



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

---

Number 246

1st Session

33rd Legislature

---

## HANSARD

Wednesday, December 9, 2015 — 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**

## CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
<b>Hon. Darrell Pasloski</b>	Mountainview	<b>Premier</b> Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
<b>Hon. Elaine Taylor</b>	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
<b>Hon. Brad Cathers</b>	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
<b>Hon. Doug Graham</b>	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
<b>Hon. Scott Kent</b>	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
<b>Hon. Currie Dixon</b>	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
<b>Hon. Wade Istchenko</b>	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
<b>Hon. Mike Nixon</b>	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
<b>Hon. Stacey Hassard</b>	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

## GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

### Yukon Party

<b>Darius Elias</b>	Government House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin
<b>Hon. David Laxton</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Patti McLeod</b>	Watson Lake

## OPPOSITION MEMBERS

### New Democratic Party

<b>Elizabeth Hanson</b>	Leader of the Official Opposition Whitehorse Centre
<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
---------------------	---------------------------------------

## LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Wednesday, December 9, 2015 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of non-profit organizations that support Yukoners

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of all members to ask my colleagues during this holiday season of giving to join me in recognizing the many organizations, both within our borders and without, that provide both health and social supports to Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, I had the honour and the pleasure last weekend of participating in the Easter Seals telethon in Vancouver as the Minister of Health and as a member of the Air North, Yukon's airline, telephone team. Being part of that event and seeing first-hand how hard the organization works to raise funds to support children and families requiring hospitalization, and hearing the stories of the children and the families — their trials and successes — was truly humbling.

Here we had a strong core of dedicated volunteers who have made it their mission to ensure there was enough money to make sure that the services are there when needed, and these services are needed and used by many Yukon families each year. This is only one organization, Mr. Speaker.

Here at home, board members and volunteers donate hundreds of hours to help the Whitehorse Food Bank provide emergency food to people. From stocking shelves to food drives to even growing food, volunteers keep the doors open — 700 hours of volunteer time each month indeed. Individuals and businesses support the food bank throughout the year, but it is at Christmastime that we all think about those who are less fortunate than ourselves.

The Salvation Army kettle campaign is another seasonal reminder of how there are those in the community who need our help. Many volunteers ring the bells over the holiday season to raise funds that stay here to support Yukon's less fortunate, and I know the Minister of Tourism and Culture has been out already with that organization and will be out again.

Mr. Speaker, the list is almost endless.

Kin Canada, formerly the Kinettes, is the organization that provides Christmas for families through Share the Spirit. Hundreds of people will donate money and gifts to the organization for distribution to families who otherwise would not have Christmas.

Hospice Yukon supports families through dying and grieving throughout the year but, during the Christmas season

through its Lights of Life campaign, invites individuals to honour and remember loved ones who have died.

There is something about this time of year that touches all of us and makes us stop and think about these organizations filled with dedicated people who work so tirelessly for others.

Many of these organizations, as a government, we support financially, but they still attract passionate and caring volunteers to their doors: Autism Yukon, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon, Teegatha'Oh Zheh, Helping Hands, Challenge-Disability Resource Group, the Child Development Centre, Yukon Food For Learning, Run for Mom, Ride for Dad, the MS Society — and the list goes on and on and on. In fact, I could be here all afternoon listing the non-profit organizations that serve our citizens — their staff, their volunteers and their community friends.

During the season of giving, we all need to take a moment and give thanks for these remarkable people and these amazing organizations. If you get the chance, whether it is during the holiday season or not, thank them for their service.

**Speaker:** Introduction of visitors.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to the *Public Service Labour Relations Act*, I have for tabling the *Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board Annual Report 2014-2015*; and, pursuant to the *Education Labour Relations Act*, I have for tabling the *Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board Annual Report 2014-2015*.

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

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present the 16<sup>th</sup> annual report of the Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Fund, which is prepared by the Board of Trustees in accordance with section 8 of the *Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Act* for the year ending March 31, 2015.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

## PETITIONS

### Petition No. 23

**Mr. Barr:** I have for presentation a petition. This petition is signed by over 500 people, in addition to 150 who signed it online. I might add that more signatures are coming in each day.

The petition of the undersigned shows that Yukon already recognizes Discovery Day, marking the beginning of Yukon's modern history as a statutory holiday, and National Aboriginal Day honours the history and the culture of the ancestors of

approximately one in four aboriginal Yukoners who inhabited Yukon's land prior to the gold rush, as well as the central role that they continue to play in our communities. With only four territorial holidays, compared to a national high of seven, recognizing National Aboriginal Day as such would allow us to join the Northwest Territories in doing so, without having too many territorial holidays. This initiative is supported by the majority the chiefs of Yukon's First Nations. Therefore the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Yukon to make National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday in Yukon.

**Speaker:** Are there any further petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

**Mr. Elias:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to consult with aboriginal peoples, the provinces and territories about declaring National Aboriginal Day, celebrated each year on June 21, a statutory holiday in Canada so that it can be celebrated as such beginning in 2016.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work toward declaring a statutory holiday in Yukon that recognizes and acknowledges the valuable contributions of aboriginal peoples to the healthy development of Yukon communities, Yukon and Canada by:

(1) working with the Government of Canada and their commitment to implementing all of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action, specifically call to action 80;

(2) working with Yukon First Nations on the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action and choosing a day to celebrate their distinct heritage, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs; and

(3) working with all Yukon stakeholders to ensure that public consultations are meaningful and inclusive, that the public is engaged and that their contributions inform and help shape the manner in which this new holiday is recognized.

**Ms. Stick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to review and update medical travel subsidies to respond to the increased costs brought on by 10 years of inflation since these were last reviewed in 2006.

**Mr. Barr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Carcross community to:

(a) remove the berms on the sides of the village's only one-way street; and

(b) add a traffic lane so that vehicles can travel in both directions.

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

This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: First Nations hire in government

**Mr. Tredger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when the original *Education Act* was being discussed — and in many studies and reports since — there was agreement among all parties — the Department of Education, First Nation governments, the Council of Yukon First Nations — that the number of First Nation teachers in Yukon public schools should be proportionate to the ratio of First Nation people in the Yukon. Currently, about one in four Yukoners identify as First Nation, Métis or Inuit. While initial efforts boosted the ratio of First Nation teachers from two to about 10 percent, I am concerned that recently that number seems to have stagnated.

What are the Department of Education's latest figures on the number of Yukon First Nation teachers in Yukon as a percentage of our total teaching staff?

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question.

Mr. Speaker, just recently — in the last few years — there was a new staffing protocol established at the Department of Education giving First Nation persons a priority in some areas — First Nation applicants for teaching positions priority in some areas. As members know as well, many years ago, government established the Yukon Native Teacher Education program in an attempt to provide trained professionals to teach in our schools.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, having seen the number of wonderful First Nation students who graduated from the YNTEP program, I also found that many of them decided not to teach in the schools because, with a degree — albeit in education — they were more than qualified to enter the workforce in any number of other areas and so chose not to enter the teaching workforce and instead were employed in other areas.

So Mr. Speaker, we make every effort on an ongoing basis to make sure that more aboriginal people are employed in our schools, but unfortunately we can't force these graduates to come to the Education department.

**Mr. Tredger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A ratio of First Nation teachers lower than that of Yukon society is a sign that this government needs to be doing more to get First Nation teachers into Yukon classrooms. The government staffing protocols do make allowances for preferential hiring that begin to address this issue. As there aren't enough Yukon First Nation teachers in the school system, qualified Yukon First Nation teachers are given preference in their traditional territory. However the ratio of First Nation to non-First Nation teachers has remained the same for several years now.

Has the government analyzed why their staffing protocols are not working while Yukon First Nations continue to be underrepresented in our classrooms?

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** I can't refer to any specific report where we analyzed the difficulty but we're making every effort to bring more First Nation people and teachers into the system. We are also attempting to reduce the gap between First Nation and non-First Nation students within the school system itself through the rural equity action plan and through any number of programs that we're running through the Department of Education. We're also providing mentoring opportunities to First Nation students and First Nation graduates of the YNTEP program on an ongoing basis to try to convince them that working in the education system and working in the school system is a valuable and extremely worthwhile occupation.

As I said before though, there is nothing we can do to force these people to come. We will continue mentoring, we'll continue offering programs and we'll continue the staffing protocol that provides First Nation people with priority hiring — especially in our rural schools, because we find that is even more important perhaps because we need these role models in the rural schools and we need these role models in the education system throughout —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Tredger:** I thank the minister for his answer.

Mr. Speaker, one possible remedy to this problem is the Yukon Native Teacher Education program. It was originally intended to support the recruitment and training of Yukon First Nation people. The program has since expanded its eligibility requirements so that non-Yukon First Nations and non-First Nation people could apply to YNTEP. This change did strengthen the program, yet the original goal reflecting our territory's diversity by increasing the number of Yukon First Nation teachers is stagnating.

Mr. Speaker, does the government know what percentage of YNTEP graduates are finding teaching work in Yukon and what is the government doing to more effectively recruit, train, hire and support First Nation teachers?

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** Mr. Speaker, a report was done a few years ago on the YNTEP program at Yukon College and that report did agree that the YNTEP was a very valuable program to the territory; that it met the requirements of teacher education in the territory and that the program was very appropriate for the territory.

Unfortunately there were not enough people being recruited into the program to be able to maintain adequate numbers and provide a real learning experience for all of the students. That's one of the reasons that the program was opened up, but it was also opened up to non-First Nation people in an attempt to impart some of the First Nation learning and in an attempt to provide that education to non-First Nation people so that, if they went into the school system, they would be much more valuable.

Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to work with the YTA, with the First Nations Education Commission, FNEC, and we'll continue to work with school councils across the territory to

increase the number of First Nation teachers within our school system.

#### **Question re: Takhini Haven group home**

**Ms. Stick:** Over the last several years, my colleagues and I have raised concerns about the location of Takhini Haven, right next to Whitehorse Correctional Centre, partially encircled by a 10-foot-high barbed wire fence. There is not a single prisoner at Takhini Haven. The whole purpose of the facility is to provide assistance and supports to individuals living with disabilities, and the staff do a great job, yet the location of Takhini Haven makes this home feel like jail.

Mr. Speaker, justice land is not a community. The residents of Takhini Haven don't have neighbours. It's time to find another home for these residents within an appropriate neighbourhood and community. In December 2014, the minister said his department was looking at alternatives for Takhini Haven.

Mr. Speaker, what alternatives have been considered and when will Takhini Haven be moved to a real community setting?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In addressing the member opposite, certainly we recognize the valuable relationship that we have with Challenge Disability Resource Group in providing services at the Takhini Haven group home located up near the jail. As the member is well aware, a number of those individuals living there are Yukon Review Board clients or perhaps individuals who need a higher level of support. Certainly Takhini Haven offers a good option for those individuals who are receiving or looking for support. A family I know — their son just moved in there — is very happy that he has a safe environment with good, caring staff who are able to provide him with support on a daily basis.

Again, in addressing the member opposite, we value the relationship with Challenge Disability Resource Group in providing the service at Takhini Haven group home. We'll continue on with that working relationship with Takhini and certainly look forward to the services they provide to the individuals.

As I indicated, Takhini Haven does offer another option. That is not the only option, but it is an option for either people with severe disabilities or Yukon Review Board clients. We look forward to working with them.

**Ms. Stick:** Mr. Speaker, these individuals are still not criminals. For years this issue has been passed back and forth between ministers, never seeming to move forward, and certainly never resulting in any concrete actions. When I asked the minister about moving Takhini Haven last month, he said: "I haven't had those discussions with Challenge.... Again, I am going to defer the fence issue to either the Minister of Justice or the Minister of Highways and Public Works." The fact is, these ministers could easily work together to come to a solution, but they have not and it does not look like they will.

Will the ministers commit to sitting down with the appropriate representatives, including the residents, to take the

long-awaited step of giving the residents of Takhini Haven a home with real neighbourhoods and a real sense of community?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In addressing the member opposite — as I indicated in my first response, we value the working relationship that we have with Challenge-Disability Resource Group, which provides the service at Takhini Haven. In fact, I was just at the Challenge Disability Resource Group luncheon today at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre and spoke with a number of people who work there. I sat at a table with the individual I was speaking about earlier who lives there. Certainly, that family is very appreciative of the supports that this young fellow has at the Takhini Haven group home. We will continue working with our stakeholders. We are always looking at the services that we provide or that we fund — non-profit organizations — and we will continue on with that good work. As I indicated earlier, the facility — the building on the grounds of the correctional facility — is just another option. There are individuals who are staying there who are Yukon Review Board clients who perhaps need that level of support, but those decisions are not made out of my office — but we certainly encourage and support the people who do make those decisions. They are tough decisions to make.

#### **Question re: Hydroelectric dam project**

**Mr. Tredger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has given Yukon Development Corporation \$2 million to make the business case for a megahydro project. Recently, YDC presented the shortlist of megadam projects, and it includes Fraser Falls and Granite Canyon, but at the next generation hydro workshop 2, YDC heard — and I quote: “We are saying no, absolutely, no to Fraser Falls. We did consultations... in 2010 on Fraser Falls...The answer was absolutely no.” Regarding Granite Canyon, YDC was told — and again I quote: “... Granite Canyon, the needle, it is beautiful and mother nature gifted it to us. Our ancestors told us to stand strong and protect this place.”

It sounds like the government does not have consent for a megadam at either Fraser Falls or Granite Canyon. Why are they still on the short list?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we see the Member for Mayo-Tatchun either does not understand what’s being talked about or is choosing to make statements that don’t line up with the facts in the House.

In fact, Yukon Development Corporation was tasked to do a technical review of projects. They started out with roughly 200 sites. They have narrowed it down on the basis of technical feasibility and have noted that additional work, including the question of First Nation opinion on projects and public opinion, still needs to be considered, but they have been doing a technical evaluation report. Until they have completed that and reported out, they are not in a position to drop any sites off for reasons other than the technical evaluation.

I also can’t pass up the opportunity to point out the member’s idea of what a megadam is seems quite strange. These projects are certainly not megadams.

Our focus is on doing the work and certainly we will consider as part of this planning process — as part of trying to reach a path that is mutually agreeable to Yukon government, to Yukon First Nations and to Yukoners. Our attempt is to work together, but we certainly appreciate the good work being done by Yukon Development Corporation to look at the technical feasibility as the first step in this process.

**Mr. Tredger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yukon First Nations have already suffered negative impacts of dams on Yukon’s rivers. Important stories were shared by people from Aishihik, Mayo and Carcross at the hydro alternatives workshop this fall. We heard about the loss of fish camps; we learned of many times when studies reported there were no fish in certain creeks that people do indeed fish in at the right time of year. It turns out the studies were done at the wrong time of year. We urge the government to respect First Nation consent and traditional knowledge now, not later in the process.

Does the government plan to proceed with a next generation hydroelectric project on traditional territory without the affected First Nations’ consent?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I’m not sure if the member was not present for my comments opening up the workshop, but if the member did not catch them, I think there’s a videotape of that. The member will see that in fact I emphasized in my opening remarks at the Yukon Development Corporation’s workshop our desire to work in partnership with First Nations to find a path that is mutually agreeable and provides the opportunity for partnership between the Yukon government and one or more First Nations. I also emphasized the fact that it is our strong desire to come up with a path forward for Yukon’s energy future that addresses the needs of future generations and also is something that is supported by not only the Yukon government and Yukon First Nation governments, but also Yukon citizens.

The Yukon Development Corporation is doing the necessary technical work. They will report following that and, after that, the report will be presented to Cabinet for determination about what the next steps in this important planning process, which is aimed at determining options to meet the needs of future generations of Yukoners. We are doing that planning work, because without doing that planning work, none of us are in a position to make informed decisions about Yukon’s energy future and we want all Yukoners to be in a position to make informed decisions about our energy future.

