from across the north had the opportunity, I believe, to go to the — Adrienne Clarkson was our Governor General. She had been up here and we had done a parade for her, and



she really liked the Rangers, so we went down to Ottawa for her change of command parade. They have these big parades, and right in front of Parliament Hill, there must have been 1,000 soldiers and off in the corner were these red sweatshirts. When she came out, one of the things they asked — they do a general salute — and they said, “Would you like to inspect the troops?” She said, “Sure” and she bypassed all the regular soldiers, came right back to the corner where the Rangers were, talked to us for about 15 minutes and went back. She liked the Rangers.

I spoke a little bit in my tribute about some of the key people in the Rangers, and I know that in all our patrols we have had some Rangers. We started everything back up again in 1991 when there was a big push. I had just been released from the military and my contract was up. I came home and somebody said, “Do you want to be a Ranger?” My grandpa was a Ranger and so, “Sure, I will give that a try.” So 30 guys signed up, as they did in Dawson and everywhere else, and we got back in and, with our sovereignty in the north, we got back up and running. There were a lot of activities and a lot of support from Canada on the activities that we could do.

The Member for Klondike wrote a letter, and I was glad that he showed me that letter, because the reason that I encouraged this side to make sure to put a motion forward — and I thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for putting this motion forward — was to highlight the Rangers. I wanted to do a tribute so we can send out a media release and letters to Ottawa, to the commanding officer and everybody else and hopefully we have unanimous support. This can let them know that we are an integral part of Canada and of our communities in any activities that we do.

You will see us out there, Mr. Speaker. Every time you go to a function and you see something, we might not be wearing a sweatshirt, but you will notice the same key people — that guy is probably a Ranger. You see that wherever you go.

One of the other things I wanted to talk about a little bit was about some of these operations that we do up in the north — Operation Nanook — and I know the Minister of Education wants to speak a little bit about her experience with that when she was the Minister of Community Services. This is a key opportunity to bring the regular military units and larger units — and sometimes they are British, sometimes they are allied units from overseas that have been up there, and then with us to work with our Navy, our air force — to go and do a little bit bigger infrastructure stuff.

I spoke to it a little bit earlier. The summer ones are incredible exercises; the winter ones in the Arctic — it's just windy and cold and there are no trees. I can tell you from my experience in the Arctic, on a few occasions — like the rest of my Rangers — do not lose sight of the Ranger in front of you, especially if he's from the north, because he knows where he's going. All that's there are little snowbanks and wind drifts, and they figure out where they're going by that, especially because Nanook of the North is out there.

I guess in closing, I just want to speak a little bit about the activities that we do. In each patrol, every time we get

together when we have the opportunity, our 10 patrols that we have — and we're lucky to have the Atlin patrol — the Ranger sergeant in their community is great down there. You'll see the Rangers providing security at the Atlin Music Festival. Every time I think of a community, I think of a function where the Rangers are out there helping.

On days like that, when the Rangers are out providing security, if you volunteer your time — probably not getting paid, but they don't really care. It's just an opportunity to help in your community.

One of the things my wife said to me, when I put a red Ranger licence plate on her vehicle, she said, everybody who has a Ranger licence plate, we all wave at each other; I don't know who those people are. I said, I don't know most of their wives or their husbands, vice versa, but if you see a red Ranger licence plate and another one, we just wave. It doesn't matter what side of the fence you sit on or whatever — it's a good group of guys.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, our unit motto being “vigilans,” which is “the watchers,” I think it very imperative that this House comes together today to show unanimous support for the Rangers, so we can let Ottawa know and let senior officials know. I was told by the commander of the military, the general under the CDS, when he found out — I think this is a good time to do it — that Alex Van Bibber had passed away — he did his Thursday briefings to all his staff — and they probably talk about other things going on in the world. There are a lot of big things that the Canadian Armed Forces are involved in. He did not speak about anything else. He had his staffers research Alex, and when he did his afternoon briefing, it was an hour briefing on Alex Van Bibber, what the Rangers were and how important they were to the north.

I think this is timely. I'm very proud to be a Ranger and I only look forward to being able to go out in the bush and get cold and have that opportunity to spend my time with my fellow colleagues. Every spring, after a long winter, when we host our Yukon shoot — which general consensus is we'll rename it to the Alex Van Bibber memorial shoot — I see at least five Rangers, and a bunch just come down for the camaraderie and the big barbecue that we have. They come down and we get to see them, ask how was your winter, how was trapping, how many furs did you get, how's the wife, how's the kids? It goes the same thing when I go to Dawson for a mass exercise with boats, and you get to see all your comrades-in-arms, and everybody's always happy to see everybody else. You don't hear a lot of complaining. There's always a good story to be told. You don't have to go very far in the Yukon to find somebody who either knows a Ranger or is a Ranger.

I commend this motion to the House and I look forward to some of my fellow colleagues having something to say.

**Ms. Stick:** I thank the member from across the way for bringing forward this motion. The most important part I see of this is that we are urging the Yukon government to continue to support the Canadian Rangers.

We have heard some great stories here today. I don't have any to share, but I do know, as a community member, that you see the Rangers at many, many events that are community events — like Canada Day, Rendezvous, parades and funerals, such as the one on the weekend. For many of us, that is what we think of when we think of Canadian Rangers.

I thank the members here for sharing stories and for telling us what happens outside of the communities and what happens when Canadian Rangers are doing training exercises, are out in the bush and are in the north being the watchers for Canadians. I thank the members for that, and I thank the Member for Klondike for the letter that he wrote requesting that the Canadian government continue to support the Rangers appropriately. They have a role to play, and it is important to all of our communities across the whole north. So, I thank the Member for Klondike for that, and I would also encourage this government to follow up with that and also write letters of support, asking for ongoing support and funding — what is needed to keep the Rangers busy and active in our communities and doing their part to protect the north.

We will, as my colleague mentioned, be supporting this motion.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** I want to thank my colleague for bringing forth this important, and I believe very timely, motion. There has been a lot said here today in terms of the tribute that was provided by my colleague, the MLA for Kluane. I just want to start by thanking my colleague, the MLA for Klondike and his long-standing role and that of his family's with respect to the Canadian Rangers.

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

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I misspoke myself. That is the MLA for Kluane.

In his capacity as the control commander — and I just want to thank him, because it is individuals like the MLA for Kluane who was able to come forward to our caucus and articulate and share with all of us his personal experiences and the importance of the Canadian Rangers.

I very much have grown to become very familiar with the Canadian Rangers on a number of different fronts. I will get to that in a few moments, but I do appreciate his passion and that of many other Rangers throughout the Yukon whom I have had the honour of learning from and talking with over the years, and seeing their work first-hand.

There has been a lot said here today, and I don't want to go over the history of the Canadian Rangers, but it is interesting. I was doing some research in the last couple of days, in particular — and, of course, it has already been spoken about how they were first established back during World War II, in 1942, and then they stood down in the fall of 1945. They then stood up again with the current role and the mission in 1946 in response to the Cold War sovereignty and security concerns. So here we are today.

Of course, they are recognized as Canada's eyes and ears — and voice, as well at that end — in our more remote regions of our country. It is a big country, as I have grown to become very familiar with over the years, but the official

mission is to provide a military presence in the sparsely settled northern coastal and isolated areas of Canada that cannot conveniently or economically be provided for by other components of the Canadian Armed Forces. They are to provide lightly equipped, self-sufficient mobile forces in support of our Canadian Forces, sovereignty and domestic tasks in Canada.

We have seen the evolution of the Canadian Rangers. I know that some of my colleagues have already spoken to this over the years, but just recently — and I know that that came as a result of, just recently, the Operation Nanook exercise — and I think it was in Gjoa Haven that the Prime Minister of Canada had actually recognized the 5,000<sup>th</sup> Ranger. It was a very interesting time because that was made a very strategic move on behalf of the Government of Canada to see the expansion of the Canadian Rangers.

I think that, in 2007, that very commitment was made by the Government of Canada and, of course, I believe it was just recently — within the last year or year and a half — that that 5,000<sup>th</sup> Ranger had come to fruition and was recognized by the Prime Minister himself. Obviously that expansion was a very strategic initiative, and it was aligned with Canada's federal northern strategy and obviously supports Department of National Defence's Canada's first defence strategy.

Beyond sovereignty and security, since the 1990s, the Rangers have very much played a very visible nation-building, stewardship role in the remote regions of our country. They represent a very important success story for the Canadian Armed Forces as a flexible, inexpensive, culturally inclusive means of having boots on the ground, exercising sovereignty and conducting or supporting domestic operations at the front. They have served as effectively as a bridge between cultures and between the civilian and military realms, and the Rangers represent a very successful integration of national security and sovereignty agendas, but combined with community-based initiatives and combining with the local stewardship, combining with the traditional knowledge.

I believe, because of this very, what I would call, practical partnership — it's rooted in the traditional knowledge, skills, cooperation, individual but also community empowerment, and also cross-cultural understanding.

There was just recently, in the last few days, in the *Wall Street Journal* — of all publications — quite a spread actually on the Canadian Rangers, and it spoke about the importance of the revitalization of indigenous cultures. They had made reference to a specific example of a Canadian Ranger — over in Nunavut, I believe — and it was a very informative, well-documented article.

It was a reminder that, to that specific individual, it was all about really connecting with the land, connecting with their roots, as a person from Nunavut and getting back to the basics, and empowering the community.

I go back to a time — I actually had the privilege of attending an Arctic Council meeting in Tromsø, Norway, a few years ago, on behalf of our Premier. It was at that time that the three premiers of the three northern territories in Canada had been invited by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to

sit at the table — not as observers, but to actually sit as advisors to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I don't believe that had ever happened until that particular time.

I had the honour of being able to attend that particular meeting. Travelling all that way to Tromsø — it's very remote, but still had a very metropolitan feel. I was astounded by the degree of infrastructure in that particular community. There was quite a discussion. I remember listening to the Premier of Northwest Territories at that time, referring to the north, the Arctic, and all the different participant governments pertaining to the governance of the Arctic. We talked about boots on the ground, and we talked about how the best form of asserting one's sovereign claim to our country, to the Arctic — to the north as we know it today — is by investing in the people — the people who live in the north and the people who view the north as our front yard. It's not our back yard, but our front yard.

It always comes to mind when I think of the boots on the ground — those red hoodies and the jerseys. I always think of the Canadian Rangers. Those are the ones who hold and possess that specific knowledge that is so pertinent to being able to continue to assert our claim to our country, to our north as we know it today, in times and in places where members of our Canadian Armed Forces are not able to do so. It is all about building strength and resiliency in our communities.

I will again be forever grateful for those members who have served and continue to serve as Canadian Rangers on this day.

When you look at the Rangers — the overview, and the type of training, exercises and patrols that they subscribe to each and every year — it's very impressive. From patrol training, patrol exercises to various multiple patrol exercises, they provide operational support — as I mentioned — to the Department of National Defence. They provide support that's external to the Canadian Forces. They also provide directed operations.