**Mr. Tredger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An agreement in principle should be in place before proceeding further. If we know now that some of these projects are a no-go, we should stop wasting money on them. The lack of free, prior and informed consent for megadams should point this government to study other viable options. A portfolio of smaller, diverse renewable energies, including pump storage

and thermal backup capacity, has many advantages. It is a scalable approach built to meet demand; a pay-as-we-go, rapidly advancing technology that is proven and cost-effective. Yukon should build capacity in the energies of the future.

Will the government broaden its directive to YDC to include scenarios of diverse renewables to meet Yukon's future energy needs?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I would have to remind the member of the fact that there are two parts to the work that is being done. Yukon Energy Corporation, as it is mandated and required to do by the Yukon Utilities Board, has its 20-year resource plan, which is currently looking at a wide range of options for the next 20 years. These include small-scale renewables; they include wind; they include hydro; and they include fossil fuels. They are comparing those options and will present that to the Yukon Utilities Board who is their regulator.

The Yukon Development Corporation is focused on the long term. We are focused on identifying energy projects that meet the needs of Yukoners for generations to come. As I indicated in my previous response, it is our strong desire to come up with a path forward that we can proceed with in partnership with Yukon First Nations to find a path that will be supported by most Yukoners as being a right, responsible choice to invest in Yukon's future.

Again, all of the projects that are being looked at, contrary to the member's assertions, are certainly not megadams. We do need to do that long-term planning work because if the planning work is never begun, the 10 years or more that it takes to plan a hydro site has to start at some point. That is the work that is being done by the Yukon Development Corporation; they will be in here in the House on Monday afternoon to answer more detailed questions from the member.

#### **Question re: Hydroelectric dam project**

**Ms. White:** The World Conservation Society issued a report about the impacts of hydroelectric dams on fish and fish habitat in Yukon. Here is the punchline of the report — and I quote: "... scientific knowledge of Yukon fish species is very limited. We lack information on distributions, population ranges, population sizes and high-value habitats for most fish species..."

The study notes environmental impacts and risks will be assessed after a project site is chosen — and I quote again: "Such an approach will likely be too little, too late."

Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Environment think "too little, too late" is good enough for Yukon's fish populations and their habitats?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** The assertions brought forward by the agency that made that report are quite simply wrong. In fact, the approach that is being taken by both Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation is based on an approach where once sites are chosen for further exploration work, there would have to be detailed work done on the potential environmental impacts, including the effect

on fish and a determination of whether those potential effects can be sufficiently mitigated. That is something they would be required to do as part of the YESAA process and they would be required to do it to the satisfaction not only of the Yukon government but the Yukon Water Board before they would be given a permit to actually build anything.

The agency the member is quoting is simply misinformed about the Yukon's process and doesn't understand the high standard we set here in the territory.

**Ms. White:** It's interesting that the minister doesn't seem to know that they're speaking of the information that we already have on fish and fish habitats in Yukon.

Each Yukon dam built to date has destroyed fish camps, and that's the fallout from how things were done in the past. Yukon has already lost natural capital that we never even knew existed. I would like to think we won't repeat the mistakes of the past. It is valuable to learn the distributions, population sizes and high-value habitats for all of Yukon's fish species. Science-based and traditional knowledge are essential for sustainable ecosystem management for future generations. There is no downside to gathering information to be effective stewards of the environment.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Environment immediately implement a plan to gather adequate data about Yukon's fish and their habitats so they can be protected for the benefit of future generations?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I would reiterate to the member that I appreciate her concern about fish. That is a concern that we share and, prior to any project proceeding, baseline data collection and assessment of the potential effects on fish and wildlife would be part of the permitting process and Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation — as with any entity here in the territory — would be required to go through the YESAA process. They would also be required — because it affects water — to go through the Yukon Water Board as well, in addition to receiving approval from the Yukon government.

So the detailed baseline data collection related to any specific project would be absolutely required before a project would get its permit.

That would include — in that specific situation — doing sufficiently detailed work to understand fish populations in the area and the potential effects and potential mitigation related to any project proceeding forward.

I would remind the member that she herself, in this Assembly — earlier this Sitting, tabled a motion urging the government to shift our energy dependence away from fossil fuels. Mr. Speaker, if we're doing that, we do need to look at options including hydro, and that requires doing the planning work that leads up to detailed assessments of any specific project.

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are not about whether the Yukon gets a megadam. My question is about getting the knowledge we need to be good environmental stewards. My questions are about fish and their habitat — something I would have thought the Minister of Environment would like to weigh in on.

Mr. Speaker, this government seems to be following a decision-based, evidence-making approach to development. A scientific approach recognizes that — and I quote again from the Wildlife Conservation Society report: “Studies need to be carried out over a long enough time frame to capture the full range of natural variation in these ecosystems. No typical environmental assessment of a development project, such as those that have been prepared for the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB), will meet this requirement or be able to fill these gaps.” Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of the Environment direct adequate resources to collect the scientific and traditional knowledge needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of Yukon’s fish and their habitats?

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I do thank the member opposite for the question and the opportunity to answer.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment is constantly gathering baseline data when it comes to fish, lakes, and river systems. We work with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans gathering this information on a regular basis and we make it public. We’re tuned to it. The previous answer by my fellow colleague explained, when it comes to major hydro projects, the different stuff that we do. The Department of Environment is constantly doing this work.

#### **Question re: Campground development**

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Mr. Speaker, later this afternoon the Legislative Assembly will be debating an NDP motion to improve camping opportunities for persons with disabilities, and tomorrow, Yukon will be observing Human Rights Day.

Yukon recognizes the UN *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* — a convention that strives to eliminate barriers and end discrimination against persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, Yukon campgrounds continue to contain barriers to persons with disabilities, which in many cases prevent them from experiencing Yukon’s nature.

Mr. Speaker, does the government support the NDP’s motion to develop accessible camping opportunities for persons with disabilities in Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our Yukon Parks branch has worked toward removing barriers for persons with disabilities for many, many years to make campground facilities more universally accessible. Universal access does not mean making all areas 100-percent accessible to everyone at all times; however, it does mean that the principles of universal design should be incorporated where practical and possible so that the people with disabilities can participate in the same programs and activities as those without disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon campgrounds and our parks have been working on this and we’ll continue to work on this.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** It’s great to hear that this government is working toward this measure and I will hope that they will be voting for our motion today. Has the use of principles of uniform design done anything to ensure that there is a single accessible campground in the Yukon? Persons with

disabilities have waited a long time to have fair access to campgrounds. The minister’s answer was encouraging, but initiatives like this often roll out in a piecemeal approach and people are left waiting. If the political will is there, there are changes that can be made relatively quickly so that persons with disabilities don’t have to wait any longer for their chance to enjoy Yukon campgrounds.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister commit to a firm timeline for when this project will be rolled out and tell us when persons with disabilities can expect to see accessible sites in Yukon’s campgrounds?

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Right now we do have accessible sites for people with disabilities. We know that there are many types of barriers that people can experience when visiting our campgrounds and parks. You know, there’s rough terrain — and we’ve been in some of our beautiful parks, Mr. Speaker. As our knowledge and design methods and techniques evolve, so does our way of addressing them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I do look forward to debating the motion put forward by the NDP later in this House today and I’m sure there will be great debate and there will be a lot of answers and questions.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Mr. Speaker, I thought Question Period was also for getting answers.

Adapting campgrounds for persons with disabilities does require work. Upgrades are needed like adding ramps and expanding the size of outdoor toilets, building an accessible ramp up to campground shelters and ensuring the ground is hard-packed leading up to the ramp. This government has announced funding to upgrade several campgrounds and is building a new one outside Carcross, and those could incorporate accessibility features.

Mr. Speaker, will the government incorporate accessible campground features into its plans to build new sites and upgrades at Conrad, Marsh Lake, Wolf Creek and Teslin campgrounds?

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do thank the member opposite for the question. I do want to thank the great staff at our Yukon parks for providing barrier-free outhouses for the last decade or so. Over that time, an effort has been made to at least one barrier-free outhouse in each Yukon campground, Mr. Speaker. There are barrier-free outhouses that are built in 32 of 52 campgrounds and recreational sites. Ramps have been installed at kitchen shelters throughout the system of campgrounds.

Like I said earlier, Mr. Speaker — I answered the member’s question. We have already done a lot of this stuff and we’re going to continue as we move forward with better technologies and working with our key stakeholders — those users of the campgrounds — having discussions with them, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to debate in the House today on this motion.



**Question re: Whitehorse Correctional Centre lockdown policy**

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Justice for arranging a tour of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre for the opposition. Although the new facility represents a huge capital infrastructure investment, it does not seem to mesh with the goals of a rehabilitative approach to corrections that were envisioned in the 2009 *Corrections Act*. This \$75-million jail design is much more similar to a high-security federal penitentiary than a community jail. Corrections officials said that prisoners are locked down in the cells overnight and are then able to move about in their units during the daytime except for four 20-minute periods and whenever a lockdown is underway for safety or for searches.

Mr. Speaker, what is the policy on lockdown at Whitehorse Correctional Centre? Are there any guidelines on the use of lockdown relating to how long and how frequently units are locked down?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have to disagree with the member with some of her conclusions regarding the design of the facility. Having been through there and looked at it, I believe that the facility represents a dramatic improvement over the former Whitehorse Correctional Centre in terms of its layout and its opportunities for inmates to access programs — and also the environment within there, including the lighting, is leaps and bounds better than in the previous Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

As far as rehabilitative program goes — as I have noted on a number of occasions in this House, we did, with the *Corrections Act*, raise the bar on rehabilitative programming. Staff did an excellent job of that, but we recognize there is more work to be done.

As far as the member's specific questions regarding lockdown, I know that they attempt to minimize the use of lockdowns. As far as whether there is a more detailed or more specific policy than that general statement of intent — I will have to look into that before I can answer that question for the member opposite.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister and I disagree. The government chose an institutional design that didn't include any form of a healing lodge, which would support a more rehabilitative approach to corrections. There have been reports that lockdown became the norm for a significant period of time in some of the units and I have raised this concern with the minister. WCC is for low-risk offenders with a sentence of less than two years. They will be returning to their communities and it is the government's job to protect the public by increasing the likelihood of full rehabilitation.

Mr. Speaker, how is the minister supporting correctional staff to practice rehabilitative focused interventions rather than relying on lockdowns?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** As the member noted she did raise the issue with me specifically based on complaints she heard of lockdowns in, I believe, E unit. The unit in question is one

that is the protective custody unit and because of the specific mix of prisoners and some conflict that had occurred between them, there was an increased amount of lockdown to prevent conflicts between two rival groups. Staff also did advise me that both groups have been made aware that should behaviour improve and they are not in a position where staff believes conflict would occur, they would not be forced to use lockdown.

Again, the use of lockdown is done at the discretion of staff and managers within Whitehorse Correctional Centre. I don't make those decisions or determination and, in fact, unless I receive a specific question, I'm not informed of when lockdowns are or are not occurring.

We recognize that the new Whitehorse Correctional Centre was designed with an attempt to improve programming. I do disagree with the member as far as the outcome of that. I would hope that the member would at least agree that the new facility is much, much better than the old Whitehorse Correctional Centre was in terms of both the units it has for inmates and the ability to offer programming in a safe and secure manner.

Again, we recognize in the area of rehabilitation that while great work has been done there is more to do and look forward to continuing to support staff in that endeavour.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition recognizes and commends the corrections officers for the difficult work they do no matter how often the government avoids answering questions about management practices at Whitehorse Correctional Centre. We recognize that often the use of practices like lockdown and separate confinement are used as a last resort when all other options have been exhausted.

I would point to the fact that on one occasion in 2014 an inmate spent 81 days in a row in separate confinement, which shows that Yukon corrections may be facing a capacity issue — whether it's training, resources or infrastructure based.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister acknowledge that in certain cases, capacity issues within WCC are forcing corrections officers to rely on management tools like lockdown and separate confinement?

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** I'm not going to comment in detail about any specific inmate situations, but I do remind the member that the example she's citing is also an inmate for whom the Crown applied to the court for dangerous offender status, so it's certainly not a run-of-the-mill, well-behaved prisoner who the member is referring to. She can refer to the comments that Justice Luther made in his sentencing of that individual in the summer.

I would also note that in the design and the implementation of the facility, the Auditor General, in the report on Yukon's correctional system, effectively gave staff a gold star for the construction and management of that facility. We very much appreciate their acknowledgement of that. Again, much work has been done in raising the bar in rehabilitative programming within the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. We recognize that there is room for continued improvement, but I do have to remind the member

of what dramatic improvement has been made in the standard of rehabilitative programming since the NDP were in power and she was the Minister of Justice.

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

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the indulgence of all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming to the gallery a very well-respected elder from the Teslin Tlingit Council and an amazing Yukoner, Ms. Pearl Keenan.

*Applause*

**Mr. Barr:** I would also like to ask the House to welcome two former colleagues. Mr. Tom Amson is a great volunteer and has worked many years in the area of addictions and group homes. He is an all-round great Yukoner, and he is quite a golfer too. Also welcome Mr. Roger Ellis, who I had the pleasure of working with over at CAIRS for many years. He is a person who never stops working for the betterment of the Yukon. He is a stick gambler and he has inspired so many youth. He is now back at CAIRS.

I would like to acknowledge those folks in the House today.

*Applause*

### OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

#### MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

##### Motion No. 1039

**Clerk:** Motion No. 1039, standing in the name of Mr. Barr.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to declare National Aboriginal Day, celebrated each year on June 21, a statutory holiday in Yukon so that it can be celebrated as such beginning in 2016.

**Mr. Barr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say that it is an honour to be able to stand here today. I welcome those who have come in the gallery to witness this motion and the debate that we will have as we go forward this afternoon. It is not something that hasn't been brought up over the years by many Yukoners — First Nations and non-First Nations. As a matter of fact, when this came forward as something that we would look at bringing forward in the House, it was often said that: "Well, I already thought that it was a statutory holiday. Why shouldn't it be done in Canada? We always thought that it was."

I would like to start off with some remarks that would help outline the reasons why we think this is a good thing, not

only for Yukon, but as a leading example for the rest of Canada.

National Aboriginal Day, June 21, is an official day of celebration to recognize and honour the valuable contributions to Canadian society by Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Unlike Discovery Day, when we celebrate Yukon's gold rush history, National Aboriginal Day is not a paid statutory holiday in the Yukon. As it stands, the Northwest Territories is the only jurisdiction in Canada that recognizes National Aboriginal Day as a paid statutory holiday. On June 21, the NWT honours its Dene, Métis and Inuvialuit people and acknowledges their values, traditions, languages and cultures.

I believe that it is time for Yukon to recognize National Aboriginal Day by making it a paid statutory holiday, and there are a number of good reasons to do so. I have taken this proposal to the chiefs of all 14 First Nations, the Yukon Métis Nation, Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations, and the Regional Chief of the Assembly of First Nations and have received overwhelming support. I will also mention later the other folks who have been brought into this conversation over the past several months.

Approximately one-quarter of the population of Yukon identifies as being First Nation, Métis or Inuit. Many Yukon First Nation governments already give their employees a paid day off on June 21, but there are many aboriginal citizens who work elsewhere and do not get the opportunity to celebrate and share their culture on this day. Non-First Nation people also want to share in the festivities, culture and traditions. National Aboriginal Day is for everyone. Making this day a statutory holiday would recognize the contributions of Yukon's indigenous peoples and support efforts at reconciliation and understanding between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples in the Yukon.

Yukoners currently enjoy nine statutory holidays: five federal statutory holidays, plus four designated by the territory. Yukon is in the middle of the pack in terms of number of days and has one less statutory holiday than our neighbours British Columbia and the Northwest Territories. Public holidays increase employees' happiness and increase social and community bonds. The research is mixed on the economic costs and benefits of a public holiday. Some research suggests that some employers may incur a cost for statutory holidays in paying for time not worked or overtime when scheduling employees who have to work. Other research suggests there is an economic benefit to public holidays as we see greater sales in retail and hospitality, and holidays mean the underemployed may receive more hours of work.

I am hoping that, as we move forward today and listen to all members of this House sharing their thoughts and ideas, we can come to a unanimous decision and have this be a reality for Yukoners.

As I was saying, Northwest Territories is the only jurisdiction in Canada that recognizes National Aboriginal Day as a statutory paid holiday. In 2001, members of the 14<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly passed the *National Aboriginal Day*

*Act*, making the Northwest Territories the first jurisdiction in Canada to recognize this day as a formal statutory holiday.

I would like to give some historical background. In 1982, the National Indian Brotherhood, now the Assembly of First Nations, first suggested establishing national aboriginal solidarity day as a day of recognition. In 1990, the Quebec Legislature established June 21 as the day to celebrate aboriginal culture. In 1995, tensions between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples led to renewed calls for a national day of recognition and it was one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. In 1995, the Sacred Assembly of aboriginal and non-aboriginal spiritual leaders — a national meeting was organized by Elijah Harper that encouraged the federal government to establish national first peoples day as a day of unity and acknowledgment. On June 13, 1996 — National Aboriginal Day was proclaimed by the then Governor General Roméo LeBlanc and, later that month, the first National Aboriginal Day was celebrated on June 21. Mr. Speaker, although we recognize the day as National Aboriginal Day for all people to recognize, we still yet do not recognize this as a statutory holiday.

Approximately one-quarter of the population in Yukon identifies as being First Nation, Métis or Inuit. Some Yukon First Nation governments treat June 21, Aboriginal Day, as a paid statutory holiday for their employees. Yukoners, as I said — well, I haven't stated this — many Yukoners who work on that day in other places cannot enjoy their culture on the day that is set for recognition to do so. What it also doesn't do when we don't have a statutory holiday is allow us to acknowledge the many struggles. I think back on the indigenous peoples of North America in general and I remember being at Moosehide one time — the first actual Moosehide Gathering — and it was such a wonderful weekend. If you've never been there, it's a free weekend.

People are brought to Moosehide by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. There are aboriginal indigenous people who come from all over who are guests — tourists from around the world are shuttled up and down the river to enjoy the festivities. Meals are given away each day. On the last day, there is a potlatch where everyone is given a gift. I think back that over the days of colonization, potlatches were outlawed. They were against the law. Many ways of celebrating our culture was considered to be against the law. Giveaways for example would have been stated as against the law.

I recall from my days in CAIRS — in the writings about the reasons for residential schools, for example, which was to remove the Indian question — to develop a subservient workforce. There would be other letters that would state about potlatches. These people seemed to think that giving away things freely was something that astounds us. Why would they not want to be charging money, making money, money, money.

To have the statutory holiday, I believe, is long overdue. The misunderstandings of what has transpired over many hundreds of years here in Canada — and I'll say North America — leads to the statement at that Moosehide Gathering — elder Art Johns and I were sitting, having an ice

cream, and there were a couple of other tourists there from the States. They were saying, my goodness, what a wonderful weekend they had. Who would have ever thought that they would stumble upon this Moosehide Gathering. They were telling us of the great time they had at this gathering.

Then they went on to talk a bit about their understanding of the history of not only Canada, but North America, and how glad they were that Columbus had discovered North America. Elder Art Johns looked over. It was just the way we hear elders speak so many times. He said: "He discovered nothing; he was lost" — and I can't say the last word, because it's a public place. I laughed, and it was a moment of clarity for me because, in that simple statement, it was clear. As history is written, it certainly has not been written from the perspective of indigenous and First Nation people.

It takes me to travelling in South America, where I've stated in this House before that it's taught in the high schools that indigenous people, aboriginal people, don't even live there anymore. They have all been killed off. That's the understanding from students in high schools. In their perspective, they live at the North Pole; we live at the South Pole. Their circles are not clockwise; their circles are counter-clockwise.

There is so much that is possible for us when we speak about truth and reconciliation. We have the latest of the 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which speaks of a national holiday. As it was said in Parliament by our new Prime Minister, it's 2015.

I know there were other motions brought forward today — and I wasn't quite able to hear as it was being stated, so I can't really comment on that right now — but I would like to say that, with the losses and the contributions that still are left to be understood by the general population that First Nations can bring, having this day being a statutory holiday will only foster those opportunities. When we come together, as the Minister for Tourism and Culture — we were both at the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association's conference, *Sharing Our Stories* — thinking back, I was just saying in this House how many years it has taken to get to that point — not that these things haven't been asked for; it's that it has taken this long to get there.

In the First Nation way and in the indigenous way of coming together, it promotes a comfortableness that allows us to get over ourselves, sit there, share tea and not be confrontational. When you walked into that conference the feeling, just walking in there — we could feel the difference. We could feel the okay-ness, the welcoming. There were no airs, just spruce boughs smelling and a canoe. There were picture point presentations — we generally see PowerPoint presentations at conferences — and there were stories. There was a canoe there people re-enacted in. Elders were speaking in their own voices. People were speaking and youth were speaking. What I saw — and I know other people saw in that room — we understood. We got things that we haven't gotten for a long time and there's a commitment to move forward.

One thing that we don't have the option to do in the Yukon — which NWT does; they're the leaders in this;

they've gone ahead with this. We don't have to wait for the rest of Canada. By doing this in the Yukon we can signal, along with Northwest Territories, that it's time. It has to start somewhere. They started it; let's kick in. Sure, we need the rest of Canada to do this.

We know that's important and we also know that it will happen, because the efforts, the recognition and the oppression of First Nation peoples in this country have gone on and continue to go on and will not rest until these things come into place — National Aboriginal Day, recognition of residential schools, culture, the land and the environment that people of First Nations and the first peoples of this country have to offer — like what's going on in Paris today in COP21. There are indigenous peoples there who aren't given as much time at the table, but they are there paddling canoes and getting press to broaden the understanding of what's necessary for this world when we speak of environmental issues, when we speak of the importance of language, when we speak of the importance of culture, and when we speak of the importance of family and how residential schools as a part and as a tool of colonization were put in place because of greed.

It really comes down to greed. Money is good; greed can get us. Money gets me on a holiday. Money feeds my family today. It's a way that we pay our bills and how we put fuel in our cars. It's not that we don't need an economy. It's not that this doesn't affect the business community; however, our dignity is worth much more than money.

I think back to when I had notes prepared here, as I usually do — and I say some prayers and smudge before I do some of this, because we believe it allows the ancestors to speak to us and say something that is from the spirit world. I was thinking of my grandfather — my Grandfather Shields — and why it's so important that we come together these days so that we can have that comfort level, to recognize that we are all just human beings with tears, with happiness, with sadness, with love, with anger and with feelings. How many years did he not acknowledge his wholeness as a human being and how that wasn't passed on to me — how we can talk about these things on National Aboriginal Day when we make this a holiday. His father, Andrew Shields — a half-breed — was on one of the first Canadian census records, but was not a human being because he looked too brown. The next time they came around, because he had a farm, a non-First Nation wife, so many cows and some buildings, he was considered a human being. That is what is wrong — that we place too much value on money in our society. People, for generations, walked around feeling that they had to cover up something, hide something, be less than — that is wrong.

If we do not have a National Aboriginal Day starting this June 21, 2016, we will — because it will not stop until we recognize all people, especially here. In this House, we are on traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an Kwäch'an Council. This House is where people camped, lived, dried fish — right here. How many times have they been moved? They are now up in McIntyre. How many times around the Yukon have people lived where the prime real estate is? Not there. These are the reasons for having this day — to know of the

losses that have been incurred and what people have endured because people still don't know. They still think, "What do you want? You have everything already."

I would like to say more, like in a language that would be less appropriate in this House as I speak, but I realize there is a camera on and I can't. I would be called on a point of order. I can't really say a lot, other than that maybe I will just share in the losses — but the contributions, as I speak of — that we have yet to learn, that would be allowed to be shared in a good way with everybody being able to come forth on that day. You don't have to open up your business on that day. I think back to when it was a fight to get stores opened on Sundays because it was supposed to be a time for community to come together, for families to share time. Although I know it's important to people, I think there is a greater good by coming together on a holiday.

I would like to share this, just briefly, because I guess maybe there are some misconceptions that we haven't consulted with people. We have, Mr. Speaker, received support from the Yukon Employees Union, the Yukon Federation of Labour, and the plumbers and pipefitters union. I have also had very positive exchanges with the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, the City of Whitehorse, and the Association of Yukon Communities. While these organizations have not formally endorsed the proposal, they have underlined the importance of recognizing the role of First Nations' contributions to today's Yukon.

I have some emails: "MLA Kevin Barr, please accept this e-mail as confirmation of a positive response from Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Chief Smith towards your initiative to declare National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday in Yukon. Regards, Ranj Pillai".

"Ka may, sothaan, Kevin. As chief of White River First Nation and as a First Nation woman, I am in support of making Aboriginal Day as a holiday. God Bless, Chief Dermit."

"Kevin: Thank you for your e-mail and letter. I, as Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations, wholeheartedly agree that National Aboriginal Day should be a statutory holiday in Yukon. Many Yukon First Nation governments recognize June 21 and have traded off the August stat in lieu. I do know I have been approached by many aboriginal citizens to ask for the status to be recognized so everyone can participate in the celebrations of the day."

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

**Mr. Barr:** Pardon — oh, don't read my name?

"Hi... We are in support of this. Chief Brian Ladue, Ross River Dena Council."

"Hi... Enclosed you will find a letter of support from Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Council for declaring June 21 a general holiday in the Yukon. If there is anything else I can do to support your efforts, please don't hesitate to get in touch."

"Great! ...Thanks so much Chief Doris Bill..." — a name — "We support this initiative".

"Thank you for your correspondence of September 25, 2015.

“The Vuntut Gwitchin fully supports your Motion to recognize National Aboriginal Day as a statutory general holiday.

“The Vuntut Gwitchin Government has celebrated National Aboriginal Day as a paid statutory holiday for employees for many years now.”

“Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, as a self-governing First Nation, supports the wider recognition of Aboriginal Day by other governments as a means by which all Yukoners’ awareness of Yukon aboriginal issues and matters can be increased. An increased awareness of these matters will further support better understanding and reconciliation. Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation.”

I have also received many verbal supports. Khà Shâde Héni Cresswell is very much in favour, on behalf of Carcross/Tagish First Nation. Teslin Tlingit Council, Chief Carl Sidney, is in support of this statutory holiday becoming a paid holiday. Na Cho Nyäk Dun Chief Simon Mervyn supports this. AFN Vice-Chief Mike Smith supports this day. Métis President Rick Christianson supports this day.

Mr. Speaker, I know there are others. I apologize if, off the top of my head, I was jotting down some of the other ones who had phoned me personally. Really, there was only one I wasn’t able to get in touch with — one chief, for good reasons. However, I have spoken with many members of that community and, as I said earlier, I already thought it was a holiday. I’ll go back in my closing remarks to state that, as I walked around and went to the market this summer, just talking with people in general, many non-First Nation people — the common remarks are: “It’s about time”; “I always thought it was”; “It should be”; “Thank you for bringing this forward.”

I would honour the folks in the gallery today who came to witness this. I would honour all those who know that this is doing the next right thing, really, as legislators, as people. Really what we’re doing is something that’s going to happen — I sure hope it happens today in this House. We can be leaders. We can signal to the rest of the country that it’s time they also step up to the plate. We don’t have to wait and prolong things. We have the opportunity here today to make this decision and move forward in that direction, to have National Aboriginal Day a statutory holiday in the Yukon, because it is the next right thing to do and to promote the understanding of the importance of indigenous peoples in our society, not only the losses, but what is contributed by the first peoples.

I thank this House and I thank folks for listening and look forward to hearing the rest of the thoughts from the members in this Legislature.

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin by thanking the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes for bringing the motion forward and, of course, for the sincere passion and conviction with which he presented his argument today. I certainly appreciate that very much.

As he outlined in his remarks, this is something he obviously feels very passionately about and I appreciate that. I think it’s an excellent thing when we are able to, in this House, discuss issues that are of great importance to us personally, not just because they’re important to us personally but because we have a strong conviction in seeing them move forward in the territory.

I’m going to speak a little bit about my thoughts on National Aboriginal Day and why and how Yukon government supports National Aboriginal Day, and a little bit about some of what we’ve seen happen over the last few years.

After that, I will turn to the specific issue of the statutory holiday and I will discuss some of the mechanics of what is entailed in that process and why some additional considerations need to be made, so I will get to that in a few moments.

To begin — I think, as the member has noted — National Aboriginal Day is obviously very important here in the Yukon. It’s held annually currently on the summer solstice, June 21, and it’s a Canada-wide event that recognizes and celebrates the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding achievements of aboriginal peoples across Canada.

Not only First Nation and aboriginal people celebrate this day, everyone in the territory is encouraged to participate. Everyone is invited to be a part of this national celebration, to enjoy live music, artist demonstrations, traditional food, special ceremonies and much more. As we’ve seen over the years, this particular holiday has had a wonderful reception here in the territory.

Events are held right across the territory in just about all of our communities in the Yukon. There are events held at the Teslin Tlingit Heritage Centre in Teslin, at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre in Whitehorse, at the Da Kų Cultural Centre in Haines Junction, at the Carcross Commons in Carcross, at a variety of locations in the community of Mayo as well as in Carmacks and, of course, at the Dänojà Zho Cultural Centre in Dawson City. These are just a few. I know that more events happen in other communities throughout the Yukon, but the important thing here is that this is something that’s already celebrated considerably by Yukoners and with considerable participation by all Yukoners, not just First Nation or aboriginal Yukoners.

When we consider the aspects of National Aboriginal Day that I just mentioned — and those are, of course, recognizing and celebrating the unique heritage, recognizing and celebrating diverse cultures, and recognizing and celebrating the outstanding achievements of aboriginal people across Canada and the Yukon — it’s clear that government has an important role to play in supporting these initiatives.

I know that my colleagues, the government and I believe that celebrating Yukon’s First Nations enriches the lives of all Yukoners and, for this reason, the Government of Yukon has and will continue to encourage opportunities to highlight and celebrate the contributions and culture of Yukon First Nations on June 21 each and every year.

Furthermore, I know that our Premier holds a special place for National Aboriginal Day and enjoys participating in events every year. He has also taken the opportunity on numerous occasions to encourage all Yukoners to take the time to recognize and to celebrate National Aboriginal Day across Canada but also specifically here in Yukon. I know our Premier is very keen to participate in National Aboriginal Day and the events that flow from that.

If I could return to those aspects of National Aboriginal Day that I outlined — the first two, of course, were the unique heritage and diverse cultures that are celebrated and recognized on National Aboriginal Day. For all the reasons that the member opposite outlined, it is very important that we do indeed recognize and celebrate the important unique heritage that First Nations bring to us and the important diversity of cultures that we have here in the territory.

Members and anyone listening will agree with me when I say that, over our recent history, in the past decade or so, we have seen an incredible cultural resurgence here in the territory with regard to First Nations. That has happened in a number of ways. It has happened as a result of the land claims process and the creation of self-government, but it has also happened in a number of other ways, such as through the sharing of stories and song, through the sharing of dance, art and music. These are all ways that culture is not only engaging with Yukoners, but also creating that cultural resurgence that we've experienced.