It's interesting — when you look at the actual requirements to become a Ranger, you have to be 18-plus years old; you have to be able to survive on the land. That's a very loaded statement — to be able to survive on the land. You have to be in good health, a Canadian citizen, no criminal record. But beyond that, of course, when you do look to each of our Canadian Rangers — and I have certainly come to know many of them on a one-on-one basis over the years through various exercises and through different missions and patrols and through their activities, really, that is the heart of the motion that we are talking about. These individuals are very passionate. They are passionate about the north. They are passionate about protecting our north, respecting our land, respecting the people who live here, and being able to maintain all that we have come to be proud of as northerners in this good country.

There is a whole host of various equipment that is provided to Rangers in support of their work, and, of course, the work of the Rangers ranges from being a mentor or an advisor in our community to performing as a guide, teaching

traditional survival skills or providing predator control. We have heard some examples by the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin to the MLA for Kluane — gathering intelligence. They are our link to the community. They provide ground search and rescue, of course. The scope of their role is very wide-reaching.

The Junior Canadian Rangers — I would be very remiss if I didn't mention their role. They provide — and again, thanks to the Canadian Rangers — a very structured youth program, which promotes traditional cultures and lifestyles in our communities, in remote and more isolated communities of the north here in Canada.

Under the supervision and leadership of the Canadian Rangers, our Junior Canadian Rangers — there are amazing opportunities. I know the MLA for Kluane has been able to serve as inspiration to many of the youth in that particular area and throughout the territory in terms of providing two to three patrols a year, annual shooting competitions, to very enhanced and advanced training sessions, and even right through to preventing harassment and abuse through education. All of this is to say that they are very important components.

As I mentioned, the Canadian Rangers — the first patrol group, of course, which is what we are here speaking to today. It speaks to national defence — primarily, our strategy that we have in place, thanks to the Government of Canada — and speaks to the sovereignty pillar of the northern strategy through the *Canada First Defence Strategy*, and it directs, within that strategy, the Canadian forces to really demonstrate a visible presence in the region, to have the capacity to exercise control over and defend our Arctic territory and provide assistance to other government departments and agencies when called upon.

It is through sovereignty of course, but also nurturing economic social development in our country, to being able to promote environmental protection and of course governance by enabling us northerners with control over our economic and our political destiny in the territories here as well.

All of which is to say that of course in the Yukon we have benefitted from a number of various patrol groups. When you look at the map — I was looking at the map last night actually. I believe it was a map that is taken out of the *Watchers of the North*, which is a program that was put together by APTN and showcased in a number of series. Incredible — when you look at all of the different patrol groups that cover the north, from Yukon right through to Nunavut, it is all-encompassing.

Getting to the root of the motion here, I do think it is timely that we speak to this motion, because as has been known — when we look at Canada's national defence and we look at recent reductions in budgets, I think that we always have to remind our counterparts in Ottawa and Canada to ensure that individuals who belong to Ranger patrol groups, such as ours, play a very important role to this day. The MLA for Klondike had made reference to Trek Over the Top. Of course, we are talking about their presence and their contributions to Sourdough Rendezvous. There is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alaska Highway, the Yukon Quest — of

course we take great pride in promoting this premiere winter event. It is a very unique international event, which crosses two countries. To be sure, it is a very great event that Tourism and Culture, through the Yukon government has promoted with the State of Alaska as well.

There have been a lot of great partnerships — all of which is to say is that the contributions of the Canadian Rangers as breaking trail and providing those trail improvements — so it is not simply just about ceremonial roles here at Remembrance Day ceremonies or at these anniversary celebrations, but it is about truly providing a presence and providing those routine patrols, which is so very important, especially as we see the escalation of eyes of all international countries, who are very keen and very interested in seeing what is happening in our northern waters and in the countries that border the Arctic Ocean and so forth.

Again, we were also reminded that there have been occasions — Rangers coming to the rescue of individual mushers — and I can certainly think of a couple of examples, as well, in the last several years where they have in fact done just that.

I also just want to make reference to Operation Nanook. When they were here in 2013, it was an opportunity for us to exercise integrated response management of emergencies. I want to say that the Canadian Rangers played a very pivotal role in the Yukon but also more so in Northwest Territories and Nunavut, of course. I think that we can never take advantage of being able to integrate resources, whether it's through our own Department of Community Services, which oversees the Protective Services branch, but also working with the RCMP, with the City of Whitehorse, our municipal fire departments, working with ground search and rescue as provided through the Canadian Rangers — but again, it's an opportunity to test that response to our capabilities in times of need, such as Operation Nanook, which has provided those great scenarios for us. It strengthens our resiliency and it strengthens our response, and the Canadian Rangers are very much part of that.

Mr. Speaker, the intent of that motion is, in fact, to be able to send a very strong and clear message, reconfirming our support — our government's and our Assembly's support — of the Canadian Rangers for this and many other reasons and to ensure that there is a heightened response, such as these local events.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I would like to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing this very important motion forward. The Canadian Rangers are adult members of the Canadian Armed Forces who live in remote and isolated communities in Canada. They are part-time reservists who are responsible for protecting Canada's sovereignty, as well as defending her coastal interests. The Canadian Rangers are divided into five Canadian Ranger patrol groups, or CRPGs. Each CRPG covers a distinct geographical area. Each has a headquarters and a staff that is responsible for overseeing the Rangers and Junior Canadian Rangers in their area.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group encompasses Nunavut, Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories and has headquarters in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group covers the entire Province of Quebec. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group is responsible for Ontario. The 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group covers British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group encompasses Newfoundland and Labrador.

According to their website, they have close to 2,000 people in 60 patrols. The Junior Canadian Rangers program reaches approximately 1,650 youth in 41 patrols. They are the eyes and the ears of the Canadian Forces in the north — hence their motto “vigilans” — “the watchers”. I first became aware of the Rangers a number of years ago when I saw some people in the red t-shirts and red sweatshirts, combat pants and a ball cap with the Ranger's crest on it. It didn't take long before I recognized some of them as friends, co-workers and neighbours.

The Canadian Rangers provide lightly equipped, self-sufficient mobile forces in support of Canadian Forces' sovereignty and domestic operation tasks in Canada. I'm given to understand that all Canadian Rangers are provided training in areas such as flood or fire evacuation planning, sovereignty patrols of Canada's remote coastal areas, major air disaster assistance, self-sufficiency and leadership, marksmanship, and the history and traditions of the Canadian Armed Forces.

In addition to these tasks, I think many of us know them for their community involvement and for their contributions in the area of search and rescue. Canadian Rangers in the north are always ready to participate. I've come to know many of them as community-minded volunteers who are excited to support a number of our community events. The Canadian Rangers have a tremendous impact on the lives of people in their communities. A significant number of Rangers hold leadership positions, such as mayors, chiefs, MLAs or Ranger sergeants. I would like to offer a couple of examples of the kind of people who become Rangers but, prior to doing that, I think I need to extend a great thanks to the Member for Kluane, for his participation in the Rangers and Armed Forces, and to the Member for Porter Creek Centre for his involvement in the Canadian Armed Forces as well.

As you may know, Mr. Speaker, from your involvement with the cadet program, my son Kyle was in the cadets. I'm also appreciative of the Rangers, who contributed their time to supporting the cadets and Junior Rangers patrols.

The cadet program is one of the largest federally sponsored youth programs in Canada, which includes the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets, the Royal Canadian Army Cadets, and the Royal Canadian Air Cadets. It's a national program for young Canadians aged 12 to 18 who are interested in participating in a variety of fun, challenging and rewarding activities, while learning about the sea, army and air activities of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Cadets are encouraged to become active, responsible members of their communities. They make valuable

contributions to Canadian society on a daily basis in terms of environmental, citizenship and community activities. Cadets also learn valuable life and work skills, such as team leadership and citizenship.

As I said a moment ago, I want to mention two examples of Rangers who were formally recognized for their volunteer contributions to Yukon, but I could also name other Rangers who do so much but are not formally recognized. Last year, I was honoured to present a community safety award at the welcoming reception of the National Symposium on Policing in Northern and Remote Canada. The community safety award recognizes Yukoners' contribution to building safer communities here in our territory. One of the recipients was Mr. John Mitchell, who won the youth mentor award. Many of us know Mr. Mitchell as a long-time resident of Dawson City and head of the Klondike search and rescue group, local Canadian Rangers and Junior Rangers program. Through his involvement in these programs, Mitchell dedicates countless hours to the community youth of Dawson. He's also a positive role model and mentor for Yukon youth.

I'll come back to the Dawson patrol in a few minutes, because of the role it plays in the Yukon Quest.

Almost two years ago, at the 2012 New Year's Levee, Commissioner Phillips acknowledged some exceptional Yukoners with the Commissioner's Award for Public Volunteer Service for their significant and lasting contribution to the social, political, economic, academic or cultural fabric of their communities.

One of the recipients was Fred Smith, who has made a significant contribution to the community of Whitehorse through his years of diverse volunteer efforts with the Yukon Order of Pioneers, the Rotary Club of Whitehorse, the United Church, as a host for many years with the international student program and as a member of the Yukon Rangers. Their contribution to society is recognized by many, many Yukoners.

My point here is that Rangers are community leaders whose attitude toward volunteering and community building are what make Yukon communities great places to live.

As I said previously, many more Rangers make contributions that go unrecognized. I know that one of my constituents belongs to the Rangers. This is following a career in the Armed Forces and in corrections. Art Birss who joined us in the gallery today for the tribute has been a Ranger for a number of years now, and I know how important the Ranger program is to him and to his fellow Rangers.

Art often speaks about the patrols that have been undertaken. He speaks to the link to the Armed Forces, but I believe that the most important aspect of the Rangers for Art is giving back to his community. I would like to thank Art and his fellow Rangers for everything that they do for our communities throughout Yukon, throughout the north and across our incredible nation.

From the conversations with my colleagues I can say with confidence that all of us on the government side appreciate their work and their contributions. Their importance to our communities were also recognized when my colleague, the

Minister for Highways and Public Works, unveiled the new Alaska Highway dedication signs in Beaver Creek along with the members of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 254 and the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group. By including them in his unveiling to honour the sacrifice made and selflessness demonstrated by many of our own to safeguard our country's freedoms, security and prosperity, it reminded all of the important contributions the Rangers make.

In my role as Minister of Tourism and Culture, when I think about Rangers, it often reminds me of the Yukon Quest. The Yukon Quest is a 1,000-mile international sled dog race between Whitehorse, Yukon, and Fairbanks, Alaska, during the depths of winter that celebrates the traditions of northern travel by dogsled. The Yukon Quest trail follows the historic gold rush and mail-delivery dogsled routes from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yukon Quest sled dogs are elite, marathon athletes that are bred from stock that survived and thrived during the Klondike Gold Rush. No animal on Earth can match them for their endurance, their dedication and their ability to perform in the extreme conditions of our north.

The Yukon Quest gets its name from the highway of the north, which is the Yukon River, and the historical winter land routes travelled by prospectors, adventurers, and mail and supply carriers travelling between the goldfields of the Klondike and those in the Alaska interior.