We've seen the creation of new festivals such as the Adäka Cultural Festival — which, I should note, just celebrated its fifth anniversary — and celebrations such as the Hå Kus Teyea biennial gathering and the dance and drum festival that was hosted by the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations this past summer in Haines Junction at the Da Kų House. We've seen the emergence of dance groups, such as the Dakhká Khwáan Dancers, which continues to earn national and international recognition. We've seen the construction of new cultural centres such as the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Da Kų House. We're seeing new First Nation tourism experiences being formed throughout the territory.

This rich cultural tradition is a key element of what attracts visitors to our territory and it's an important part of what makes Yukon unique and special. The Yukon government has been a proud partner for many of these initiatives through its investments, including investments made through the arts fund, through the touring artist fund, through investment funds like the CDF, or direct contributions in support of organizations such as the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association, through infrastructure funds, both federal and territorial, and the negotiation of long-term leases with First Nation governments such as the Kwanlin Dün and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. We've seen the creation of new First Nation cultural centres, as well as new partnerships formed with First Nations, that have resulted in a new Whitehorse Public Library here on the banks of the Yukon River and the new visitor information centre as anchor tenants.

The Yukon government is certainly committed to growing, promoting and celebrating strong and sustainable First Nation arts, tourism and cultural sectors, and, together with organizations such as the YFNCTA — the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association — it is working to do just that. A key initiative that showcases, celebrates and fosters the development of Yukon First Nation arts and culture is the Adäka Cultural Festival, which I mentioned earlier. Adäka, which means “coming into the light” in the Southern Tutchone language, speaks to the work to preserve and revitalize arts and culture while inspiring First Nation artists and youth to take pride in their heritage and communities.

The Department of Tourism and Culture administers annual funding to the YFNCTA in support of its strategic plan, business plan and marketing initiatives related to its tourism objectives. Recently the YFNCTA hosted a Sharing Our Stories conference on cultural tourism in First Nation communities. The conference was an opportunity to take stock of the many successes over the past 10 years as well as an opportunity to look at the future and where we need to go. The First Nations Culture and Tourism Association is leading the way, and Yukon government has supported and continues to support these efforts.

The new tourism television commercials that were recently unveiled showcase Yukon's culture and heritage. Our government is most grateful to our stakeholders who provided invaluable input and suggestions for strengthening the commercials. One of those groups was, of course, the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association, which helped facilitate discussions with representatives from each of the eight First Nation language groups within Yukon — again, speaking to the importance of First Nation culture.

As I mentioned earlier, the Department of Tourism and Culture offers administrative, training and financial support to each of Yukon's First Nation cultural centres throughout the Yukon in partnership with Yukon First Nations. The examples of that are numerous, Mr. Speaker; I won't list them all. My intent here is simply to highlight just some of the ways that the Yukon government recognizes and celebrates aboriginal and the unique heritage of Yukon First Nations as well as the diverse cultures therein.

I know that other members will have the opportunity to fill in where I have left gaps, but my intention here today is not to provide an exhaustive list of those ways but simply to note that we are keenly and very enthusiastically supportive of finding new ways to recognize and support First Nation culture, heritage and language.

The other aspect of National Aboriginal Day that I wanted to note — because it's of importance to me, especially as minister responsible for the Public Service Commission — is the idea that National Aboriginal Day offers an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the outstanding achievements of aboriginal people across Canada. That's something that I very much value, especially in the Public Service Commission. The reason I say that, Mr. Speaker, is we have some wonderful institutions within our government with regard to just that.

One wonderful example is the Aboriginal Employees Forum. That's something that was created a number of years ago to provide a forum for aboriginal employees of the public service to come together and share experiences and help inform government as to how we can make the public service a more appealing place for Yukon First Nation citizens to work, but also to engage with Yukon First Nations and implement the provisions of chapter 22 that speak to this.

One of the things that have come out of the Aboriginal Employees Forum is the Aboriginal Employees Award of Honour. It's an awards ceremony that has been going on for not quite 10 years now — for about eight or nine years now, I believe — and, over the last three years, I have had a chance to attend each of them. It is a fabulous opportunity for us, as representatives of the Yukon government, to highlight and acknowledge the incredible contribution of aboriginal employees to our public service. The Aboriginal Employees Award of Honour recognizes accomplishments of Yukon government aboriginal public servants who provide outstanding service or contributions to the Yukon government, fellow employees or to the Yukon public. The awards showcase the talents of individual aboriginal employees, strengthen pride in the public service and call attention to the good work of aboriginal employees in the Yukon public service.

This is just one way that we can acknowledge the contribution of aboriginal people. I know there are many more that occur throughout Canada and throughout the Yukon, but I did want to highlight that one, just because it is of importance to me personally — both as a member of Cabinet and as the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. In short, I think we have come a long way with regard to how we engage with aboriginal people within the public service and have come a long way with regard to acknowledging, appreciating and recognizing their contributions.

Having said what I have said so far, I want to turn now to the specifics around the mechanics, as I noted, of the creation of a statutory holiday. I think I have tried to be clear that Yukon government very much appreciates and supports the National Aboriginal Day here in Yukon. We enthusiastically support the aspects of that day in the ways that I have outlined already, but in many more ways — and I hope to hear from others about some of the ways that we do that as well.

I will turn now to the specifics around what is entailed with the creation of a statutory holiday. For those who are wondering, the reason I am up talking about Tourism and Culture is because the angle of this, of course, relates to the *Employment Standards Act*. That is the act that, of course, outlines holidays, provides the definition of what holidays are and when statutory holidays occur. It is a piece of legislation that falls under my responsibility as Minister of Community Services.

In preparation for today, when the members identified that this motion would be called, I asked my department to provide me with some information about how we would potentially go about creating a new statutory holiday in the

Yukon. I will provide some of the information that I received from my department for members' consideration.

First of all, the *Employment Standards Act* would need to be amended. That would require legislative amendments to that act to recognize a new holiday. Though it's not specifically required in the *Employment Standards Act*, it is normal practice to consult with the public and interested groups — such as First Nations, the business community, NGOs and labour organizations — in order to get their perspective on the potential implications of any changes to Yukon's statutory holidays.

A new holiday would also require changes to other pieces of legislation and regulations administered by Yukon government departments to ensure the new holiday would be appropriately recognized throughout the Yukon and in order to prevent conflicts with other laws. Though departments are able to coordinate in order to make these changes, it would take time to properly conduct the legislative process.

The department also noted to me when providing me with this information that an amendment of this nature, according to the department, would take at least a year to carry out, as consultation is recommended. Consequential amendments to other legislation would likely be required, and it would likely take some time for proposed amendments to make it through the process that we have in place.

So Mr. Speaker, I am providing that information because I want members to understand exactly what needs to occur in order for a statutory holiday to be created. In order for us to respect the process that will have to go into making an amendment to the *Employment Standards Act*, I will in a few moments propose an amendment to the motion that will provide us with a path forward that I think would hopefully be acceptable to all members. It will allow us to have the necessary consultations to bring forward that amendment if it is determined that this is the course that we're going to take.

Now I recognize that the member raised the point that he himself has conducted a significant amount of consultation. I certainly respect that. I appreciated hearing the letters and the input he has received to date. I should note that it was the first time I had heard that material. I, as minister who is responsible for the *Employment Standards Act*, hadn't heard the impact from Yukon Chamber of Commerce, from businesses and from the individuals that he has to date. That's not to say it's invalid or anything like that. I'm simply saying that's something that we need to take into consideration.

As well, when statutory holidays are created, there are impacts. I know the member made some compelling arguments about the need to disregard money and how everything shouldn't be about money; however, I should note that when we create a statutory holiday, we are creating a cost. It's usually a cost that's not borne by government; it's a cost that's borne by small businesses throughout the territory. That's not to say that it's something that wouldn't be supported, but it's something that we need to consider. The imposition of a new statutory holiday will have cost to business in this territory and, as such, we think it's only fair

that we consult the business community before taking such a step.

So Mr. Speaker, I think it's probably best for me to simply move an amendment and then I'll speak more about the amendment in my opportunity at that stage. Without further ado, I will put forward an amendment.

*Amendment proposed*

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** I move:

THAT Motion No. 1039 be amended by:

(1) deleting the word "declare" and replacing it with the phrase "consult with Yukon First Nations, employers, employees and the general public about the possibility of declaring"; and

(2) deleting all the words after the phrase "statutory holiday in Yukon".

**Speaker:** Order, please. The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services:

THAT Motion No. 1039 be amended by:

(1) deleting the word "declare" and replacing it with the phrase "consult with Yukon First Nations, employers, employees and the general public about the possibility of declaring"; and

(2) deleting all the words after the phrase "statutory holiday in Yukon".

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will say a few words about this because I'll give members some time to digest the amendment. As I indicated in my remarks, I am bringing forward this amendment to recognize the fact that, in order to enact a statutory holiday in this territory, we need to amend the *Employment Standards Act*. As I have indicated previously, the usual course of business for making such an amendment would require consultation with affected groups. As I indicated, there are people — businesses in particular — that are affected by the creation of a new statutory holiday and I think it's only fair that we consult with them, prior to doing such an initiative.

I am hopeful that, with this amendment, it is clear that we are not unilaterally declaring that there should be a statutory holiday for National Aboriginal Day, but that we should consult with the affected stakeholders and those who will be affected by this decision prior to taking that decision. As well, because of the fact that this sort of consultation, in order for it to be meaningful, will take a little bit of time, I am uncomfortable passing a motion that commits us to create a statutory holiday by this June. That is why the second part of this amendment is put forward — to remove the part about celebrating a statutory holiday this coming June. I think that this amendment will create a motion that still gives us a path forward for this initiative, but will respect the obligation that we have to consult the necessary stakeholders before making any change that will affect their livelihoods.

I think, in conclusion to my remarks on this amendment, I would say that certainly the government has demonstrated —

and I tried to a little bit earlier on — that we are in favour of supporting National Aboriginal Day. We enthusiastically recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding achievements of aboriginal peoples across Canada and here in Yukon. We will continue to do so, but before we make a decision like creating a new statutory holiday, more work needs to be done. The amendment to this motion charts out a path forward for us that will allow us to do that work in order to see this conversation continue.

With that, I will conclude my remarks on the amendment. I look forward to hearing from members opposite about whether or not this is amenable to them. If this amendment does pass, I am confident that all members of the House will be able to support the motion as amended.

**Mr. Barr:** I thank the minister opposite for his words.

I would like to speak to the amendment. Having "2016" removed from my motion is disappointing. I do hear what the minister is saying in regard to their due diligence as a government — that, although the work from this side of the House with the affected businesses and so on and so forth — much of that has been done. I can certainly share that information with the member opposite in hopes of facilitating the process, so that, although the date is removed from this amendment, it may still be possible by this June 2016 to do so. There has been quite a large heads-up, and we do have a great amount of the support that the members opposite would be looking for. It makes sense — and if we were in government, I am sure that we would want to do the same — but please take into account that much of that work has been done. We will share that — do what we need to do — in the hope that, if it can be by June 21, that would be great. We know that life happens sometimes and we will honour that, recognizing that First Nations have waited a long time, as I stated in my other notes — and maybe some of my colleagues will also reiterate this — and that they have been waiting for this holiday to be a national holiday.

We would support the amendments to the motion, as they are in good will — that we work forward to this because it is the right thing to do. It's time.

**Mr. Tredger:** I thank the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes for bringing forward this motion and I thank the minister for his amendment. I am disappointed in aspects of the amendment, and I understand that governments can tend to be slow and take time to react to things.

First Nations have been asking, as the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes mentioned, for this day to be declared a statutory holiday since the 1990s, and they're waiting.

Just a little story — when the First Nations of western Canada first encountered the Canadian government moving across Canada, Louis Riel, Chief Big Bear from the Cree Nation, referred to the then Prime Minister, Sir John A Macdonald, as "Old Tomorrow". Let us hope that the First Nations don't begin to refer to us in this Legislature as "Old Tomorrow".



Mr. Speaker, this Yukon Party government has brought forth other amendments to acts on shorter notice, and the NDP has supported them in that process. We have seen other motions amended on this floor that removed timelines and concrete actions, and we have sat by, waiting for action. First Nations have been very patient. I believe we need to send a strong, clear message that First Nations and Yukoners have waited long enough. It is time for us, as the government, to make this day happen — sooner than later.

**Speaker:** Does any other member wish to be heard on the amendment?

*Amendment to Motion No. 1039 agreed to*

**Ms. Stick:** I want to thank my colleague, the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, for bringing forward this motion. It's important. I think also the amendment — I realize the timelines can sometimes be a difficulty.

We know that Aboriginal Day is recognized across Canada as a day of importance, but not necessarily as a holiday, except for our friends to the east of us in the Northwest Territories who have declared this and made it a holiday. When the minister was speaking about the process that we have to go through to be able to enact an aboriginal day here in the Yukon, I decided I would go and look at the Northwest Territories and what their *National Aboriginal Day Act* is.

Mr. Speaker, it's one paragraph, and that's the act. I'll read it. It just say: "In recognition of the cultures of the Aboriginal peoples of the Northwest Territories, and in recognition of the significant contributions of Aboriginal persons to the Northwest Territories, and to celebrate and honour those cultures and contributions, June 21 of each year shall be known as 'National Aboriginal Day' and shall be observed as a public holiday."

One paragraph, Mr. Speaker — and I understand that there would be amendments to other acts, such as the public service or the employment standards acts. There are things that would have to be adapted to that. We see that in most amendments, or a lot of the amendments, to legislation. We see where it does refer to other pieces of legislation. But it's interesting that it's one paragraph — not long, not lengthy.

In fact, in looking at my notes, it was in 2001 — so this is 14, going on 15, years now that the Northwest Territories has celebrated Aboriginal Day. It was an invitation not just to First Nation individuals, but to everyone in the Northwest Territories to come together and celebrate — everyone, not just First Nations.

It was 1996 when the National Aboriginal Day proclamation was first read, and that was by Governor General Roméo LeBlanc. It was after consultation and with the support. His basic proclamation was, "... Aboriginal peoples of Canada have made and continue to make valuable contributions to Canadian society and it is considered appropriate that there be, in each year, a day to mark and celebrate these contributions and to recognize the different cultures of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada..." Again,

Mr. Speaker, I see this as an invitation to all Canadians to celebrate those among us.

It's very interesting to review statutory holidays across Canada. According to the Government of Canada's website, there are 22 public holidays. Only nine of those are celebrated by all provinces and territories. I think some people would even be surprised to know that, in some provinces, Remembrance Day is not a statutory holiday. People go to work and children go to school. It is not celebrated the same way that we celebrate it here.

After that, it's pretty much a free-for-all between the provinces and territories of what holidays they have. We have Islander Day in PEI; Louis Riel Day; Nunavut Day in Nunavut; St. Jean Baptiste Day in Quebec; and National Aboriginal Day in the Northwest Territories.

The Yukon, in addition to our national holidays, also has Heritage Day in February — or what we call Rendezvous — and we have Discovery Day in August. The rules around statutory holidays in the provinces and territories are ruled by the employment laws in each province and territory. In addressing what the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission spoke to, yes, there are some amendments that would have to be made.

In the Yukon, we have, as we know, 13 First Nations, eight language groups. According to the oral traditions of Yukon First Nations, people have lived here since Crow made the world and set it in order. That's the oral tradition. First Nation people have been here from the beginning. Others — archeologists and scientists — have found sites that are over 7,200 years old. Others believe that there are more out there to be found that are even older. It's a long time for a people to be in one area. I always love looking at the map of all of the First Nations in the Yukon and how they cover the whole territory. They overlap. There are some from the Northwest Territories and some in BC that come up into this map, but the whole map is covered.

Yukon First Nations have played key roles in the Yukon's most recent historical events as well as the very old ones, including the Klondike Gold Rush. We know that it was Tagish Charlie, George and Kate Carmack, and Skookum Jim who first discovered gold — First Nation people — and laid claim to that area. It was Yukon First Nations who helped lay out the routes and showed people the way to the gold fields. It was First Nation people who helped to pack goods over the Chilkoot Trail. Yukon First Nation people sold traditional clothing to the gold seekers so they could survive our harsh winters. It was Yukon First Nation people who taught them survival skills and shared their hunting skills. It was mostly Yukon First Nation people in settlements along the Yukon River who supplied wood to the steamships that ran up and down the Yukon River. We have a building named after Frank Slim at Shipyards Park. He was a First Nation captain on one of those steamboats.

The other big piece of recent history that First Nations have had — not only involvement, but in impact — is the Alaska Highway. First Nation people were hired as guides to

help those engineers and surveyors map out how this highway was going to go through their lands.

Much of the highway follows old trails used by First Nations on foot or dog team and the impacts of that Alaska Highway were huge. We've heard of those stories. There was the promise of wage work, but then there was the influx of disease that no one had resistance to. It was a major change in many of the First Nation lifestyles, away from the land. It had a big impact. We celebrate these historical days with Discovery Day in August. We celebrate probably more in Dawson than in Whitehorse, but it is a celebration of our non-First Nation events. They were certainly a part of it. The same with Heritage Day — the focus is pretty much on the gold rush with cancan dancers and trapper contests and those types of things. So we do celebrate our history. We do have two statutory holidays where people don't have to go to school or don't have to go to work. But we don't do the same for Aboriginal Day. I understand that there are lots of festivals. There's Moosehide and there's the celebration every two years of the Tlingit from Teslin and from Juneau that come together. There's Adäka. Yes, we have those celebrations throughout the year and that's a great thing.

I really believe that if we have an Aboriginal Day that's a real holiday here in the Yukon, it's an invitation to go to events and to participate. Yes, First Nation offices often close, but that's not everyone; that's just a small group. There are many First Nation people who still work on those days. I believe it should be an invitation to all Yukoners to celebrate the culture, the contributions, the variety and the wonderful relationships we have with First Nations here in the Yukon. I'm a business owner. I know that statutory holidays can cost. If you stay open, we will pay your staff extra or we can close and not bring in money that day. As a business owner, I recognize that and I make choices just like every business owner can. I mean, at one time, Boxing Day was a day we stayed home in our pajamas and ate leftover turkey and read a book. Now it has become this commercial — we have to go out and buy and everything's on sale. As a business owner, I choose not to open my store and I might lose some money, but it's a holiday and I try to make sure that my staff have holidays when they are there. It's not a chance for more commercialization or consumerism.

I think if we have Aboriginal Day, businesses will make those same choices — "I'll stay open as usual, or I won't". Personally, if an Aboriginal Day in Yukon — I would close and encourage staff to get out and see what the celebrations are and participate, because this is an invitation to all Yukoners.

We have celebrations throughout the year. First Nations have celebrations throughout the year. We already have two holidays, one for heritage and one during Rendezvous. Let's have an Aboriginal Day. This is our opportunity. Show the rest of Canada. Our neighbours have done it for 15 years now. Let's not wait. Let's move ahead.

**Mr. Elias:** *[Member spoke in Gwich'in. Text unavailable.]*

The member's heart is in a good place with this motion. I appreciate it and the work that he has done. I know how it is to be in opposition.

I don't know where to begin with this motion. It's interesting for me as a Vuntut Gwitchin; basically Aboriginal Day is every day and I am living a rich cultural heritage and trying to express it and its specialness in this Assembly from time to time.

I think back, prior to February 14, 1995, and the years and decades of negotiations and sacrifices in our community, and the work that our leadership and our people have gone through to get to where we are today as a self-governing First Nation in north Yukon. It has been a long journey going through that through my youth and now being a leader in our community. That opportunity exists throughout the Yukon now with several First Nations — not all, obviously. It's really intriguing for me to listen to the debate today because I think we're at a point in Yukon's history where we have an opportunity to do something in a good way and I think that the momentum is heading in that direction and I will tell you why in a second.

I think that with the Prime Minister making an announcement — I think it was yesterday or the day before — suggesting to the country that he's going to be implementing all 94 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action is a signal to me, because under call to action 80, it says that: "We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process."

Thinking about that and thinking about my own family history — my grandmother had, I think, 11 siblings and she's the only one who survived. We don't know where her brothers and sisters are buried. When I think about that and I think about the member opposite's motion on the floor today and the motions that I put forward, urging the Government of Canada to make this a national statutory holiday and to have that possible debate on the floor of the Assembly and also maybe mapping out a little bit of a way to how I see — as a private member — that we can do this in the territory. I put those on the floor of the Assembly today.

Mr. Speaker, I think the opportunity exists — whether June 21 is chosen as a day of celebration and a statutory holiday in our territory, or maybe not — because as a Vuntut Gwitchin citizen, we consider February 14 a very important day because that was the day our citizens signed an agreement of partnership with the Crown and with the territorial government that is supposed to stand the test of time. That day is important to my constituents.

In the springtime, in May, when the caribou are heading toward their calving grounds in the Arctic National Wildlife coastal plain and they travel through our community, that weekend and those days are very important days to my constituents. Traditional pursuits are important to the Vuntut

Gwitchin government. They have policies where their employees can have days off for traditional pursuits and traditional activities as a self-governing First Nation. The Vuntut Gwitchin government offices will be closed for two weeks during Christmas to celebrate the holidays with their families and to give and to share, dance and to celebrate that time of year — as well as the other 12 statutory holidays in our community of Old Crow — in our own way.

I think the opportunity is there to not only celebrate, but also to commemorate — possibly on the same day. What I'm hearing from members of the House is that we have to engage a broader audience and have an open and honest dialogue with as many of our citizens and organizations and employees and employers as possible, in order to come to an amicable decision, when it comes to decision time.

I think we've had a valuable discussion today and I just thought I would put a little bit of thought into this because we have to think about the federal government's commitment. We have to think about how it affects all of our citizens in the territory. We have to think about all of the other First Nations' ideas and thoughts about how to possibly address the commemoration and the celebration of aboriginal peoples' diverse and distinct heritage, languages and culture and traditional practices in our territory.

I spoke with a family member on the phone today who owns a small business, and I wrote some stuff out because I believe we celebrate 12 statutory holidays in our territory already. I asked her, "What does another statutory holiday mean to your business?" She just very quickly — hopefully I don't get this wrong. A small business owner — let's say, whether their employees come to work or not, or, if they do come to work on a statutory holiday — has to pay them time-and-a-half or double time, and they also have to match EI benefits, and they also have to match the Canada Pension Plan benefits. Let's say just for an example, one employee who's making \$10.30 an hour minimum wage for eight hours a day — \$82.40. That's just one employee, so that's times 12 statutory holidays per year that they have to pay plus benefits, and so there is a financial implication to small business owners like my family member. When I looked at the press release and when I looked at the member's original motion, to me, it didn't address that aspect of things that are realities in constituencies.

I think, just wrapping up my comments, I'm in favour of the motion as amended, and I think that's about all I have to say.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes for bringing forward the motion to debate today to make June 21, National Aboriginal Day, a public holiday in the Yukon.

I support the motion. I support the motion because it would benefit everyone; I support the motion because it is timely; I support the motion because it is the right thing to do; and I support the motion because it's an opportunity for all members of this House to play a leadership role in our

community by making National Aboriginal Day, June 21, a statutory holiday.

Now one of the events that make this motion timely is the recent initial report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission had a large number of gatherings, spoke to people in communities all across the country, did a lot of research and has released a preliminary report that contains an enormous amount of important information. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission acknowledged the harms that the state and the church — that governments and religions — have done to aboriginal peoples in our history of colonization. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission tells us that reconciliation is a process that all Canadians must be a part of. Following the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, aboriginal leaders have spoken about reconciliation and they've also talked about restitution and resurgence.

Designating June 21 as an aboriginal day holiday is something positive the Yukon government could do to celebrate the historical and the contemporary contributions of aboriginal peoples and the cultural resurgence of Yukon's First Nation, Métis and Inuit citizens.

The former chief medical officer of health for New Brunswick, Dr. Eilish Cleary, takes a holistic view of health. Dr. Cleary came to the Yukon to speak about her research and her recommendations on shale gas development. In Dr. Cleary's view — and I'll read a quote here: "Health is largely a product of the complex interaction between people and their social and environmental influences." In 2014, she wrote about indigenous peoples' health and their lives prior to colonization. "Much of what we know about the health of the original peoples in Canada comes from their oral histories. These histories reveal diverse and complex societies with close-knit integrated communities made up of people who were, by and large, strong and healthy. While their well-being varied depending on the particular combination of physical, environmental, and social factors that they found themselves in, the influences contributing to their overall good health have been well described. These include access to local, safe, and nutritious foods; a sustainable and close relationship with the environment; and cultural and spiritual supports that included traditional medicine and healing practices. There is no doubt that the loss of these health-determining factors as a result of the arrival of outsiders had a major influence on the health of the population at the time."

Mr. Speaker, the reason I quote that as something relevant to the debate on this motion to celebrate National Aboriginal Day is this: By establishing National Aboriginal Day as a Yukon statutory holiday on June 21, we would be demonstrating our support for the traditional, cultural and spiritual practices of Yukon indigenous peoples.

It's ironic that First Nations have played such a critical role in the success of all the activities that displaced many First Nations and that also made their traditional practices illegal. We celebrate in the Yukon August 17 for the discovery of gold in the Klondike, and that was something

that displaced Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in peoples. As the Member for Riverdale South said in her comments, there was a significant contribution of indigenous peoples to the success of the Klondike Gold Rush, starting from the fact that Tagish Charlie, George and Kate Carmack, and Skookum Jim were the ones who saw the first nuggets of gold in a pan. First Nation people sold their traditional clothing, shared their hunting skills and even packed goods across the Chilkoot Trail.

Again, during the construction of the Alaska Highway, First Nation people played a significant role in guiding the army units that were surveying and building that pioneer road. This proposal for a National Aboriginal Day is timely and the right thing to do because we need to honour the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. That included the recommendation to make June 21 a National Aboriginal Day holiday. It's the right thing to do because it celebrates Yukon First Nation people and the Yukon.

There are many reasons why I celebrate the contributions and the lives of Yukon First Nation people. We have elders in the gallery today. We have elders who have shared their storytelling over time with those of us who came in as settlers. I think of the book *Part of the Land, Part of the Water*, which is such a valuable resource in our community. I celebrate Yukon First Nation contributions in the political leadership from the First Nation governments. I celebrate the political leadership of the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, which has been resourceful and has had a relentless commitment to the safety and dignity and the survival of their people. The Liard Aboriginal Women's Society was behind the Together for Justice initiative where they created a protocol on how the RCMP interacts with indigenous people. They didn't just speak about the problems that need to be addressed. They worked to achieve a protocol to make better relations into the future. In turn, if we support making National Aboriginal Day a holiday, we will be celebrating that same thing.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Elias:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your indulgence and the indulgence of the House, I would like to introduce to the Assembly today my uncle, Harvey Kassi, and Michael Tizya, who are in the gallery today — my constituents from Old Crow.

*Applause*

**Ms. Moorcroft:** We do welcome seeing the public here today and many citizens of Yukon First Nations here to listen to this debate on declaring National Aboriginal Day a holiday in Yukon.

I was speaking about the many things I celebrate about indigenous people in Yukon. First Nations are working to use their land claim settlements to create development corporations and to create economic diversification in our communities. I can point to one example in Carcross where the development corporation has brought forward the Carcross Commons project, where there are accessible boardwalks and

storefronts. That is something contemporary to be proud of in the contributions of First Nation people. I celebrate all of the gatherings, like the Moosehide Gathering that is held every two years at Moosehide, downriver from Dawson; the Hà Kus Teyea Celebration in Teslin, and the Adäka Cultural Festival.

I celebrate the Dakwäkäda Dancers and all of the dance troupes across the Yukon that have become more and more active over the 40 years that I have lived here. When I see those dance troupes performing, we see so many young dancers from toddlers on up and that gives me such hope and such pride in the fact that we're able to live here together in Yukon and celebrate First Nation culture.

When I heard the Public Service Commission minister get to the word "but" I became concerned that the government would express support for Aboriginal Day, but they would find barriers to making Aboriginal Day a holiday by June 21 of 2016. I understand that the government doesn't trust that the Yukon NDP consultations with First Nations, the public and the business community demonstrate enough support for them to support the original motion to aim for Aboriginal Day to be a holiday on June 21, 2016. I'm encouraged that the government has implied that it hopes to make Aboriginal Day a public holiday on June 21. I'm encouraged that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin spoke about seeing momentum toward making National Aboriginal Day a holiday all across Canada.

This Legislative Assembly could make a short, one-paragraph bill to establish Aboriginal Day as a holiday on June 21. This amendment — or this motion — is broadly supported across the community. There are hundreds of signatures on the petition that we have been circulating at gatherings and in every community of the Yukon, and so I do hope Yukon government will be able to finish its consultations and the small amendments it would need to other laws in time for June 21, 2016 to be the first celebration of National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday in Yukon.

I look forward to seeing unanimous consent in this Assembly for the bill. Thank you.

**Mr. Tredger:** I thank the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes for bringing forward this very important motion.

First Nation Yukoners play a central role in our communities and by passing this Yukon NDP MLA's motion to make National Aboriginal Day, June 21, a statutory holiday, we can ensure that all Yukoners can celebrate the contributions of aboriginal cultures in our society.

People in my constituency have told me that they believe National Aboriginal Day should be a statutory holiday in Yukon. The petition that was tabled today by the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes was well-received in my constituency. Many felt that the establishment of a statutory holiday would help communities come together in a spirit of reconciliation.

When I started to consider this motion, I asked myself: "What difference can a day make? What difference can a statutory holiday make?"

Mr. Speaker, when I was a boy in Alberta, Remembrance Day was not a statutory holiday. In my town, I remember a brief pause in a day at school where the eleventh hour was marked. Some years we did a short gathering, usually in our respective rooms, where the Canadian anthem was projected over the intercom. Perhaps one lucky student got to read *In Flanders Fields*.

Mr. Speaker, I can remember the local legion contemplating, and occasionally moving their Remembrance Day service to the closest weekend, so that more people could attend. I can remember playing *Last Post* on the bugle one cold Remembrance Day, but it was on the weekend — it wasn't on Remembrance Day.

Moving to the Yukon, I saw the importance that Yukon people placed on Remembrance Day ceremonies. It was an eye-opener. I attended school ceremonies on the day before Remembrance Day when the entire school came together and had veterans speak to them. People shared their stories and students shared their artwork and their poems. I have attended Remembrance Day ceremonies in small communities like Carmacks or Pelly every year and I know that these small-town services are held around the Yukon. They are widely attended; they are respectful. I know that there is a large service in Whitehorse — again, well-attended, very respectful.

The fact the Yukon has established Remembrance Day as a statutory holiday signifies the importance our territorial citizens place on participation in this annual service. They are well-attended, respectful gatherings, helping people to learn, to respect, to share and to honour. Mr. Speaker, we should do no less for Aboriginal Day.

There is a growing desire in our communities to come together to celebrate with our First Nation neighbours Aboriginal Day. The last two summers, I had the opportunity to attend Aboriginal Day celebrations in Mayo, held in conjunction with their annual midnight sun arts festival and marathon. There I saw local First Nation children dancing; local First Nation elders laughing and telling stories and laughing some more. I've watched the Spirit Dancers from Selkirk First Nation gather strength, pride and respect as they share their culture.