The Yukon Quest trail cross frozen rivers and four mountain summits. Temperatures of minus 40, one-hundred-mile-per-hour winds, open water and bad ice are all barriers. It's through the volunteer work of people like the Rangers who make the trail safer for the mushers and for the dogs. I'll come back to the Yukon Quest core values, one of which is to focus on the mushers and their dogs by, among other things, working to produce a fair and a safe race.

The Yukon Quest is a very challenging race at the best of times. The work of the Rangers in opening up the trail is so very valuable to making that race safer for the mushers and their dogs.

I know some of the Rangers, and I know many look forward to that event as an opportunity to practise their land-based skills while supporting a great organization.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, some members and perhaps some of those listening in today may wonder what criteria one must meet in order to become a Canadian Ranger. You must be 18 years old. You must be physically and mentally capable of carrying out Canadian Ranger duties. You must be a Canadian citizen, have a social insurance number and reside in Canada. You must not have been convicted of a serious offence under the *Criminal Code* of Canada for which a pardon has not been granted, including firearms offences, violent crimes, drug-related offences, and other offences at the discretion of the Canadian Ranger instructor. You must not be a member of any other subcomponent of the Canadian Armed Forces or another national military or police branch — for example, the RCMP or the Coast Guard. You must be knowledgeable and personally equipped to survive and efficiently operate on the land.

I again thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing this motion forward today. I have appreciated many of the comments provided by all members on the floor of this Legislature today. I once again thank the Canadian Rangers for their perseverance, their commitment and their valour.

**Mr. Hassard:** It is a pleasure today to rise in support of Motion No. 725, which urges the Government of Yukon to continue to support the Canadian Rangers and their Yukon patrols in local exercises that provide skills and abilities in order that the Rangers can help support local functions, such as the Yukon Quest, among many others.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Rangers are a subcomponent of the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves. They provide patrols and detachments for national security, public safety missions in sparsely settled northern coastal and isolated areas of Canada. They are the Canadian Armed Forces' eyes and ears in the sparsely settled northern coastal and isolated areas of Canada and, appropriately, their motto is "vigilans". As we have heard, that means "the watchers".

The Rangers started originally as the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers in March of 1942. These were Rangers who volunteered and patrolled and performed military surveillance and provided local defence on the coastline of British Columbia and in the Yukon against the wartime threat of a possible Japanese invasion. The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers of 1942 consisted of loggers, trappers, prospectors, woodsmen, lumberjacks, fishermen and ranchers who knew the local terrain and understood permafrost.

The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers consisted of 15,000 volunteers and 138 companies across three major patrol areas of Vancouver Island, the lower Fraser Valley and the Bridge River area.

According to *The Ranger*, a training publication issued on September 1, 1942, young lads of 15 years and older, who proved to be good shots and could handle an axe, or men considered too old to join the war effort were welcomed.

The modern Canadian Rangers were formally established on May 23, 1947 and the primary role of this part-time force was to conduct surveillance or sovereignty patrols, as required. There are currently approximately 5,000 active Canadian Rangers who live in over 200 communities. Many are aboriginal and they represent 26 different dialects and languages.

The Rangers maintain CAF presence in local communities, instruct and supervise youth in the Junior Canadian Rangers program, which is a program that has significantly improved the quality of life of young people in the most isolated areas of Canada. They also support and participate in events in local communities, such as Yukon Quest. You often see them at Remembrance Day or Canada Day celebrations.

The organizational structure of the Rangers consists of regular force and reserve force. The reserve force supports deployed forces and provides a base for expansion or mobilization. The reserve force is organized into four subcomponents: the primary reserve, the supplementary

reserve, the cadet instructors and the Canadian Rangers. The Rangers are non-commissioned members of the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves. They are members who are always ready for service, but who are not required to undergo annual training. They serve only when placed on active service or when called out in an emergency. The Canadian Rangers are divided into five Ranger patrol groups — or CRPGs — and each CRPG covers a distinct geographical area. Each has a headquarters and a staff that is responsible for overseeing the Rangers and Junior Rangers in their area.

The 1st Canadian Ranger Patrol Group encompasses Nunavut, Yukon and Northwest Territories and is headquartered in Yellowknife.

In terms of regular Canadian Armed Forces training, Canadian Rangers participate in marksmanship and learn about the history and tradition of the Canadian Armed Forces. Each Canadian Ranger patrol undertakes a minimum of one on-land exercise per year. These exercises differ from one area to another and allow the Rangers to brush up on their skills, work as a team in a controlled environment, take inventory of their equipment and discuss new policy and direction with their sergeant. Canadian Ranger exercises can last anywhere from a few hours to a week or more, depending on the skills being practised.

CRPD 1 consists of over 1,750 rangers and 60 patrols and more than 1,500 Junior Rangers in 41 communities across the north. Their main tasks include participation in northern operations, conduct north warning site patrols, report suspicious and unusual activities, assist in search and rescue when tasked, and collect local data of military significance.

Here in the Yukon, the Rangers provide an invaluable service supporting the Yukon Quest and last year, as we heard from the Member for Klondike, they were instrumental in providing emergency assistance to an injured musher and safely rescued him. Canadian Rangers have a tremendous impact on the lives of people in their hamlets and communities. A significant number of Rangers hold leadership positions such as mayors, chiefs, Ranger sergeants — and apparently one drives an ice cream truck, Mr. Speaker. Who knew?

From helping recover lost persons or to representing the Canadian Forces to setting a positive example for youth, Canadian Rangers in the north are always ready to participate. Rangers are active community members who have a positive influence on their peers and are often seen as role models.

The riding of Pelly-Nisutlin is home to the Faro patrol, which is under the watchful eye of Mr. Daryl Fulton. As well, while Teslin doesn't have a patrol of their own, many of our community members are part of patrols from other parts of the territory. One of those members was actually here for the tribute today and that was Mr. Frank Johnstone.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to again thank all of the people who volunteer their time to this great organization and again, thank you to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing forward Motion No. 725. I hope to see this motion get unanimous support when we get to vote.

**Ms. McLeod:** I'm very pleased to rise today and speak to Motion No. 725. I want to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing this forward.

I don't have a lot of personal experience with the Canadian Rangers, although we do have a Ranger troop — let's call them — in Watson Lake. When it was first started not that many years ago, it consisted of several members of the community. I think there was, like, two dozen of them. It was easy to see right from the start that this organization was a very positive influence in the lives of the young people who were participating. Now of course they weren't all young people, but a good majority of them were. It was very good to see them out and about in the community in their red sweatshirts. It makes them highly recognizable.

The Canadian Ranger program is a federal program that is supported through the Department of National Defence. They're not really here to do work for communities or for Yukon government, but when Ranger training aligns with civil needs, that's a bonus and, as I said, not a Department of National Defence requirement. We've heard many stories today of exactly how the Rangers are assisting with civic duties. For that we thank them. We would like to see them continue, so anything Yukon government can do to assist them in exercises to hone their skills and abilities — in order that they're ready and able to help out in times of great need. For that, I thank everybody for their comments today and I look forward to a positive vote.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I'll be very brief in my comments here this afternoon. I just want to begin, first of all, by thanking the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for bringing this motion forward, and to thank as well others who spoke to it, including the Member for Kluane speaking to his personal experience in the Canadian Rangers.

I want to rise here briefly and acknowledge and thank all of our Rangers, both currently serving and past, within the Yukon, for the work that they do and the service they provide, as a number of my colleagues have briefly touched on, but I want to specifically, as Minister of Community Services, thank them for the contributions that many of them make, both as Rangers and in other roles to their communities. That includes many Rangers who serve as search and rescue volunteers as well, and often serve in other roles, including as Yukon EMS first responders, driving our ambulances and providing pre-hospital care to people who need it in the communities — and those who also often serve in other roles, including as volunteer firefighters.

It's again not specifically, in some cases, in accordance with their duties as Rangers, but I just want to acknowledge, recognize and thank the many Yukoners across the territory who serve as Canadian Rangers for the fact that, for many of them, Rangers are only one part of what they do for their communities and what they do for the territory. We are better as a territory and stronger as a territory for the work that these Yukon citizens do, day in and day out, and for their continued service and readiness in uniform in the event there should ever be a time when that service was necessary, in their official

capacity, as well as through the good work that they do in many other areas, including contributions that Canadian Rangers, in an official capacity, have provided to the Yukon Quest throughout the years.

So that is about all I have to say to this and thank you again to all who serve as Rangers and all who serve the communities in this territory.

**Ms. White:** The Member from Kluane mentioned earlier that there were other people in attendance at the Winterlude festival in Carmacks and I was lucky enough to attend this year with the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, whose riding Carmacks is in. I had never spent a lot of time around that many Junior Rangers before and I have to say that it was pretty fun. I was escorting my friend Flat Morgan — which was a school project from a young girl from Ponoka, Alberta — there and Flat Morgan and I participated in things from wheelbarrow races to the multi-skis to everything else. I think sometimes my participation was a bit of a surprise for the kids because I was supposed to be one of the grownups attending.

I think one of the things I really appreciated about the event was to be able to see the Rangers mentoring the Junior Rangers. It started off where the Junior Rangers were divided by the communities they came from and the communities that didn't have quite enough kids to participate had other Junior Rangers from other communities join them. They had to set-up their wall tent to start with, which was pretty fun, and then throughout the day they were working on their chili cooking projects with limited adult supervision. The honoured guests were invited to be part of the chili cooking taste testers to award the chili winners. I think what I really appreciated the most was watching the mentorship between the Rangers and the Junior Rangers from the campfire tea station to questions about the chili cooking to the full participation of the Rangers with the Junior Rangers in the final competitions. It was a lot of fun to see.

The chili cook-off was — chili's not my favorite food to start with and there was some creative licence used by some of the groups and the portions were very large. I think by the end of it, there wasn't a single person raising more than the tip of their spoon to taste because some of them were a bit surprising. That was a fun thing and the Member for Kluane mentioned the initiation — and I can't remember what my name is because I sent the certificate off to young Morgan in Ponoka with her Flat Morgan character at the end. I'm relieved to say that the day I was in Carmacks, I was not wearing brand new smart wool socks because those socks did not survive and there were a couple corrections that they did for me because, first of all, they wanted me to use an axe without my eyes when I was like, okay, well I want to know what I'm touching first and then they wouldn't let me touch the wood, and the reason they wouldn't let me touch the wood is because they put my sock there and I would have known that I was slaughtering something that I wore to get there. It was all done in good fun. Also, they might not have been expecting me because I was given a size 12 white sock to go home in which, like I said, it's good I wasn't in smart wool

socks at that point in time or my feelings would have been really hurt.

I think the most impressive thing about that entire day for me was the leadership shown by the Rangers toward the Junior Rangers and the patience as they worked through different kinds of stations, and then in the gymnasium when things were getting organized for the awards and things.