Each year, Yukon First Nations are gathering strength, sharing, learning, celebrating their culture and the whole community benefits. They're building ways to celebrate. They're learning and understanding the changes that have come upon them in the last century. Their strength and vitality shine through and they want not only to remember but to share. I've seen beading circles become popular once again. I've seen language classes in our communities where people come out and walk around with a new-found pride. I had an elder tell me, "We're not about blaming. We're not about what has happened in the past. We're about how we move forward and how do we create a better place for our grandchildren?"

I see a national or a Yukon Aboriginal Day not as the only answer, but an opportunity to learn, to celebrate and to grow as neighbours. As the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin said, it's not just one day; it's every day. This is a day to celebrate.

If we wish to respect First Nations, their culture and their contributions — and I'm sure all would join those of us in this House who support this motion in that wish — we should do it right. We should give it the prominence it deserves and we should do it sooner rather than later. I urge everyone to support this motion.

**Ms. White:** It's with great pleasure that I rise in support of Motion No. 1039, even in its amended form. I thank my colleague from Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes for all the time, effort and hard work, but especially the heart he has put behind this endeavour.

I hope the amended motion doesn't lose steam and that we do indeed see National Aboriginal Day become a statutory holiday in Yukon. Mr. Speaker, as a child, I grew up in a pre-First Nation final agreement Yukon. The first agreements weren't signed until 1993, when I was in grade 10. Changes started to happen in Yukon prior to my birth when, in 1973, Elijah Smith and a delegation of Yukon chiefs, including Dan Johnson of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, went to Ottawa to meet with the Prime Minister of Canada.

I can't even begin to imagine how these men felt, with the hopes of their people behind them, as they brought the groundbreaking document, *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, to Ottawa. With their courage, determination and hope for a better Yukon, they were able to convince the federal government to begin a negotiation process for a modern-day treaty, the first of its kind in Canada.

In the territory, 11 of our 14 First Nations have signed final agreements. The White River First Nation, the Kaska Dena and the Liard First Nation have chosen, so far, not to enter into final agreements. The first four were signed in 1993, and the last of the 11 was signed by the Carcross/Tagish First Nation in 2006. These agreements benefit all Yukoners. They make us stronger as a territory.

We are blessed in Yukon with 14 strong and proud First Nation cultures and traditions. You might be asking yourself why I'm stating what seems so obvious now — because what seems so clear now hasn't always been so. I grew up here and, like many other Yukon kids, I didn't fully understand our collective Yukon history and, to be perfectly honest, Mr. Speaker, that really makes me sad.

I want to see this changed and I want to see a different reality for our future generations. I want my nephews and all their classmates and every kid in Yukon to be proud of the cultures that we are a part of. I want to see them stick gamble in gym class; I want them to learn language and hear stories from elders; and I want them to share the pride of their aboriginal classmates, because this was not the Yukon that I grew up in.

I want our collective Yukon to celebrate the richness and diversity that these 14 First Nations represent, and one way to do that is by having the Yukon government broadcast the importance of First Nation cultures and the rich diversity of our home by marking National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday in Yukon.

By taking this one day to pause, to celebrate and to reflect what we share together here in the Yukon, we are taking one more step on the path of reconciliation toward ensuring the contributions made by aboriginal people in Yukon are valued each and every day throughout the territory and throughout the year.

During Question Period, the Premier said that he hoped everyone would get out and participate and enjoy the rich cultures we have in Yukon. Mr. Speaker, I totally agree. What wasn't said in any of his responses was what happens when June 21 falls on a Wednesday, or maybe a Monday? Who is able to leave work to celebrate our diversity then? I know that, for a great number of years, I would have been one of the people working, therefore not participating in the celebrations of First Nation people.

It's easy to see the number of people from all demographics, from all walks of life and from all different workplaces out and about for Canada Day. It's a day when we pause to celebrate our collective history, to champion our diversity and to appreciate what we share as Canadians.

What an amazing opportunity it will be to come together as Yukoners to celebrate our collective history with Yukon First Nations, to champion our diversity of settled and non-settled First Nations, and to appreciate what we share as Yukoners.

One in four Yukoners identifies as aboriginal. It is time to honour our collective heritage and take every opportunity to support a newly respectful and united common future.

Thanks to the hard work, determination and resilience of Yukon First Nations, all Yukoners share our beautiful, groundbreaking, modern treaties. They are our collective final agreements. Now it is our turn to be champions, to keep moving forward together for the benefit of all Yukoners. We spend one day each year celebrating, in large part, the history of Yukon settler society. It is time we dedicate the same time, one day each year, to celebrating the peoples and societies who were here for centuries before the settlers ever arrived.

I look forward to the day when we celebrate National Aboriginal Day as a statutory holiday in Yukon.

Thank you very much.

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

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Elias:** It's a pleasure for me to ask once again all the members of the Assembly for their indulgence in introducing Kluane Ademek to the Assembly today.

Kluane is a very powerful youth representative in our territory and, I'm sure, is going to be an elected leader here in our territory within her time.

*Applause*

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Mr. Barr:** I was acknowledging Kluane and hadn't turned around to stand up yet so thank you very much.

I just want to say thank you to everyone in the House for their remarks and I know that it's a good thing that we discussed this today, and I especially want to acknowledge Elder Roger Ellis and Grand Elder Pearl Keenan to the House. They have been here all day listening to what we've been talking about, and I hope, as witnesses to the work that we do, that we have done something good here today and that we, as a collective, go from this House and share with those we are going to have supper with and see after this that it will only encourage this motion to come to fruition and become Aboriginal Day, a statutory holiday, by June 21, 2016.

I respect that there are amendments to make. We have, in this House, done a great deal of consultation with the broader section of business, of community, of First Nations, elected chiefs, and so on and so forth.

I believe, with a good heart, that if it were us — as the Yukon Official Opposition and knowing what we have done — we would feel secure in going forward and making sure that this coming June 21 would be the first and we would join NWT in being leaders in Canada. It is not necessary — the rest can catch up to us. That would be my hope. In acknowledging that it was a good discussion, I thank all the members for adding what they had and look forward to hearing what is going to become of the government in their efforts. If there is anything that we can do to assist those to have that happen, we would like to do so — I extend that — in a good way — across the way here. Thanks for this time and I commend this motion to the House. Gunilschish.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

## Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

## Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Mr. Elias:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Stick:** Agree.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Mr. Tredger:** Agree.

**Mr. Barr:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yea, nil nay.

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

*Motion No. 1039, as amended, agreed to*

### Motion No. 1093

**Clerk:** Motion No. 1093, standing in the name of the Ms. Moorcroft.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Member for Copperbelt South:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to improve camping opportunities for persons with disabilities by:

(1) ensuring accessibility in the design and development of future Yukon campgrounds, campground facilities, and campsites; and

(2) building new accessible campsites, outhouses and trails during upgrades and repairs to existing Yukon campgrounds and campground facilities, including the work proposed at the Conrad, Marsh Lake, Wolf Creek, and Teslin campgrounds.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** I rise today to ask all members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly to support my motion that this House urges the Government of Yukon to improve camping opportunities for persons with disabilities by ensuring accessibility in the design and development of future Yukon campgrounds, campground facilities, and campsites; and by building new accessible campsites, outhouses and trails during the planned upgrades and repairs to existing Yukon campgrounds and campground facilities, including the work that is proposed at the Conrad, Marsh Lake, Wolf Creek and Teslin campgrounds.

Many of us, I believe, choose to live in the Yukon because of the incredible environment that we are blessed to be surrounded by. We cherish the landscape, the mountains and valleys, the rivers and lakes. Yukon campgrounds are a great place for some time away to enjoy nature and that nourishes our well-being. We also are a generous community and one that supports inclusion.

The Yukon supports the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, a convention that strives to eliminate barriers and end discrimination against persons with disabilities. All of us enjoy the opportunity to get out into nature in the wonderful campgrounds that we have across the Yukon. Unfortunately, Yukon campgrounds continue to contain barriers for persons with disabilities which, in many cases, prevent them from being able to enjoy the experience of camping out at one of our many campgrounds. I would like this government to support making our campground sites accessible.

I want to recognize too the good works that public servants do. They are connected to our community. They are members of our community and they have, as the minister said earlier today in Question Period, been working to increase their knowledge and to investigate new design methods, such as the universal design, which makes buildings

and campgrounds in our communities more accessible and inclusive. I want to recognize that work.

There is rough terrain in the campgrounds, of course. They are built at lakesides. They are built near rivers. They are built out in the forests. We can make them more accessible, and it's the right thing to do for the Yukon. I think this is a good time for this motion to be supported because the government has announced that it will be putting \$500,000 into expanding the number of sites in three of the campgrounds that are close to Whitehorse — Marsh Lake, Wolf Creek and Teslin campgrounds.

My argument and my request to the government is that, when they expand those campgrounds, they make accessible campsites, as a start, at each of the three campgrounds that they will be doing some upgrades to. In order for the campgrounds to be fully accessible, there would have to be one or two accessible campsites. There would need to be improvements made to the outhouses and there would need to be improvements made on the trails.

Earlier today, the minister spoke about the barrier-free outhouses that have been built in the Yukon over the last decade or so. I've spoken to constituents in my riding and to other people who live the need for inclusion on a daily basis, and who do find many barriers to their full participation in the community.

The barrier-free outhouses that have been built are a great attempt, but there's still more work needed. The barrier-free bathrooms need to be larger. They need to be large enough to allow a person in a power wheelchair with a care attendant to fit in, and they need to have a ramp up to them and the ramp needs to go down to hard-packed ground, because wheelchairs cannot navigate gravel. So where the ramps have been built, if they're on gravel, rather than hard-packed ground, or pavement, then they're not accessible.

In our campgrounds, Yukon campground shelters are great and they're well-used. Inside there's lots of room for wheelchairs. There's a woodstove to keep warm, if it's damp or chilly but, in most of them, a wheelchair couldn't get into the campground shelter, and that's a simple fix. Build a ramp and have it connected to hard-packed ground.

Boardwalks are also built in various campgrounds and on various trails around the Yukon. Many people in wheelchairs can navigate those boardwalks. What they would need is a barrier to prevent a wheelchair from falling off the edge. Bolting a four-by-four to the edge would be sufficient to prevent a wheelchair from slipping off. For the summer season, any incline in the boardwalk would need traction, so the government could use, in the design, expanded metal to ensure there's sufficient traction for the boardwalks to be accessible.

One of the people I spoke to was Steve Beaulieu, who gave his permission to share some of his perspective and experiences. Two of their sons have Duchenne muscular dystrophy and we see them in Whitehorse in their power wheelchairs quite often.

I believe there are between 100 to 150 wheelchairs just in Whitehorse alone, so we're talking about a significant number

of people living in our community who would really appreciate the opportunity to be able to camp in Yukon campgrounds.

Steve was talking to me about how the Alaska state campgrounds in Kenai are accessible so it's a lot easier to go and take your family. They already have ramps and the accessible campsites are close to the shelter and the bathrooms. That takes away the need to pack or to use a portable ramp that they may have with them.

Another highlight that he mentioned of the camping in Alaska is that there are boardwalks next to the river that are accessible. When he was standing in the river fishing for salmon, there was a vet on the boardwalk in a wheelchair with no legs and he too was fishing for salmon. Their two sons were on the boardwalk enjoying that experience. That's something that we could do, Mr. Speaker.

I would just like to close by saying that I'm looking forward to hearing from the minister; that I hope the government will support this motion and I hope that we will see campgrounds in the Yukon have accessible campsites and accessible facilities including bathrooms and trails within a relatively short period of time.

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the member opposite, the Member for Copperbelt South, for putting forward Motion No. 1093. I think it's timely to debate this motion.

Our campgrounds are seeing such great success — Tombstone — I've seen some of the newer ones we've done and I've seen great success. We haven't really developed a bunch of new campgrounds in almost 30 years. We did some stuff at Tombstone and now the new Conrad campground.

Before I get started in speaking to this, I really do want to say a few words about the staff. The member opposite brought up some of the staff there, but I know a lot of campground attendants. We have many campgrounds within my community and a lot of them work there. I worked for parks and recreation for one summer way back in the 1990s developing some new spots in Lake Creek and in Congdon Creek and they are the ambassadors for the Yukon. Between the staff at our visitor reception centres and our campground attendants, they talk to people. They're great people.

The other staff — we have the campground cops who go around and make sure that there is some semi-order. I'm sure we've all camped in campgrounds and had somebody come by and ask us to calm it down or put the guitar away at 2:00 a.m. maybe. Anyway, I just want to say that our staff do a wonderful job and for those of them who are attentively listening on Hansard, I think that they really need to hear that.

I want to read a little bit first from our "Guide to Yukon Government Campgrounds". It says, "Welcome to the Yukon government campground system. Whether you're motoring in the comfort of your recreational vehicle or taking a tent, we hope you'll enjoy our cozy campsites and spectacular mountain scenery.

"First-time visitors and long-time residents alike can enjoy the fishing, hiking, wildlife viewing and boating

opportunities found near many campgrounds. Our network of 11 highways will take you through some of the world's most outstanding wilderness areas.

"So try camping 'on Yukon time.' Residents know that to operate 'on Yukon time' means to leave your clocks and watches at home. Forget about routines and schedules. Let yourself be absorbed in the beauty and wonder of this great land.

"Campgrounds are spread out so wherever you travel there will always be one nearby. And don't pass up the chance to visit our colourful communities as well.

"Campground facilities — Our roadside campgrounds offer picnic tables, campfire pits, firewood and at least one picnic shelter. You'll also rely on outhouses and fresh or hand-pumped cold water. If you prefer other conveniences, try one of Yukon's privately operated RV parks or campgrounds.

"Government campgrounds do not have RV dump stations. You can get a list of dump station locations at Visitor Information Centres."

It says here that: "Campgrounds with wheelchair accessible outhouses are shown in the facilities chart" — which is on the inside. "Some campgrounds also have wheelchair accessible picnic shelters."

Camping permits — on-site registration for \$12. The pre-paid daily permit is \$12. An annual Yukon resident permit is \$50. I think it's wonderful that Yukon residents age 65 and older are free. "You can purchase these permits at many highway lodges, gas stations, retail stores, in liquor stores (outside Whitehorse) and at Environment Yukon offices" throughout the Yukon.

"Everyone must register — (1) Occupy a vacant campsite. Note the campsite number and your vehicle licence plate number. Go immediately to the fee station to register. (2) Fill out the self-registration envelope and remove the receipt stub. (3) Fill in your annual permit number or place your payment or prepaid daily permit(s) in the envelope, seal the envelope and place it in the deposit vault. (4) Clip the receipt stub to your site number post."

There is lots of other stuff in here. There is a great map, and this is where it all starts to get into our campgrounds.

The member opposite — and I think I have spoken in the House a little bit. We have been talking about campgrounds in Question Period. I do just want to talk a little bit about some of the investments in our campgrounds. This year we are investing over half a million dollars in campground improvements, including new campsites and facility maintenance. This fall, approximately 22 additional campsites have been developed — the equivalent of almost a new Yukon campground. We have also invested over \$700,000 in the new Conrad campground that will open next spring. It will have 30 vehicle-access sites and five walk-in sites. Combined, this investment is more than \$1.2 million and delivers on this government's mandate to expand camping opportunities.