There were some standouts for sure — some things that I remember really well. The Junior Rangers from Kluane, with the help of their leader, had actually made mittens of — I can't remember the creatures, but they were creatures that they had hunted and trapped and then tanned the hides. They were beautiful, beautiful mittens. They took great pride in showing them off, and I have some fantastic photos because the light was beautiful and the mittens were really fantastic.

Other highlights for me were — I can't remember where the contingent with the fewer participants was from, but to know that others happily moved in there and they were working together. The youth don't necessarily get to spend a lot of time together to know that that wasn't a problem and it wasn't like, "Oh, why do I have to go work with them?" They were quite willing, so that was really fantastic.

I loved the campfire tea — that was lovely — and things like that, but I think mostly it was the mentorship that was shown by the older Rangers toward the younger ones. I think there is the hope that this will become a yearly event, and I think that is going to be a fantastic thing. Hosting it in different communities gives the community that is hosting it the ability to maybe set a little bit of the day's plans and highlight some of the things that they do in the area. It was fantastic to have the Canadian Forces members out of the base in Yellowknife, I believe, there as part of the festivities and part of the leadership. It was really fantastic to have the community members come throughout the day, so there were people there for the barbeque in the middle of the afternoon. There were people there to watch the chili awards, and I think it is a relief that all of the chili didn't have to be consumed by the kids because some of them were harder to taste than others. But it was a fantastic day, and I look forward to going to the next one. If anyone in Carmacks is ever going to read Hansard, then I congratulate them on the fantastic Winterlude exercise that they had, and I look forward to the next one. Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Elias:** I must say I heard some unexpected pleasantries today in the debate on my motion that I put forward in the words of the members. It is good to hear of the work and support that is going on by various members of the House in their ridings and it is good to hear that we have the support, hopefully, of this Assembly to send messages where they need to go in support of our Canadian Rangers. I thank everybody who spoke.

Just another quick story, Mr. Speaker — in Old Crow, we have this annual big caribou day celebration in the springtime,

in May, and we have a shooting contest. We put balloons out on the river and everybody gets one or two shots.

As soon as I see one of those .303 British rifles come out with the peep sites, I don't even enter the contest because you know that it is going to be a shoot-the-wings-off-a-fly contest — something that I would prefer not to enter in, unless I have my .300 Winchester Magnum with my 3-9x40 scope. Then it'll make it fair.

Anyways, the shooting contest is always won by a local Ranger, a Canadian Ranger in Old Crow.

When we speak about contributing to the fabric of our Yukon society, our Ranger patrols are standing strong and doing their part. Whether it's a patrol that's being conducted in minus 45 degree Celsius weather from the Old Crow Flats to Herschel Island, or whether it's a Canadian Ranger mentoring a youth, providing leadership in their community, being the eyes and ears in the north for the Canadian Armed Forces, I just want to take this opportunity to thank our dedicated citizens who are our Yukon Canadian Rangers. These men and women are standing on guard for our true north strong and free. They are wonderful citizens.

We salute them and thank them for their service in our territory.

**Speaker:** I'm going to take a liberty here and add a couple of my own personal comments, seeing as how all the comments about the Ranger program have been quite favourable. I had the distinct privilege of having Rangers work with me during my military career on many operations in the high Arctic, and the three summers I spent in the Yukon. Our jobs would not have been as successful as they were without the assistance of the Rangers.

Also, a number of members noted the Junior Ranger program. It's free to the kids, as is the Cadet program. There's no charge to the kids, but they come out of it stronger, better, and as capable persons within our society. They should be very proud — the Rangers and all those who work with the cadets as well. Thank you for indulging me.

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.



**Mr. Elias:** Agree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Agree.

**Ms. Stick:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yeas, nil nays.

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

*Motion No. 725 agreed to*

### **Motion No. 828**

**Clerk:** Motion No. 828, standing in the name of Ms. McLeod.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Member for Watson Lake:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to seek public input on changes to the *Students Financial Assistance Act* for fair, equitable, and fiscally responsible methods to enhance access to financial assistance for current and future Yukon post-secondary students.

**Ms. McLeod:** I am very honoured to rise today in support of Motion No. 828, and I am quite pleased that I was able to make the motion in the first place. This motion urges the Government of Yukon to seek public input on changes to the *Students Financial Assistance Act*.

The Government of Yukon has an excellent array of financial support for post-secondary students, and I would like to congratulate the Minister of Education for all her fine work to help our Yukon youth reach their full potential.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share a little information about the Yukon grant and the history of financial assistance in the territory. The Yukon grant has existed in the Yukon for many years and is an integral part of many students' financial plans for post-secondary education. The Yukon grant is available for students who are taking full-time post-secondary classes at a designated institution. Students must fit into one of three categories: dependant student, independent student, or new resident student. There are set criteria used to determine which category applies to a specific student.

To be considered a dependant student on the day the institution's classes start, the student must: (1) be less than 19 years of age and have at least one parent who has lived in Yukon continuously for the two years right before the classes start, and that parent is a Canadian citizen or permanent resident; or (2) be currently 19 years of age, having lived in Yukon continuously during the 12 months right before classes start and have previously received the Yukon grant as a dependant student.

Dependant students sometimes meet the eligibility requirements for independent students as well, and if that is the case, these students will be assessed as an independent student. To be considered an independent student on the day the institution's class start, the student must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident, have completed any two years of high school in any of the grades 8 to 12 in a Yukon high school or in a Yukon-registered home schooling program, or

have previously received financial assistance as an dependant student and has resided in Yukon continuously for the two years right before the classes start.

To be considered a new resident student on the day the institution's classes start, the student must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident, be less than 19 years of age when they move to Yukon with at least one parent, as a dependant of that parent, and have completed at least one year of high school — again, grades 8 to 12 — in a Yukon high school, and their classes before they turned 19. Once students are eligible for the Yukon grant as a new resident student, they continue to be considered a new resident student as long as their parents or parent continue to reside in Yukon and they are less than 24 years old.

There are often many questions to navigate these many questions of eligibility and applying for Yukon grants, and the Department of Education has dedicated staff who deal with incredible volumes of inquiries, especially around the beginning of the fall semester at post-secondary institutions. I would like to be sure to thank all of those people who do that good work.

Yukon government also has the student training allowance available. The student training allowance is available for Yukon residents who are studying full-time at Yukon College. Usually, students are considered full-time if enrolled in nine credits or more. However, there are non-credit programs and students need to check with Yukon College to confirm their status on an individual basis. They also need to be in a program that runs for at least three weeks.

To qualify as a resident for the purposes of this specific fund, students must be legally entitled to remain in Canada and have lived in Yukon for the two years right before their classes start. This usually includes students who are absent from Yukon while in full-time studies at an outside school. The staff at the Education department are able to clarify requirements on an individual basis.

Students can receive the student training allowance for up to 40 weeks per year for a maximum of five years over their lifetime, provided they continue to meet the eligibility requirements — very generous, Mr. Speaker. These amounts are variable, based on whether the student has dependants — this school year, starting at \$104 weekly for no dependants; up to \$218 weekly for students with four or more dependants.

For student training allowance purposes, a dependant is defined as a child, natural, adopted or stepchild, under the age of 18, or a spouse whose income is less than \$104 per week.

There's also an allowance for students who must attend Yukon College away from their home community and who will be maintaining two residences as a result. The allowance for a second residence is \$83 per week.

Students who must travel to another community to attend Yukon College may also be eligible for a travel amount, and travel amounts vary between communities. It's important to note that students cannot receive the student training allowance and the Yukon grant at the same time.

If students are attending Yukon College and are eligible for both, they can choose which funding option suits them the

best. Students who are eligible for both student training allowance and the Yukon grant can receive a total of five years of funding combined.

The third major fund that the Yukon department provides to students is the Yukon excellence awards. These awards encourage academic achievement in secondary school and help students pursue post-secondary education or training. Students are eligible to receive up to \$3,000 for 10 awards to offset costs of post-secondary education and training. They may use the award toward the cost of tuition, compulsory fees and/or books.

Yukon excellence awards criteria have changed over the years. In the 2013-14 school year, the department established that students qualify for a Yukon excellence award when they achieve an 80-percent final grade — and that's the course and exam — in any 10 designated courses. The eligible courses include: grade 10, any three courses with a B.C. provincial exam, such as English, math and science, and one other course; grade 11, one mandatory course with a B.C. provincial exam, such as social studies or civic studies, and two other courses; grade 12, one mandatory course with a B.C. provincial exam in English or communications, and two other courses. It's important to note that French language courses are considered equivalent to English courses, and the higher grade will be considered.

These changes create an overlap of students for different criteria, so it's important for students and members to know that the changes do not apply to students who left high school prior to the 2013-14 school year. For current students who were in grade 11 or 12 in 2013-14 and wrote grade 9 YATS in 2012-13, they can use whichever criteria awards the students desires for the higher award up to \$3,000. Students who were in grade 9 or 10 in 2013-14 must use the new criteria.

Under the new criteria, each Yukon excellence award is worth \$300. It's possible to earn up to 10 awards from grades 10 through 12. The maximum amount of money students can receive through Yukon excellence awards is \$3,000. When they are enrolled in post-secondary education or training, they apply for the entire amount they have earned or use a portion each year, as they wish. Students who have qualified for an award receive letters every October, informing them of any earned in the previous academic year.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon government does a lot to support Yukon students in their post-secondary pursuits, and I think we should be proud of what we have done. However, we always want to do better, and I think that is what this motion speaks to today.

We can't debate the motion and have a discussion without understanding the background and what we are currently doing to support students. If you talk to any Yukon student who has had the opportunity to attend post-secondary school and access the Yukon grant, I think you will hear from a very grateful person. We have all heard stories of how students from other jurisdictions are shocked and envious of how much support our students get, and I think we can all be proud of that because there has been a great amount of work done on this file throughout Yukon's history.

We do need to continue to make sure that we have fair, equitable and fiscally responsible methods to enhance access to financial assistance to Yukon students. I look forward to hearing from other members on any thoughts and ideas they may have in this regard.

Just from a personal perspective, my son did apply for the Yukon grant some years ago and found the application process to be easy, and the cheque came quickly. Unfortunately, he had to send it back because he had other funding arrangements, but really it was a good experience for him.

I thank you all and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms. White:** I thank the member for bringing it forward. I was hoping to hear some of the solutions to make our financial support for students more fair and equitable, and so I am sure I will hear that from others.

At a glance, Motion No. 828 seems easily supported. Reaching out to the public for their opinions on how things that affect them should be administered just makes sense, and who doesn't want access to education to be fair and equitable. I would hazard a guess that a consultation on changes to this *Students Financial Assistance Act* is in the territory's near future.

Today I had the pleasure of reading both the *Students Financial Assistance Act* and the accompanying regulations. I thank the member across for walking us through section 6, which is the eligibility for financial assistance.

I think part of the conversation needs to be that, if we want to ensure that young Yukoners have long-term and stable access to post-secondary education, then the Yukon government has a responsibility to call on the federal government to show leadership and ensure that education remains accessible in other jurisdictions of the country that we depend on for affordable education opportunities.

I was having the discussion today and, for some families, the expectation is that you are going to university or college or maybe you will go to trades school. All those things are important, but knowing that Yukon students leave the Yukon typically to go to school, that means we are out of province, which means we pay a higher tuition rate often than the students within that province where the schools are located. I think it is important to add to the conversation that, in the past 15 years, tuition fees in Canada have grown to become the single largest expense for most university and college students. The dramatic increase of tuition fees during this period were the direct result of cuts to public funding for post-secondary education by the federal government and, to a somewhat lesser extent, by the provincial governments. I think it is one of those things we want to make sure that, if anyone has the desire and the will to go to school, financial burdens are not the holdback. I have quite a few friends who will be paying off student loans for decades still. That's a big commitment to get into — and a scary commitment at that.

Recent studies reveal the effects of high tuition fees on access to post-secondary education for students from low- and middle-income backgrounds. Statistics Canada reports that

students from low-income families are less than half as likely to participate in university than those from high-income families. Statistics Canada also tallied the reasons cited by high school graduates who did not participate in post-secondary education and, by an overwhelming margin, the most frequently reported barrier to university and college for these students was financial reasons.

When we talk about equitable and fair, I hope that any student who has an interest and a desire to go to post-secondary education has that opportunity, and the Member from Watson Lake is right: the Yukon grant has been a fantastic help for, I would suggest, just about every graduating student from the Yukon.

It's a well-known fact that the public benefits from a well-educated society, and the increasing demand for post-secondary degrees in the workforce reinforce the fact that education should be a right. Every young Yukoner who wants to and can attend a university or college, should be able to do so without financial barriers in place. We need to make sure that every Yukon student has the same access to those opportunities, if they're coming with the marks and the desire to work toward those goals.

The education passed by the forward-thinking government of the day lays out strong principles for guiding our deliberations on how to increase Yukon students' access to high-quality education at all levels, and the *Students Financial Assistance Act* is a good piece of legislation that offers opportunities for young Yukoners seeking a university education to do so outside of the territory for the financial support that the member mentioned.

There are other ways that the Yukon government could ask the federal government to improve access to post-secondary education. The federal government could introduce legislation that enshrines Canada-wide standards for access and sets terms of transfer payments to provinces and territories to include dedicated, post-secondary education spending, like we already have for health care — so imagine the similar transfer payments that we get for health care, but going toward post-secondary education.

The federal government could lift the two-percent annual increase cap on the post-secondary student support program that funds aboriginal students applying to post-secondary institutions and expand access to the PSSSP to non-status First Nation and Métis students. The federal government could re-implement the Youth in Transition Survey, a longitudinal Statistics Canada study — that tracked young peoples' progress through secondary school and into the workforce — that was abolished with the long-form census. They could shift funding from federal student loans to grant-based student assistance — so instead of it being on a borrowing basis, it's on a merit basis, and it's not having to be repaid.

If the Yukon government is serious about helping young Yukoners have better access to education, then what we need is to pressure the federal government to show leadership to offer students in need adequate help and to ensure that the universities our students are attending are holding up their end of the bargain.

So now we'll turn back to the Yukon. In order to increase access here, we need to freeze tuition fees at Yukon College and engage with the college to find an effective and sustainable funding model that limits ongoing financial barriers to new and returning students. We must continue to foster strong relationships between the college, First Nations, employers, non-government organizations and other community stakeholders, because the more people we put toward the problem, the more solutions we'll find.

Our hope is that, one day, Yukon College can become a full-fledged university, and we also encourage ongoing university of the north and circumpolar initiatives. Mr. Speaker, I'll point out that, when you and I ran in the 2006 election, this was part of the NDP platform back then.

Lots of questions remain as we discuss ways we can make post-secondary education more accessible. A public discussion is a good thing and it's a great step, and I look forward to seeing the guidelines of how that will go. But it is essential that it is guided by the principle that we will continue to work toward affordable, accessible education that isn't limited by financial barriers. There are a couple of questions that I was hoping would maybe in the introduction, but we have questions so, right now, our Yukon grant funding is \$4.7 million, I think. One of the questions we have: Are there plans to limit the funding available to the post-secondary student grants? Are we looking at putting a cap on that? Would that then limit the number of students who can apply?

Another question we have: Are changes being contemplated that will limit First Nation students from applying for financial assistance to both their First Nation and the Yukon government's post-secondary student grant program? We know that, for many First Nation students, without the access of both funding through their First Nation and the Yukon government, it would be a lot harder to get to university or college, if that's where they were going.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in this day and age, we have many different paths that we can choose for education, and sometimes the programs work really well for us and sometimes they don't. I know that, when I went to my professional culinary program, it was only four months long and, although the program was \$10,000, the maximum amount I could get access for help from the Canada student loan at the time was \$1,500, which meant that there was a lot of money to make up as soon as I finished, and that was quite daunting. Had I not been in a car accident in the summer before, then collected the money, I would have been paying it off for a long time.

I look forward to further comments and I look forward to when I imagine that the *Students Financial Assistance Act* will come out for public consultation. I'm interested in seeing how the government will shape that conversation.

I think the most important thing is that we make sure that education for anyone who wants it is never limited by their ability to access finances. If we have people within communities, within the City of Whitehorse and throughout the territory, who have the desire and the smarts to do it, we need to support them in whatever way we can, as they move

forward, because the more we develop the intelligence of the territory and the knowledge base of the territory, and when people come home with that, it benefits us all.

I just want to make sure that, in talking about this, we keep in mind that access to finances should never be a barrier to education, and that we should make sure that education is available for everyone.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the MLA for Watson Lake for introducing this motion today. It's a very important motion and it is something that I want to talk to on a number of different fronts here today.

Of course, over the past year and some, I've served as Minister of Education in the territory and I've had the opportunity to travel to pretty much every single community. I've had the opportunity to engage with all of our school councils and First Nation governments and, of course, administrations within our communities, to talk about education.

I feel very blessed to have come from the Yukon, to have been born and raised in the territory and to have subscribed to many of the education programs in support of education here in the territory, but also beyond that of grade 12 — and I will speak to that.

I think that this motion is timely. I think that there have been a number of different fronts and I want to thank the MLA for Watson Lake for speaking to some of the recent changes to the Yukon excellence awards, for example, and how that is one particular area that we have delivered in support of students' post-secondary education. We provide the Yukon grant, we provide the student training allowance and Yukon excellence awards — of course we help administer or deliver, working with the Government of Canada, the Canada student loans and grants program.

Of course, we also work with other different organizations on the administration of a number of private scholarships. In fact, tomorrow evening the Yukon Foundation is holding its annual dinner and annual gathering/meeting to really celebrate and to review many of the funds and scholarships available to Yukoners — Yukon students in particular — to further their post-secondary studies.

It has already been said, but we are very proud that we were able to — just when we look at the last fiscal year — provide more than \$4.3 million to assist approximately 980 Yukon post-secondary students with expenses associated with their studies. I can say that, as a recipient of the Yukon grant — also the Canada student loan and other programs over the years — it has and continues to be the envy of many students across this country.

I think as the MLA across the way alluded to before, as well, having gone to school and having talked about how — of course, in addition to your three jobs per summer and in addition to your loan — you were also able to subscribe to this student Yukon grant and how, with all of those factors combined, I was able to literally walk away from my university degree with literally no loans. I had one relatively

small loan, but in the broader scope of things, and when I spoke with many of my friends and colleagues at the University of Alberta, for example, it was nothing compared to \$20,000 or \$30,000 in debts that they were hampered with. Not only trying to find employment after your post-secondary studies have concluded — you know, making that decision whether to further your post-secondary studies or whether or not you go pursue work — having to start chipping away at those long-term debts is not the greatest way to start off your life beyond school, so to speak.

I always say that school and education is lifelong. It's lifelong learning; there's never a bad time to start your education. In fact, through the Department of Education, through Advanced Education branch, we administer many different programs in collaboration with Canada. The targeted initiative for older workers, for example, which was just recently renewed for an additional number of years, has really targeted a segment of our population in order for them to re-engage in the workforce to garner new skills and to be able to really target industries that are in need of workers. What better way to target an industry or a segment of our population than by looking to our older workers? It is one of many different venues that the Department of Education does provide.

About two weeks ago, we actually debated a motion on the floor of the Assembly that spoke to providing Yukoners with fundamental skills necessary to prepare them for jobs, responsible citizenship and lifelong learning, again by working in collaboration with all of our respective stakeholders — orders of government, First Nations, Yukon College — to develop an inclusive, adaptable, productive workforce that contributes to and strengthens our economy and the quality of life that we have come to know as Yukoners over our livelihoods here.

That motion really dovetails very nicely with the motion that we are here today speaking to. As I mentioned, we are very much committed to, as a government, encouraging lifelong learning and enhancing students' access to post-secondary education opportunities. As I mentioned, we invest a significant amount of resources in order to make it more affordable for current and future post-secondary students here in the territory to pursue a wide variety of advanced education opportunities and training as well.

I know that there has been reference made to Yukon College, and I would like to just talk to Yukon College and about the many investments that this government has made over the course of the last number of years, but even specifically over the last couple of years — the last three years since we were re-elected in 2011.

When you look at investments, such as the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, that is a substantive commitment of \$11 million over five years, which speaks to resource industries, contributions and investments in ensuring that Yukoners have the opportunities to subscribe and take advantage of the opportunities coming from our resource industries. Not just that — it's about expanding and looking to how we can benefit from all industrial trades and how, as a result of our contribution to Yukon College, coupled with that

of the Government of Canada, we're able to invest in things like a new trades building, which is going up as we speak. That will also enhance our ability to deliver initiatives, such as an apprentice subscribing to electrical, for example and to be able to complete your full electrical as a journey person.

That is absolutely essential, because right now, you are not able to do that. You have to go down south. You have to go to NAIT or SAIT or some other institution to be able to finish that apprenticeship.

These are all making a substantive difference. The mobile trades trailer unit, which has just finished up its part with providing welding opportunities, providing the dual-credit welding opportunities in the Dawson area — again, subscribing to high school students, but also adult learners as well. That trades trailer has now moved over to Pelly Crossing and just graduated another complement of students in collaboration with Selkirk First Nation — just like with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, Yukon College and mining companies like Selwyn. These are all great examples. That trades trailer will be moving over to Ross River in the new year, and I understand that the uptake of individuals who have indicated a strong interest in taking up the programming made available in January is substantive in Ross River. That is another fantastic example of why we continue to invest in initiatives such as CNIM. Likewise, the Yukon Research Centre and the Northern Institute of Social Justice are a couple of other examples, all of which is to say that we are providing a record level of funding — well over \$26 million — in support of Yukon College operations. Much of this is housed within this year's supplementary budget.

You know, we support Yukon College and their ability to be able to continue to build on their strengths of indigenous governance. I was very pleased that earlier in October — mid-October — I was able to join members — the president and the chair of the board of governors for Yukon College — in announcing the first-ever degree program to be delivered by Yukon College that is made in the Yukon and specifically focuses on indigenous governance.