We know that improvements help the department to deliver a better, safer camping experience for Yukoners and visitors and also provide economic benefits and job opportunities for some of the local businesses. We recognize



that there is a demand for more campsites in the Whitehorse region, and we are continuing to work to expand the number of campsites. I'm sure the Tourism and Culture minister will have a few things to say about this, but improving our campground network supports the Yukon tourism sector through increased visitor days. It keeps them around and they spend more money. Most of Yukon government campgrounds, while well-maintained, are older and are starting to show it. That is why we have seen increased budgets within the department. Annual improvements are needed to maintain government assets and to ensure public safety.

As we know, our Yukon government campgrounds provide outdoor recreational opportunities that benefit Yukon residents and visitors. Our campground users bring economic benefits to Yukon businesses, including our gas stations and some of our other businesses. The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is that our department is always looking at a number of options to address issues and opportunities related to the supply and demand thing.

I am just going to speak a little bit about the Conrad campground. Construction of the campground, which we know is on Windy Arm of Tagish Lake, began in 2015. Like I said, this is the first campground located on the south Klondike Highway, south of Carcross, and the first new campground built in 28 years. The department collaborated with Carcross/Tagish First Nation during the planning phase; a contract for construction was awarded to Carcross/Tagish First Nation, and their citizens played a significant role in the clearing and construction phase. I had the opportunity to tour it and there were some young First Nation people training on some of the equipment, getting some experience. I thought that was excellent. We know the campground will be open in May 2016. There will be 30 vehicle-access sites.

The Conrad campground is well situated to complement the growing recreational opportunities and community development in the nearby Carcross area, and a heritage management plan for the adjacent Carcross historic site is being co-developed by this Yukon Party government and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation.

Getting into the campground — it will include 30 recreational-vehicle sites, five walk-in tent sites, campground, picnic shelters, outhouses and bear-proof waste containers.

The Carcross/Tagish — a note, Mr. Speaker. Their final agreement identifies the campground at Conrad and provides the opportunity for the First Nation's economic benefits associated with the construction of the campground. The Department of Environment has worked in collaboration with the Department of Tourism and Culture and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation to ensure that the plans for the campground are consistent with the objectives of the Conrad historic site, which is adjacent to the campground. I know the previous Minister of Environment had conversations over some of these collaborations and conversations.

We allocated \$734,000 in 2014-15 for planning, research and construction of the campground. The campground consists of a 44.5-acre park reserve, adjacent to the Conrad

historic site, where a small town of Conrad existed in the early 1900s during the operation of the Venus mine site — a little tidbit of information. The site was chosen as a new campground because of its proximity to Montana Mountain biking and hiking trails and the scenic values, and also because it is adjacent to the Conrad historic site.

Knowing that we have to do the right thing, it went through the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. They recommended the campground development proceed. There were 34 terms and conditions to mitigate potential effects on heritage and other land users, wildlife and wildlife habitat, and some of the aquatic resources and environmental quality of these 34 terms to conditions to the government.

The major change in the direction that we are going with campgrounds is that we're looking to improve our campgrounds, and we're looking to do more work and create more campgrounds. They are popular with residents and visitors, with some campgrounds full just about every weekend and sometimes most of the week. Yukon's bigger parks like Tombstone and Kusawa receive significant public use.

Some of the benefits — I have said before that private and public campgrounds are key elements of the Yukon's tourism product. The economic and social and health benefits for Yukoners to go out and visit, but public use and expectations continue to grow. The member's motion speaks to that a little bit, especially for the camping opportunities close to Whitehorse and at the high-profile destinations like Tombstone.

We receive many positive comments about our campgrounds from Yukoners and tourists, and we always get complaints and the odd issue. That's the department's job and we work to find solutions.

We're working on increasing the supply of well-maintained YG campsites and we're looking at attracting Yukon campers to underused campgrounds also, and ensure that there's a fair access to our YG campsites. We want to do a little bit more engagement with people experiencing parks and campgrounds to remain relevant to Yukoners in the years ahead and to enhance the economic and social and health benefits.

In the fall of 2015, 20 new campsites were constructed in three existing campgrounds. In addition, the new Conrad campground was built with 35 sites. These additional 57 sites represent a 19-percent increase in the number of campsites within 200 kilometres of Whitehorse, or six percent across the territory.

We continue to infill campgrounds by identifying some additional sites, and we're hoping to do some of that and develop this for the 2017 camping season. We continue to improve our aging facilities and increase universal access for people with physical disabilities and identify opportunities — something that many Yukoners have said to us and the department through their comments — for winter use.

It's important that we work with our First Nations to identify some of the new potential opportunities for new

campgrounds, campsites and other camping-type opportunities. We can consider opportunities for cost-sharing, development and provision of services, marketing and training.

The other thing we can do is we can talk to our users. We can make sure that we have baseline research to ensure that wise planning and strategic investments are supported with facts and evidence and what preferences campers have for facilities. Do they want to see more winter use? Would they like to have Wi-Fi within some of the closer urban campgrounds? Extended-stay campsites? Why are certain campgrounds underutilized, and what would make Yukoners change their mind and go to some of the underutilized campgrounds?

I think you'll see us moving forward on implementing an awareness and marketing campaign during the spring and summer of 2016.

With that, I do have a friendly amendment that I would like to put forward, Mr. Speaker, on the floor of the House today. I think it is relevant and I'll speak to it after.

*Amendment proposed*

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** I move:

THAT Motion No. 1093 be amended by:

- (1) adding the words "continue to" between the words "to" and "improve";
- (2) adding the words "is considered" between the words "accessibility" and "in" in clause (1); and
- (3) deleting all the words after the words "campground facilities" in clause (2).

**Speaker:** Order, please. The motion is in order.

It is moved by the Minister of Environment:

THAT Motion No. 1093 be amended by:

- (1) adding the words "continue to" between the words "to" and "improve";
- (2) adding the words "is considered" between the words "accessibility" and "in" in clause (1); and
- (3) deleting all the words after the words "campground facilities" in clause (2).

Minister of Environment, on the amendment, please.

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, in speaking to the amendment, when I read the member opposite's motion — the one she put forward this morning — and had a conversation with some of my fellow colleagues, I had the department go back and see what we had done in the past on campground upgrades and how we deal with accessibility. We've been doing a lot of that. I can speak a bit to it after. We have already been doing a lot of that, so I felt it would be good to put "continue to" in there, because it's not like we need to start. I'll speak to many of the accessibility things that we do already in our campgrounds.

Where we put in "is considered" in the design, I think it's important because we're actually doing that too. We can see some of the old style of facilities, like some of the old style of outhouses and then our new outhouses. We work to try to find

a design that basically works for accessibility too, Mr. Speaker.

One of the other important ones was deleting everything after "facility". We didn't want to just have it look like we were working on Conrad, Marsh Lake, Wolf Creek and Teslin. We wanted to make it so that the motion, as read, applies to all our campgrounds in the Yukon when we move forward. We continue to consider accessibility in all our campgrounds, not just specific ones.

Yukon Parks has worked hard toward removing barriers for persons with disabilities for many, many years to make campground facilities more universally accessible. Universal access does not mean making all areas 100-percent accessible to everyone all of the time; however, it does mean that the principles of universal design should be incorporated where practical and possible so that people with disabilities can participate in the same programs and activities as those without disabilities. I spoke to this a little bit in Question Period today.

We know that there are many different types of barriers that people can experience when visiting our campgrounds and parks. The rough terrain in Yukon is the most obvious challenge. Back when I was the Highways and Public Works minister, I received a phone call from a concerned citizen who drives back and forth from Haines Junction to Whitehorse and they said that quite often they can't make it the complete trip and need to use one of the facilities along the way. They said: "Could you get your staff to shovel — to go to the outhouse and shovel the berm?" The plow trucks would go in and then they would build a big berm and some of the elderly folks or people with disabilities couldn't get through there. Well, obviously we can. There's a shovel on each plow truck because they have to knock the sand down in the sander, so I passed that on to the department. Sometimes it's just as easy as that — hearing from someone — and the department went out and in those sites that we plow in the wintertime, they cleared the snow away so it was accessible for all, especially seniors and people with disabilities.

As our knowledge of design methods and technologies evolves, so does our way of addressing them. Once we're aware of the challenges and the solutions, we can then work to build the solutions into the standard design and we have done some of that. This is what we're doing with our facilities in Yukon parks to meet the principles of universal accessibility. For example, when we plan and design trails, using widths, lengths and dimensions that accommodate a wide range of people ensures access to recreational facilities and programs for all the visitors.

I will give you an example of the good work that has been done by the department: Yukon Parks have been providing barrier-free outhouses for the last decade or so. Over that time, an effort has been made to have at least one barrier-free outhouse in each Yukon campground. Today barrier-free outhouses have been built in 32 of 52 campgrounds and recreational sites.

Ramps have been installed in kitchen shelters throughout the system of our campgrounds and the Tombstone

Interpretative Centre has a specially designed lift that allows people in wheelchairs to access the second floor. In addition, the outdoor ramps and outhouses are all accessible for persons with disabilities. This is important to serve our First Nation elders, our other Yukon citizens and the tourist market, such as when the tour companies bring elderly people to the centre by bus. With Holland America being in Dawson City, that is something that is ongoing. As we know, a lot of our tourists — I think the Minister of Tourism and Culture could speak to numbers of seniors that come to Yukon every year, but it's a good bunch.

Also at Tombstone Park, the beaver pond interpretive trail was Yukon's first accessible nature trail in a remote park. It offers a viewing deck with permanent wheelchair-accessible binoculars. In 2015, the Yukon government provided \$522,000 to enhance infrastructure in Yukon campgrounds. As the facilities are being redeveloped, universal access is a key consideration.

During 2015, Yukon Parks undertook four on-site visits with a disability expert to access our campgrounds, provided our planning and our operations staff with an orientation of universal design and did some identification for us — where the problems are and opportunities for improvement. At the new Conrad campground — set to open, as of course I spoke to earlier, in the spring — universal design is being addressed in several ways. Two designated universal-access campsites will include accessible parking, picnic tables and camping areas. New barrier-free outhouses are spaced throughout the campground. Designated parking is located near facilities, such as the kitchen shelter and the playground area. The design and construction of a new children's playground is planned for 2016 and includes an accessible area or a structure. We are also going to see a permanent accessible wildlife viewing spotting scope also planned for installation.

As we go forward, this Yukon Party government does have a plan and we're always looking to move forward and do a better job. Our parks include universal design as a core lens for designing, constructing, and maintaining campgrounds. This includes such things as — I think the member opposite spoke quite well about some of the related issues — minimizing slope on the approaches to facilities, and the standard is two percent; avoiding any lifts or obstructions that interfere with people's movements; and using ground materials such as cement, wood chips or stone dust that allow people to get in and out of their vehicles more easily.

Yukon Parks is currently looking at a redesign of our existing barrier-free outhouse to further enhance accessibility. Accessing docks from land can be a significant challenge for people with disabilities. Yukon Parks is exploring different dock systems that can provide better access. Some of our docks, Mr. Speaker, you have been to, being an avid boater and fisherman. Some of them are quite friendly to people who have accessibility issues, but some of them are a little bit more challenging.

At Wolf Creek, Yukon Parks is introducing a designed parking area and a barrier-free outhouse beside the trailhead. Several potential trails have been assessed to determine if they

can be made accessible for people with disabilities. Yukon Parks is currently exploring partnerships and funding to create accessible trails at Wolf Creek and Pine Lake campgrounds for the 2017-18 season.

This Yukon Party government will continue to make improvements to our campgrounds for the benefit of Yukoners and our visitors and I would welcome — especially from any of the MLAs, whether they are on this side of the House or the other side — if you're at a campground and somebody tells them that there is an issue, if they get in touch with me in the office, I can send it off to our Parks folks. If someone has ruttled up something for a wheelchair access, for example, our staff are great; they will get out there and fix it and do what needs to be done.

That's about all I have to say on the amendment to the motion, so I'll sit down and hear from members opposite.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** I'm certainly glad that I called this motion for debate today, and I want to thank the minister for sharing some information with the House about what the new Conrad campsite will be — that there will be accessible sites and that there will be designated parking and a permanent accessible spotting scope. I'm certain that if we do have the time to get into Environment debate in this Assembly, there will be more discussion on exactly that.

Using universal design as a core lens is the modern way to ensure buildings and campgrounds and communities are accessible. The minister has talked about the work the government had done to build barrier-free outhouses. I would point out that there are deficiencies in that. I mentioned that when I spoke to the original motion, and there is a need for improvement. I'm glad to hear that the minister has just spoken about doing that, because sometimes we don't achieve what we had hoped to achieve on the first attempt.

The minister's amendment takes out of the motion what I had hoped to see in setting an achievable target to start with at having accessible campsites at Wolf Creek, Marsh Lake and Teslin campgrounds. Those are all relatively close to Whitehorse. The minister has said that Yukon does have accessible sites for people with disabilities but, as far as I know, there are no accessible sites in those three campgrounds.

I'm encouraged that the minister has said that one of the reasons for his amendment is that they want to ensure they will make all campgrounds accessible, but I would have appreciated hearing from the minister that, since the government has designed a significant amount of money and made an announcement that they're going to add new sites and do some upgrades at the Wolf Creek, Marsh Lake and Teslin campgrounds, making them accessible during those upgrades will not fall by the wayside.

The minister also mentioned that the government has put money into upgrading campgrounds and so will continue to improve camping opportunities, and that there are ramps and accessible campground shelters at the Wolf Creek campground. I was at Wolf Creek campground on at least three occasions over the last summer — the summer of 2015

— and I wasn't at all of the campground shelters, but the ones I was at did not have a ramp and did not appear to me to be accessible. I hope that they will be — that was the intent of calling this motion for debate.

I will support the amendment in the interest of achieving unanimous consent to the motion before the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Does any other member wish to be heard on the amendment?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** I will be brief. First, I would like to thank the Member for Copperbelt South for bringing this motion forward to the floor today. Being the father of a child with a disability, I certainly appreciate the motion. I also appreciate the amendment brought forward by the MLA for Kluane in the sense that we continue to look at making improvements to campgrounds and that we always take into consideration — and I think we do — accessibility when we are looking at campgrounds. Certainly to the third point, where we are deleting the words after “facilities”, because I think the MLA for Kluane, the Minister of Environment, made a good point in the sense that those considerations are made not just with the newly developed campgrounds, but with the campgrounds throughout the territory.

I do commend the amendment to the motion. I will be speaking at greater length to the motion as amended, should we get to that point today. I think, for the minister and for the departments that are responsible for campgrounds — I know Highways and Public Works certainly does a lot work in the campgrounds as well as Environment — but as the father of a child with a disability and knowing a number of people who have disabilities — in wheelchairs and scooters and other cognitive types of disabilities — who I have seen out using the campgrounds, I know they appreciate the work that has been done over the last number of years to make them more accessible, at the same time taking into consideration the appreciation that all people have, whether they have a disability or not, for the great outdoors and going to a campground to take in the great outdoors.

I thank the MLA for Kluane for bringing in the amendment and certainly my regards to the Member for Copperbelt South for bringing the motion forward.

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

*Amendment to Motion No. 1093 agreed to*

**Speaker:** Does any other member wish to be heard on the motion, as amended?

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Like many other Yukoners, I enjoy camping. I have certainly taken my children, Jack and Kyle, camping since they were small children. They have always thoroughly enjoyed camping opportunities, whether it is playing on the playground equipment, fishing off the dock, tenting or staying in the camper, cooking over an open fire,

kayaking, canoeing or boating, walking or biking around the campgrounds, visiting with friends and neighbours, skipping stones, relaxing and enjoying the natural outdoors and lying on the beach. I have done this with my children since they were very young. As you know, my youngest son has a disability, so we generally look at it from the perspective that we conveniently go camping to be inconvenienced.