Likewise, Yukon College is looking at a post-degree certificate in climate change to be delivered in the Yukon coming up in 2017. All of these are great examples of how far we have come over the past 51 years from Yukon College — where it started off and where we are today — in providing them with resources to be able to expand and enhance their ability to deliver programs that are relevant and that are specific to Yukon's labour market of today.

Of course the Yukon grant — our government was also able to deliver on a platform commitment of a few years ago. We were able to index the Yukon grant against inflation. That has helped see the grant increase over the number of years, and that is something very substantive to keep in mind.

I know that the member opposite had spoken to tuition fee increases delivered by Yukon College. I think that when we looked at even 2013-14, we saw an increase of about 2.3 percent. It was in keeping with the increase that we also saw — well, it reflects basically a 2.1-percent cost of living

increase and again, as I mentioned, the Yukon grant that continues to be delivered is in keeping with those increases.

I did want to spend a little bit of time though on the actual *Students Financial Assistance Act*. Of course the *Students Financial Assistance Act* and the program that we deliver at the Department of Education have been helping students to access post-secondary education for more than 25 years. As I mentioned, last fiscal alone, we were able to provide some \$4.3 million in order to assist approximately 980 post-secondary students with a number of costs associated with their studies.

This assistance available to students gives them a significant financial advantage as they pursue higher education, both within as well as outside of our territory. Over the past 25 years though, you can appreciate that there have been many changes that have occurred in the landscape of post-secondary education for our students, leading to new challenges but also new opportunities. Of course, in order to address those very changes, the legislation and the program itself we are looking to bring up to date to better really meet the needs of today and tomorrow's post-secondary students from the Yukon. Ensuring that assistance is accessible, is supported and is effectively administered is a priority of mine as Minister of Education, but also a priority of our Government of Yukon. So looking forward to the year ahead, updating this legislation presents a great opportunity to strengthen this program.

There have been a couple of examples, of course, that have been brought to my attention over the course of the past year and a half as to where we can strengthen this program. We certainly look forward to incorporating those as part of the review going forward of the *Students Financial Assistance Act*, but really the purpose of going out for consultation next year and looking forward to bringing forth changes to the act itself is really an opportunity for us to hear first-hand from Yukoners on understanding the needs and the perspectives of not only current, but future post-secondary students and their families, of local as well as national post-secondary institutions, of other community stakeholders and First Nation governments — these are all essential steps in the process of updating this important piece of legislation.

Looking forward, we are very much looking forward to being able to engage with all of these respective individuals, governments and stakeholders on how best to update the act in a way that supports fair, equitable and fiscally responsible access to financial support.

As I mentioned, throughout the course of my travels — in speaking with the Yukon College Board of Governors; in speaking with the Yukon College student union; in speaking with community campuses; in regard to speaking with First Nation students; in regard to speaking with First Nation governments and individual Yukoners as well — there has been a number of respective various areas in terms of looking forward as to how we can strengthen the program and how we can update it after some 25 years to reflect the needs of today's labour market. That is very pivotal in going forward.

I think the member opposite had made reference to implementation of First Nation self-government agreements and how under the current legislation — it is interesting to have heard these very sentiments, but students from self-governing First Nations, for example, that have taken over their responsibility for post-secondary education funding from the federal government are eligible to receive funding from both their First Nation and the Yukon government. But students from First Nations that have not taken over responsibility for such funding from the federal government — they can receive funding from either the federal government or the Yukon government, but not from both sources. This has been raised a number of occasions in speaking with First Nation governments. Certainly, this is but one area that we hope to be able to engage with First Nations and other stakeholders about looking how we can promote the participation of additional First Nations in supporting their case.

Another area is looking at how we can also accommodate residents who have achieved high-school equivalency in the territory, but haven't necessarily completed two years of high school as is currently the case to receive the Yukon grant. Again, we're looking at ways on how we can even out the playing field in terms of making funding available to more Yukoners by providing more equity.

Mr. Speaker, I see that my time has pretty much run out so, again, I look forward to hearing more discussion from members opposite and of course, we look forward to discussing some of these potential changes and moving forward with some of these changes.

**Ms. Hanson:** Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge at the outset that I hadn't intended to speak to this motion with respect to input on changes to the *Students Financial Assistance Act*, because I think, as speakers here have already said, there is no question about the importance of having a fair and equitable and fiscally responsible means of assisting people engaged in education and ensuring that we do whatever we can to enhance access of students to financial assistance — both current students and future ones.

As I was listening, particularly to the comments of my colleague for Takhini-Kopper King, several thoughts came to mind.

I thought that I would just share a couple of the thoughts, partly because I had read a book this weekend that spoke really directly to some of the issues we are facing here today and I just thought it would be kind of interesting to share an excerpt from that. On the one hand, the concept of Yukon's assistance to students to seek post-secondary — with respect to any post-secondary opportunities — really stemmed from an era when there were few, if any, options for further education for people living in the Yukon.

That has been one of the criticisms and the challenges actually of the financial assistance program too. It is almost the chicken and egg in some people's mind — the more you offer assistance to go elsewhere, the less there is an incentive to stay here. I think that part of the public conversation, if this

is truly what we are talking about, is actually opening up this — and I would be encouraging it — and I'll say this probably over and over again, that we want to make sure that we don't limit ourselves to the just the nuts and bolts of what a student financial assistance act looks like, but also what are the opportunities here.

When we started off, where the Department of Education is now with the Yukon Vocational and Technical Training Centre, it is a long way from that, from when I first came here — I'll admit that is not that long ago; it's only 36 years ago, or so — to what we have now, which is a modern campus at Ayamdigut, which as the minister opposite has said, you know, evolved from the initial days. There were degree-granting programs that were essentially hosted here, but the degrees came from the University of Regina, Saskatchewan or when I did some of the programs — the MPA program — from the University of Alaska Southeast, to where we are now. We are now in the process of looking forward to having our own degree-granting programs.

So, I think as we go forward, it is time to think of the opportunities for Yukon to lead the way in terms of post-secondary education. As I mentioned the other day, I was reading this new book by John Ralston Saul — it is called *The Comeback* and it really has to do with the comeback of aboriginal peoples in terms of — basically it is the comeback from the sympathy of outsiders and sympathy of racism.

He talks about some of the challenges and some of the opportunities that we have, and anybody who has read Saul before will know that he has a passion for education. Both he and his wife, the former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, took that passion wherever they went — in particular with their focus on circumpolar issues and the Canadian Arctic, in particular. He makes the comment — and I'll just read a couple of excerpts because they are not very long, but they are just pertinent to this:

“Canada was also the leading force in the creation of the virtual circumpolar University of the Arctic, but then, early in this century” — the 21<sup>st</sup> century — “the circumpolar world came on board and we were faced with the threat of having to take responsibility for our idea. Worse, we might have had to demonstrate our commitment by hosting the university in Canada.”

“My God!” — he says — “Money might have had to be spent on strengthening our northern society. So of course we backed off as fast as we could, and Finland, so much bigger, so much richer than Canada, took over the leadership. The Canadians who had led in putting it all together moved to northern Finland” — so these are the people who were involved in the circumpolar university — “where people understand what a northern policy looks like.”

“Worse still, Canada remains the only circumpolar country without an Arctic university.” He said, “Why is there no Arctic university? Apparently, we can't afford one. Greenland can, population 56,840. Iceland can, population 324,000. Norway can, population five million. Finland can, population 5.5 million. Sweden can, population 9.5 million. Canada, population 34 million, G7 member, cannot. Besides,

we don't have a large enough northern population to justify a university. Except that our northern population is one of the largest among the Circumpolar countries."

"The real difference", Saul says, "seems to be that the southern-based leadership of other circumpolar countries actually believes that their north is an integral part of their country. It's a small detail, but one worth considering." It seems to me that that's the challenge part of getting — not just governments — the federal government and our sister governments in the provinces to recognize the importance of an Arctic university based in the Yukon, because I do not see anywhere else a Canadian Arctic university could be, based on the achievements and the developments that have occurred and continue to occur under the good leadership of the executive and the board at Yukon College.

He also says, when he talks about the other part of the challenge: How do we move to having a hub of "northern-centred research and thought? This is what we need", he says, "Or is it to be a more sophisticated version of what we have already — a well-equipped place for researchers from southern universities to use as a base for their annual three months up north? These southern scientists now control northern research. Their southern universities get the benefit in reputation and funding from this colonial relationship to the north. And they stand in the way of the development of a northern-based approach and the development of a northern research community, which would include northerners, northern students and northern approaches..."

This is an issue that really touches me deeply, because I think it is really critical to the evolution of the north and the Yukon in particular. It is not just about the fact of the challenges of getting southern-based research institutes. There have been some amazing initiatives over the last couple of years. We have seen the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council put in a five-year commitment, which is funded out of the initiatives in the Yukon, but a lot of the research and other associated activities — so there is one aspect of it here, but the large portion of that — the residua — is occurring through universities all through southern Canada.

Occasionally, we have those colloquia of these researchers gathering to talk about the research that they are doing up here, but based in someplace else. In a recent conversation on my flight to Ottawa last Sunday, I had the opportunity — while we were waiting for the plane — to talk with the president of the college. We were talking about the opportunity that exists in this territory for Yukon to become that centre of research and have those researchers based here.

You know, people will say — and that's why I used the excerpt from John Ralston Saul — the notion that we're too small to do it. Well, how big is Wolfville? How big is Antigonish? How big is Charlottetown? These are all centres that have developed very credible, research-based universities and have done it with very small populations. It's not the size that matters, Mr. Speaker. It's the intent and it's the political will to do it. It's also being willing to stand up to academia and say, "We want you here and we want to host you here."

I heard the minister speaking about looking at the needs of our labour market. I would hope that the focus is not solely on the current labour market, but the future of the north and of the Yukon is becoming a source of highly skilled and educated citizens who have the critical thinking skills for lifelong learning, who will be able then to adapt to the changing times and the changing economic opportunities and challenges that we face in the north. Where better to have that kind of research and to have that kind of investment than in the Yukon?

I also pointed out the example that he used of these other smaller circumpolar nations that have invested in having universities in these small countries. I use the word "invest" because education is seen as an investment, Mr. Speaker. It's not solely as an expense. I use the example of one of my nephews who did his master's in industrial design. He did it in Finland — no tuition. He's not Finnish. His grandmother was Finnish but he's not. It doesn't matter. His tuition was free. He gets a highly recognized master's degree in industrial design from a university and from a country that recognizes that education benefits us all. Those countries have taken education as a significant part of the whole of the fabric of their economy and see that part of it. We all know that in order to make a profit, you have to invest something in it, and it's not so far-fetched to suggest that for those students and for us to develop our university in the Yukon, one of the opportunities is to be creative in terms of how we finance it.

The educational opportunities for students in the Yukon are great now, in many ways. I will acknowledge and I'm thankful for the opportunities my daughters had when accessing the Yukon grant and, I think, the academic excellence award — at least one of them. I won't say about the other one. Those are important. I would just hope that we're not getting too narrowly focused as we go out there — that it's not just about what we see as currently out there around the labour market and it's not just getting too narrow about it, but really focusing on the investment or learning, and challenging ourselves to say to the world that the Yukon — when I say the "world", I'm talking about southern Canada in particular, because we know the circumpolar north knows about us and shares a common vision and a common reality and our participation in that international venue over the last almost 20 years.

Particularly the First Nations' participation in that as permanent participants has broadened the exposure of this relatively small jurisdiction in ways that nobody would have anticipated possibly 25 years ago. I don't think we should allow any limitations to the possibilities that are out there. We need to keep our eyes, ears and minds open to the possibilities of the Yukon being the centre of that kind of circumpolar- and Arctic-based education that allows our citizens and our students whom we graduate from that university to be contributing citizens wherever they live in the world — but because they have the critical thinking skills that they developed here in the Yukon.

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** It is a pleasure to rise and speak to this motion put forward by the Member for Watson Lake urging the Government of Yukon to seek public input on changes to the *Students Financial Assistance Act* for fair, equitable and fiscally responsible methods to enhance access to financial assistance for current and future Yukon post-secondary students.

I am very much in agreement that I think it is an appropriate time for us to take a look at this particular act and the programs that fall under it. I am of the opinion that a number of the issues raised by the Minister of Education in her speaking to this motion are issues that indeed should be resolved and should be considered in conducting a review of this nature and should be done.

There are a number of issues that — while I think we will all agree on this motion, I think that there are some aspects to it, based on the comments I have heard from other members, that we may disagree on. While I ultimately expect that this motion will be unanimously supported and passed, I think that perhaps some members from various sides of the House would have different reasons for that.

I heard some interesting comments from both the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Member for Takhini-Kopper King in speaking about the need for increased access to education and a number of issues associated with that. It really got me thinking about my thoughts on those issues and about my experiences with them and how those experiences have coloured my opinions.

First of all, let me say that I, as many Yukon students have, subscribed to the Yukon grant for my post-secondary education. My four-year undergrad at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia was supported and made possible by my subscription to the Yukon grant. I can say with confidence that I would not have been able to attend that university had it not been for the financial support provided by the Yukon grant.

I should note that my decision to go to St. Francis Xavier and study what I studied there was a decision that was not easily arrived at. It was one that took a lot of thought and consideration of how I was going to be able to afford to go to a university on the other side of the country, and how I was going to be able to use the skills that I intended to study and develop at that university in the course of my personal development and career development.

I think that that consideration currently is too often ignored by some students who look to go to universities for those types of education. What I mean by “those types of education” — I did a bachelor of arts with honours in political science, a very stereotypical liberal arts education that has all the risks and benefits associated with a liberal arts education, and then, following that, I attended the University of Northern British Columbia, where I received a master’s degree in political science. Obviously, the Yukon grant only covers five years of university, so my two-year master’s degree was only partially supported by the Yukon grant, but indeed a pretty important part. Especially when those spring months started to arrive toward the end of the school year and money was quite

tight, the Yukon grant was absolutely a necessity for me for those full five years.

The point I wanted to make is that the intent, in my opinion, of the Yukon grant is to provide a levelling effect for Yukon students with other parts of the country. It is, sincerely, more expensive to go to university in southern Canada if you are from the Yukon. That’s an obvious statement of fact, given the geographical location and the commensurate travel costs — but it’s not intended to be more than that. I think it is something that we need in place. I think it is something that is essential and, as I said in my own case, I simply wouldn’t have been able to go to the university I went to were it not for the availability of the program.

However, I think that there has been a bit of a movement in Canada lately — and I have heard it significantly from some of the student unions throughout the country, increasingly loudly, particularly in the last few years — that the governments in Canada, including the federal government, need to take an increased role in reducing tuition or subsidizing tuition throughout the country. That is not a view that I agree with. I think that the Yukon government providing the funding that we do for students to attend university is a sound one, because of the geographical challenges we face, but I don’t agree necessarily with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King — or perhaps the Leader of the Official Opposition — in suggesting that the federal government needs to step in and artificially subsidize tuition throughout the country.

I obviously understand the access-to-education aspects of the debate and the argument, but I respectfully disagree. I think that, over the course of the last few years, we have heard similar arguments made by student unions — even in the case of the St. Francis Xavier student union, a union that I was formally a member of, of course — as well as a number of left-leaning think tanks — in particular, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, as well as others that have advocated on behalf of either free post-secondary education or significantly subsidized post-secondary education by the federal government.

I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition took the opportunity to quote Mr. Saul, so I would also take the opportunity to quote somebody on this. I read an article recently on this issue. It was in September 2014, and it was by Marni Soupcoff, who is an executive director with the Canadian Constitution Foundation. I know that, off mic, the Leader of the Official Opposition is shouting that that’s a right-wing person. I have no doubt about that and, for some reason, I sympathize with her point of view.

I will go ahead and quote Ms. Soupcoff in her article of September 11, 2014, in the *National Post*. She references a recent study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives that indicates that tuition and other compulsory fees have increased significantly over the past few years, and that that particular think-tank estimates that the cost will continue to rise by 13 percent over the next four years. Now, let me quote from her directly:



“The news sounds dire for parents and students, who will now have to save, work and borrow more to make a university degree possible. However, let’s be clear about one thing: The reason the price tag comes as a shock is not because universities are suddenly gouging students. It’s because we’re so used to massive government subsidies and price caps on tuition that we have no idea what the cost of higher education actually is.

“Granted, that distinction comes as little consolation when it comes time for a parent or student to foot the bill. But we mustn’t lose sight of it, because that distinction informs our view of what, if anything, should be done about the higher costs.

“The predictable call is for government to step in — to pay more of the tuition, to crack down on hidden student charges, to get tougher with the price caps. The usual.

“The thing is, though, that the usual hasn’t been working all that well. By artificially lowering the price of university (and by significant amounts), government has created incentives for far more students to attend university than get optimal benefit from a university education.

“Why is a BA worth so little on the job market these days?

“In part it’s because so many people have one; and because these degrees are undertaken with insufficient consideration of whether they are a worthwhile expense. Large price tags block access to university degrees for those who are a good match for them, which is problematic. But it’s a problem that is easier to solve — with targeted merit- and need-based subsidies — than the more systemic problem we have created of devalued degrees and overeducated people.

“If the price students paid for their university tuition were closer to the actual cost of the schooling, it seems highly likely we’d see more students heading from high school to community colleges or learning skilled trades. Instead, community colleges are full of students who spent three or four years in university first, a pleasant diversion before getting down to the learning that will actually carry them into a paying career.

“It’s not that I begrudge learning for learning’s sake, or see no value in a solid liberal arts education. It’s just that those opting to take those routes should be realistic about how much it’s costing before making that decision, as should government. If, for example, \$80,000 (the cost of a four-year university education, according to CCPA) feels like too much of a luxury for a family to spend on learning just for learning’s sake, then maybe in that case it is.

“The silver lining of rising tuition costs is that they could lead to more meaningful and useful university experiences for those who ultimately choose them and make the requisite sacrifices.”

I’ll end my quote of Ms. Soupcoff there.

Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the point I was making. When I undertook to make the decision to go to a liberal arts education and do that schooling that I knew, going into, was going to be very expensive, it was a decision I didn’t take

lightly, and it is a decision that I undertook knowing that I would have to work very hard to afford that.

So what was involved there was me going to university and subscribing to the Yukon grant, which covered, for the most part, my travel to and from Antigonish, Nova Scotia. It also required me to take fairly onerous and fairly difficult summer jobs. I had to work very hard throughout the summers, oftentimes working two or three jobs, in between my school years at StFX. I had full-time jobs here in Whitehorse — the typical 9:00-5:00 jobs, but I would also do other jobs on top. I was a janitor right here in this building at one point. I vacuumed floors and changed garbage cans for a number of summers in the evenings, after a full day of work in another setting. When it came to hay season, I would chuck hay bales with some of the farmers in the Member for Lake Laberge’s riding and add to my penny jar with the money I made doing that.

I did this all, Mr. Speaker, knowing that I was doing it because it was something I wanted to do, and it was a sacrifice I wanted to make for the education I wanted. I wasn’t doing it because I wanted to be something else in my career. I knew that what I wanted to do with my life. It required me to have these skills and that type of knowledge.

I think too often, people — students like myself or students who are younger than me — perhaps consider going to those BA programs, those Liberal Arts programs, not because they want to have those skills or knowledge, but because they don’t know what else to do and they just simply go to learn for learning’s sake, or to go for the social aspects of a Liberal Arts university, which are somewhat worthwhile as well, I should note.

My point here is that students really need to consider what skills they want and what investment they want to make. If it is too easy for students to go to these Liberal Arts schools and get that type of education, then too many of them will be doing it without good cause and for the wrong reasons, and that results in the situation that we have today, which is that a bachelor of arts is somewhat undervalued, given the fact that so many people have a bachelor’s degree without the skills or sincere attention to the knowledge that they need to get that degree.

Part of that is because universities of late, especially those in southern Canada, have had an imperative of having an increased number of students come through their doors, so they’ve lowered the eligibility for university entrance. So more students coming out of high school with lower grades and lower ambition or drive are getting into university, and ultimately succeeding, because they simply have no better idea of what to do than to go to a Liberal Arts university.

Let me turn back to Miss Soupcoff and conclude. She says — and I quote: “The less university education is viewed as a de facto right, and the more it is appreciated as a hugely costly — and potentially hugely worthwhile — investment, the more likely students will be to choose their paths wisely and get their (and their families’ and taxpayers’) money’s worth out of whatever that path happens to be.

“This isn’t just a good thing for individual students. It’s a good thing for the Canadian economy. More authentic supply and demand cues in higher education lead to better matches of supply and demand for training and actual jobs. All of that adds up to fewer skilled worker shortages. And fewer semiotics PhDs working as baristas — at least without having bargained for such an outcome. (As someone with a creative writing BA, I realize that sometimes subsidizing art with beverage prep is part of the plan.)

“If skyrocketing tuition brings our expectations back to Earth about who should attend university, it won’t be an entirely bad thing.”

To conclude there, my point is simply that it’s important that the Yukon government continue to provide the support that it does for students to go outside of the territory and get the education that they need for their lives and their respective careers, but it’s also important that students understand that there is a responsibility incumbent on them to make wise decisions and thoughtful decisions about what they want to do. Cost that is associated with education should be a determinant of what path they choose.

That’s my opinion, and that’s what guided me over my career or my academic career at least as a student and it’s something that I’m very grateful for. Obviously it took me a few years after my university degrees were completed to pay off my debts associated with those degrees, but those were costs that I went into with eyes wide open. I knew that I would be able to incur those costs and work hard to pay them off and ultimately I’m better for it. But I know that path isn’t for everyone and shouldn’t be for everyone and that there are others who should be considering other options other than the one I chose.

Looking at the Canadian economy and looking at the structure of the labour needs of our economy, I would suggest that my path probably isn’t one that needs to be replicated thousands of times over. It’s probably much smaller than that. I think that we need to continue to encourage students to look at a variety of educational pathways, including the skilled trades, including community colleges and including the training that’s available right here in Yukon at the Yukon College.

Mr. Speaker, you’re indicating my time is running short so I will turn my attention now to one of the comments that the Leader of the Official Opposition made about the potential in Canada for an Arctic university, especially with regard to the benefits that are related to the attraction of skilled or highly qualified researchers.

I wanted to note that the developments that have occurred over the past few years with regard to the Research Centre in Yukon at the Yukon College have been incredible and have been right along that very same line. The Research Centre has gone — in a very short period of time — I think in the last two or three years, it’s gone from a handful of researchers to several dozen researchers here in the Yukon doing their work. That’s an incredible development.

The Yukon is increasingly being seen as a place where world-class research about issues that are very relevant and

very important to the Yukon economy and to Yukoners is being conducted. We are no longer simply the subject of that work, but we are conducting it ourselves.

The developments that have occurred at the Yukon Research Centre — in part because of the significant investments made by this government through either the Department of Education, Department of Economic Development, Department of Justice and many others who have partnerships with Yukon College — have led to that strong position that the Yukon Research Centre is in and why it is such a leader throughout the world when it comes to the research that they do there.

I’ll conclude by saying that I do agree that this motion is a good one, that we should be reviewing this particular piece of legislation and the programs that fall under it including the Yukon grant.

I think that the issues raised by the Minister of Education are legitimate ones that need to be considered, and I think that the program should continue in earnest. The significant financial support that we provide to Yukon students to go outside the territory to university should continue. It’s very valuable. I would simply encourage Yukon students to give very thorough consideration as to what path they want to take in their educational career — in particular, their post-secondary education choices.

I would encourage members to join me in supporting this motion. I would like to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing it forward and members for their comments, and I look forward to hearing from others about their thoughts on this particular issue.

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** I wasn’t intending originally to speak on this motion — mostly because I think what you’ll find from my comments is that I have a very different view of student financial assistance and where it should be going than many others do.

I guess the first thing you have to understand is that I had my first brush with the Yukon financial assistance act in 1968, which is maybe a day or two before the previous speaker was born. I came from a family with many children and, unfortunately, I was one of the older ones so, at the time, my parents didn’t have a whole lot of money to support me in my endeavour to go to school. What we found — “we” meaning my older siblings and myself — was that we had to do is help each other. I stayed out of high school — once I graduated, I stayed out of school for a year and worked and sent money off to my older brother who was attending university in British Columbia. Then, when he was completed and I eventually made it back to B.C. and my educational career, I lived with him for a couple of years — gratis, you might say — in exchange, so we did things a little differently and I realize that not everyone is able to do some of the things that we did. But in those days, questions like travel costs were a given. There was no university in the Yukon. There was no place we could go to take post-secondary education. The Yukon Vocational and Technical Training Centre was recently constructed in the Yukon at that time, and we had been encouraged to attend

university. My father was a great proponent of attending university. He worked as a tradesman all his life. In fact, I believe that he had ticket number 001 for his trade here in the Yukon, so he was a great believer in education. He later taught at the college for about 15 years as well.

But, Mr. Speaker, I know that one of the questions that I have — and that I think I will propose it during these deliberations that the department is going out with — is the payment of travel costs. My question has been, for some years now — and previously, Mr. Speaker, I should also come clean that I worked on and off for Yukon College for about 26 years, I believe. When I say “on and off”, I mean I didn’t work those whole 26 years for the college.

I saw a great transition from the Yukon Vocational and Technical Training Centre to the current college. I was a part of that expansion. I was a part of the negotiation of transfer agreements between Yukon College and various universities across the country. I can remember, on behalf of a Yukon College student at the time, negotiating transfer credits with Queen’s University. We made some great contacts during that negotiation. Since then, any Yukon students who attended Queen’s University from the college had a seamless transfer with credits. It was an interesting time.

In the last few years, I wonder why we pay travel costs to students who are taking courses in a university outside of the territory when they could take the courses at Yukon College and not bother with the travel. I realize we also have to look at the social education of leaving the family home here in the territory and attending school Outside. We used to call it “growing up”. It’s now social education — politically correct to the nth degree. We have to weigh those kinds of things.

I know, on behalf of students attending the college during my sojourn there, many times, I said, “Well, why would a student at Yukon College not receive the exact same funding that a student attending UBC received?” And they didn’t. Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, it was because they were not eligible for travel costs because they came from Whitehorse. If they came in from a rural community, they were eligible for a very small amount of travel costs.

At the time, I thought that was extremely unfair. It’s something that we have to make up our minds about. We can’t do one or the other. We can’t say on one hand that because you attend the University of Alberta or a university in Nova Scotia, in Antigonish, that you get more money than you do if you attend the exact same program here at Yukon College. We just can’t continue to do that. That’s one of the things that I would really like to see changed.

During my time here with the college, I found that more and more of students were older students. Some were coming back to school after an absence. Some had realized that education was essential in their line of work so they wished to continue their education, and others simply couldn’t afford to leave the territory for education and they were non-traditional students. They were students who either had a family, they had a full-time job — there were a number of barriers to continuing their education. So, Mr. Speaker, one of the things I also became a strong advocate for is funding for students

who are attending college on a part-time basis, who are attempting to work at courses on-line. In fact, I can remember any number of times that I negotiated with the Department of Education, successfully most of the time — because I have to tell you the Department of Education was wonderful during this time phase as well. We had students attending Yukon College who could not take a full-time course load at the college; therefore, they weren’t eligible for financial assistance. But if we could get them into an on-line course, they then had a full-time course load and were eligible for financial assistance.

So any number of times on behalf of those students, I would write letters to the department justifying the fact that even though they were only taking two Yukon College courses, they were a full-time student because of the fact that they were taking an on-line course, or there were other things occurring that would constitute full-time status. I have to tell you that one of the other things that occurred during that time frame is that the department took a look at what full-time status meant. There were some parameters shifted in that way too. There have been a number of things over the years done that I think were very good for students, but there are still a number of things that we have to do.

At the present time, all we are talking about is funding for post-secondary education and yet, in the *Students Financial Assistance Act*, if you look at the very end, it says in regulation that funding may be providing for a training allowance for Yukon College students. The training allowance always was a mixed blessing to me and to students at the college. It said in one way that the training allowance had to be paid to you every two weeks because you weren’t trustworthy to get all the money upfront and then attend a full semester at the college. It said in another way that we didn’t really value you as much as if you were taking true post-secondary education. Yet, in our own system at the college, a person with a journeyman ticket, red seal, who is instructing in programs at the college, was given the same status as a person with a master’s degree. So in our own college, we valued the trades education and we valued the time that they put in, but with our students we didn’t appear to. I realize that at this time that it wasn’t the department’s fault. They were just following what the legislation said, but to me this something that must be looked at and we should be changing it at the same time we’re changing the grant funding for post-secondary education.

The other reason I say that is I like to look at these programs and equate apples to apples and oranges to oranges. At the present time we fund a person to take three courses as a full-time student. That means that each of those three courses may be 15 hours in length. That means that they have to attend only those three courses. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I lost my train of thought there for awhile. They only attend for three courses and they are considered full time. A trades student in a skilled trades program was expected to attend school for at least — in those days — six hours a day. Yet, you received the same funding for an extended time frame. In other words, if you attended university courses, you only went for the time

frame that you were required to go for one semester. A trades student would often attend an extra month each semester in order to complete his or her program in a single year. To me, that was hardly fair as well. I felt that if a student in the trades program attended double the hours in a semester that a university student had to, to be considered a full-time student, then they should be adequately compensated for that.

When you were a full-time post-secondary university student taking three courses, you could work part time quite easily without any problems at all. If you were a full-time trades student, attending school for six hours a day, then it was extremely difficult to work on a part-time basis. So you didn't have the options that many post-secondary students had.

This is also something that I would really like to see addressed. It's interesting that we have 980 post-secondary students receiving financial support this year. In the year I graduated and applied, I think 27 of us from my graduating class received financial assistance. It's an interesting change. What's really important — and I'm really happy to hear that people will probably be supporting this motion, because the intent is to enhance access to future students. That's so critical. Education — after spending all the time I did at the college and seeing what a tremendous difference it made in students' lives, I can't tell you how important it is to many students.

I don't mean only post-secondary training. We offered a number of short courses and a number of trades programs, as you know, that were also instrumental in improving the lives of Yukon students, or Yukon residents. I think that's what we can't lose sight of here, that we're not only talking about those students who are graduating from our high schools around the territory, who are going out to a university. We're talking about other Yukoners here who are often lost because they aren't taking full-time studies or they aren't taking post-secondary education.

I have a number of other questions that I'll probably ask as well, but I think it's so important to get Yukoners involved in determining what they see happening, in terms of educational funding, that will be available to them and their children in the future. I have grandsons coming up now and I would just love to see them go to university as well.

As my young friend back here said, I hope that they don't go just because it's getting them out of home and they're going to go into a program that has limited value in today's world — because there are a lot of them out there. Each time I see students going into a program — I know, at the college, I did a lot of student counselling as well, and I would always try to ask a student what they hoped to do as a result of this particular education path they were on.

I don't know what kind of influence I had, Mr. Speaker, on many of the students. I like to think that I had a good influence on a lot of them, but that's not always true.

I hope that we will all support this. I think it's a well-intentioned motion. I thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing it forward. I think it will only do us good in the long run.

I was going to make mention of the Yukon research centre because I was there when it started. I saw it in its infancy and I know that, since that Yukon research centre opened, about \$10.8 million has been invested in that research centre by the Government of Yukon. I think that it's an absolutely wonderful investment. I just spent some time up there just a very short while ago and toured the research centre with a number of people who have come to the Yukon — a number of people who are Yukoners who have now obtained jobs there or are doing research there — and they could say nothing but good about the research centre — especially the Yukoners working there who are utilizing the skills they learned Outside, probably with the assistance of the Yukon grant.

I hope that funding continues. I understand from the Minister of Education that they've recently signed a new agreement for the next five years for about \$6 million. That \$6 million comes from the Department of Education, but that's not the only investment in that research centre. I know other departments also have invested heavily in the research centre and I look forward to seeing it continue and possibly even grow.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I will end my address. Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** Does any other member wish to be heard?  
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. 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. Moorcroft:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 13 yea, nil nay.

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

*Motion No. 828 agreed to*

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:22 p.m.*

**The following Sessional Paper was filed on December 10, 2014:**

33-1-135

*Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees Thirteenth Report*  
(December 10, 2014) (Hassard)

**Written notice was given of the following motions on December 10, 2014:**

Motion No. 835

Re: appointment of Al Hubley to the Yukon Human Rights Commission effective December 15, 2014  
(Nixon)

Motion No. 836

Re: appointment of Michael Dougherty, Michael Riseborough and Jean-Sébastien Blais as members of the Yukon Human Rights panel of adjudicators effective December 15, 2014 (Nixon)