Having a background in social work and business and being a parent of a child with autism, I have some familiarity with the subject matter of this motion, as amended. We are fortunate to have so many professionals working with people with different abilities here in the territory. There are a number of NGOs, such as LDAY, Yukon Learn, Challenge-Disability Resource Group, Autism Yukon, Yukon Association for Community Living, FASSY, Teegatha'Oh Zehh, Gibbs' group home, the Child Development Centre, and so on. Members will recall that I paid tribute to many of those NGOs that provide those social service components to Yukoners.

We have government divisions, such as the Child Abuse Treatment Services, residential youth treatment services, St. Elias group home, supported independent living and so on. I know many of the staff in those organizations look at camping opportunities for the people they support there.

We also fund approved homes and foster homes, all of which provide supports and services to people with disabilities, including children. Also within my department, we have services to persons with disabilities. The services to persons with disabilities, or SPD, program currently serves approximately 147 adults with a range of cognitive and developmental disabilities. The department continues to collaborate with stakeholders on programs for persons with disabilities, including transition planning for youth with disabilities who are aging into the adult support system, and enhancements to residential services, including planning for the new St. Elias group home.

To further enhance collaboration, department officials continue to meet with the disability program's advisory committee, otherwise known as DPAC. It is an advisory committee comprised of adults with disabilities, families of children and adults with disabilities and departmental staff.

The new adult assessment and FASD diagnostic clinic in the SPD — or services for persons with disabilities — unit began accepting referrals in May of 2015 from Whitehorse and rural communities. Mr. Speaker, you're an individual who, like many of us in this Legislature, spend a lot of time at the campgrounds and we can certainly appreciate and recognize that a number of support staff accompany people with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and other disabilities to the campsites.

The department is continuing to work on policies and services to support persons with disabilities. Priorities include residential services and supporting families, as I've talked about in this House before.

While we debate this motion today, I also think it's important — and I touched on it earlier — to consider that balance between providing supports, services and accessibility

around campgrounds specifically, and maintaining the original intent of the campground itself. I talked about appreciating the great outdoors.

I can tell members that taking my son Jack camping is an experience unto itself, but it also gives him a chance to challenge himself. It gives him a chance to get away from the ramped curbs, the special parking spots, the elevators and modified washroom spaces. In fact, whether a person has a disability like my son Jack or not, I think the roughing-it component of camping is desirable to many. Earlier I talked about how we go camping to conveniently be inconvenienced.

There's another individual who certainly comes to my mind who, for me, epitomizes a person who was able-bodied and became disabled and continues to defy potential limitations. I believe it was in 2009 during a snowmobile extreme sport event in New Hampshire that he broke his back and collarbone and ribs and damaged his lungs. Any of us who know Darryl Tait knows that he doesn't let his disability define who he's able to be. Mr. Tait continues to amaze me and many others — from bobsledding to hand-cycling up Grey Mountain to skiing Mount Sima or continuing to do stunts on his snowmobile.

My point is that sometimes, whether it be going to a restaurant, park or campground in this matter, people with disabilities want to have opportunities to continue to challenge themselves without always having modifications in their surroundings. Often it is parents and support staff challenging those who are close to them with those different types of abilities.

As a parent, I chose not to use Jack's parking permit for special parking spaces. I support him to challenge himself to walk through a parking lot. I challenge him to ride his bike on gravel instead of taking the easy way on a paved trail, and I support him to use a regular washroom instead of a modified washroom. Jack — like many other Yukoners with different abilities — and other Yukoners — loves camping. He loves kayaking, swimming, sitting by the fire and exploring where he is able to explore.

I'm also aware that a number of non-profit organizations continue to have group events held at places like the Robert Service Campground, like Wolf Creek, Kookatsoon — and others, I'm sure. I know from personal experience how excited some people with disabilities or different abilities, like Jack, are when they have those opportunities at our existing campgrounds.

Our government continues to support people with cognitive and developmental disabilities by providing a community-based social safety net including residential care and supports for daily living. Residential supports are provided through a continuum of residential settings, one model being contracted private, approved caregiver homes. I know that part of the enhancements to approved caregiver homes included one-month vacation pay annually and compensation for respite supports. We know that the Premier recently made an announcement that enabled individuals living at the home other than parents, of course, who wanted to provide respite to a person with disability — now they are

able to do that, which I think, as a parent, is a terrific concept and idea.

Other residential support models available through the services to persons with disabilities unit would be supported independent living, staff group homes, staff residential placements for individuals with complex cognitive, developmental and behavioural challenges. Certainly many of us who frequent the campgrounds often see staff, parents or family members supporting those with different abilities in the campgrounds.

Our government is committed to ensuring there are services and supports available to both children and adults with different abilities and their families. In relation to children with disabilities, we have the FSCD program — family services for children with disabilities — that serves children and families with a broad range of disability-related needs, including chronic, developmental, physical, sensory, cognitive, mental health or neurological conditions or impairments.

I continue to be impressed by the level of support we have seen through FSCD since its inception — I think it was in 2006 or 2007 — under this Yukon Party government. I certainly recognized, as a parent with a newly diagnosed son, that there was work to be done. I'm glad, through working with this Yukon Party government, that we've seen that work done over the last decade. I appreciate the work done at FSCD and SPD, as I believe they help parents and caregivers challenge the children and adults whom they are responsible for.

Often we associate camping and the outdoors with healthy living. Of course, through Health and Social Services, we released the wellness plan for Yukon's children and families. That plan was released in April 2014, and it provides a wellness road map for Yukon government, other governments, community groups, businesses and individuals. Yukon government has engaged in many activities to support wellness. For example, the Pathways to Wellness website continues to be the go-to resource for evidence-based information on wellness. Weekly e-tips give people good ideas for a healthy life. An interdepartmental committee within Yukon government meets regularly to coordinate initiatives related to healthy living. Health and Social Services ran a public awareness campaign to promote mental well-being last spring. That was, as you'll recall, the Flourishing campaign, which provided tips on how individuals can take practical, easy steps to improve their mental well-being. I don't know about other members in the Legislative Assembly, but certainly I take those opportunities, when I go camping, to sit back, relax and just forget about daily life, and enjoy the great outdoors.

It is estimated that 58 percent of Canadians' health care dollars are spent treating and managing chronic conditions, which are largely preventable. Prevention of chronic diseases requires a multi-pronged and sustained approach that involves individuals, families and all sectors. The wellness plan summarizes the evidence on what we can do to improve

wellness for Yukon people. Certainly, for my part, it includes those camping opportunities.

I think it is important as we move forward — I know the Department of Environment, as they move forward on developing campgrounds and looking for opportunities — to look at other jurisdictions that have promoted accessibility, but still maintain the original intent of the campground and campsites and keeping that campground as natural looking as possible. I know that's important for my son.

I know from my conversations with many people who have cognitive and/or physical disabilities, they really enjoy the natural landscapes and the trails — albeit sometimes challenging — that campsites traditionally offer. I don't know of many people who would appreciate paved campground roads with concrete pathways or concrete slabs on sites, but I think if there are ways to promote accessibility while maintaining natural camping environments, we would be interested in learning more about those opportunities. I think that was the intent of the MLA for Kluane, in his amendment.

Perhaps there is a balance of natural campgrounds with some attention to accessibility and assistive devices, such as hand-cycles like the one that Darryl Tait uses, or off-road types of wheelchairs can also be looked at. I say this not because I don't believe in accessibility for everyone, but because many people with disabilities enjoy the outdoors and they enjoy the natural landscapes as much as their able-bodied friends and families do — something that we also need to consider, Mr. Speaker.

At the end of the day, one of the most important aspects of this issue is that we are debating it here and making these considerations for many people in our community with different abilities. Again, I thank the Member for Copperbelt South for bringing this motion forward today, but I also extend my thanks to the MLA for Kluane, for his friendly amendment that certainly makes perfect sense to me.

I commend this motion to the House.

**Ms. Stick:** I would like to thank the Member for Copperbelt South for bringing this motion forward. Accessibility for individuals with any type of disability is important to me. I just remind the House that it was just on December 3 that we did tributes here on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and that the theme this year was "Inclusion matters: access and empowerment for people of all abilities". Inclusion matters — access and empowerment. That, to me, is what this motion speaks to. It's giving all people the opportunity to take advantage of our beautiful campgrounds in the Yukon and to get out into nature, something all of us need.

I know probably most people in this House are happy to get out of this building and just go out into the parking lot and see the mountains, the river and sunsets — well, it's now dark — but it's an important part of our day. For me, it's getting out and walking my dog. For another member, one of my colleagues, it's getting out on her mountain bike and being out in that nature. It's important to all of us, and it doesn't matter

whether we have a disability or not. It anchors us; it feeds us; it makes us feel better.

Camping does the same thing. Whether it's a family, individuals, seniors, a person with disability — it's that getting out, back into nature, along water, in the trees and enjoying what we have.

I don't think, in making this motion today, that my colleague was suggesting that every campsite needs to be accessible — that there are opportunities for individuals to camp there who might have difficulty otherwise if there wasn't well-packed ground, if there weren't outhouses that were truly accessible to people with wheelchairs or their attendant.

I remember going to Alaska many years ago and seeing those accessible outhouses. I was amazed, and I thought, "This is brilliant." Cinderblock buildings, cement floors, lots of space, grab bars, raised toilet seats — it just seemed like such a simple fix. I have always wondered why we didn't follow that example a lot sooner. I mean, it is right next door. We could see it, and I'm sure everyone here has been in a campsite in Alaska and saw those types of facilities. It is a fix.

We are not suggesting that anything be paved over or any of nature be taken away. When we talk about making these campgrounds accessible, it's not just for wheelchairs. I think of my mother who I go to visit, and she is now 88 and living on her own. She needs to use her walker — well, she thinks she needs to use her walker now — but she is very fast on her feet. She loves to walk, and she loves to be out in nature. A simple sidewalk or a bit of pavement for her to get out and walk on in nature is wonderful, and she appreciates that.

I just think back to the controversy when we talked about paving the Millennium Trail. What a big deal that became in this community. We were ruining nature. It was a big deal for a lot of people. I look at that trail now, and it has that universal design, which means that it's accessible for everyone — for parents with strollers, seniors, people in wheelchairs and individuals with walkers. Its universal design has made it a real centrepiece in our town. I am always amazed — even now, they are plowing it to allow people to walk, and it's always busy. Just drive by the *SS Klondike* and see how many vehicles are parked there because people have gone and parked there just so they can do the Millennium Trail. Go out at lunch time and see how many government employees are out either running or walking parts of that trail. At the time, some people were dead against it, and yet it has become part of the community.

When we are looking at campgrounds, we are not looking for paving everything. We are not looking at taking away from what is already there. What we are asking is that it be more accessible for everyone. That is what universal design is about. It's to make it the best for all people, not just people with disabilities. I just wanted to say that.

I just wanted to say that we're not taking away; we're adding. With our aging population, with the number of seniors we see coming up the highway on their dream trips, it's not a big ask, but I think it's an important one. I would like to see it in every campground in the Yukon, whether it's here at Wolf

Creek or up the Aishihik Road at the Aishihik campground. They're beautiful campgrounds and they should be accessible to every person in the Yukon.

I thank my colleague for bringing forward this motion. Maybe it was a good thing to take those other campgrounds off and we just make it a point to do it for all campgrounds — universal design, make them accessible, accessible outhouses, ramps to those great shelters — so that everyone, every person, whether a parent with a stroller, a parent in a wheelchair or with a walker, a child — is able to take advantage of what we have and what we get to share.

**Ms. White:** I thank my colleague for bringing forward the motion and I appreciate the amendment that was made by the Minister of Environment. It's important to mention that, if we go to the Environment web page, it gives you a map and it talks about the accessible campgrounds in Yukon. There are 13 out of the 52 that are marked that say they have accessibility. What they don't say is what level of accessibility. They don't say if it's camping spots, they don't say if it's shelters, they don't say if it's washroom facilities. So 13 out of the 52 listed on the Yukon Environment website say they're accessible, they just don't say how they're accessible. Maybe that would be a change the department could make.

It's really important when we talk about accessibility that we talk about the different levels of accessibility. I didn't realize how inaccessible the community or the City of Whitehorse was, until I — I'm not sure I could say I had the pleasure of pushing my friend in a wheelchair, or if I had the terror of pushing my friend in a wheelchair, because it was wintertime. It turns out that a lot of the curbs that we have designed to go toward the roadway are so steep that we really risk dumping someone out. As soon as we put someone who is in their 70s into a wheelchair and you're then responsible for getting them from point A to point B, it becomes a lot less pleasurable, maybe, and a bit more stressful. I've often said that I would really like to see the disability community have a scavenger hunt someplace like on Main Street, where we would get to participate in a wheelchair and we would understand that a small stair becomes a big barrier to access.

When we discussed this motion as a group, we talked about the opportunities of getting out to nature and how important that is. In this House, we're all able-bodied. Because we have that ability to move, some of us maybe with a bit more limitation than others, but the point is that we all have the ability to get ourselves from point A to point B on our feet.

My colleague mentioned a family with two sons with Duchenne muscular dystrophy. I learned a lot because of my friendship with that family. The Millennium Trail is plowed in Whitehorse because of the active lobbying done by that family and their friends to the City of Whitehorse to get the trail plowed so that it could be used by people with varying levels of ability all year-round. I know that made a huge difference, not just for people in wheelchairs, but for seniors who are

using walkers and people who are a bit more unsteady on their feet.

When we talk about accessibility in campgrounds, there are all sorts of different ways that we can do it. It's not that it has to be set out in one way or the other. I think that it would be great if government endeavoured to make sure that our communications with what campgrounds were accessible and which weren't maybe were a bit clearer about what you could do there, depending on your level of ability. At Pine Lake campground, there are a couple of wooden boardwalk trails, and there are some that aren't, but it means that the ones that have boardwalks are more accessible, that if you are unsure on your feet, if you are unstable or you are in a wheelchair, you can access them.

It was interesting when the Minister of Health and Social Services mentioned the handcycle. I'm not sure if he has ever looked into the cost of the handcycle, but I know from conversations with Darryl that the bike that he rides when we go biking retails for \$10,000. I think it would be fantastic if we made handcycles available to the wheelchair community in Whitehorse, and Yukon as a whole. It would be great if they were able to access the funding to purchase that kind of sporting equipment, because it would definitely make things far more accessible for them.

I appreciate that it appears that we are moving toward unanimous support of this motion. I hope that the website on the Environment Yukon page improves and tells us what the accessibility level is of those 13 campgrounds out of the 52. I look forward to campgrounds in the future being designed more with that accessibility in mind. I look forward to seeing the renovations of existing campsites include accessibility in their design, and I look forward to seeing people of all levels of ability in Yukon being able to camp, and camp with fewer barriers — and my hope is, at some point, camp with zero barriers. I commend this motion to the House.

**Mr. Barr:** I would like to thank the Member for Copperbelt South for bringing forward this motion. I too look forward to seeing this come through as another move forward by all of us in the House. When I reflect on the day, it has been all about inclusion — not only this motion but the previous motion. I think that makes the world a better place. The more we can do to include all of those in society, we will be better for it.

I just wanted to add my little bit of words, and I commend this motion to the House.

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

**Ms. Moorcroft:** I would like to thank all of my colleagues in the Legislature for expressing their support for this motion. Inclusion matters.

As my colleague, the Member for Riverdale South, reminded us on December 3, we marked as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and the theme for this year

was not only that inclusion matters, but that inclusion means access and empowerment for people of all abilities.

Some people with disabilities can navigate the trail from Schwatka Lake to Canyon City and enjoy a wonderful picnic lunch there. Other people with disabilities need more accessible trails and more accessible features in our campgrounds. Some people with disabilities can do mountain bike trails with their chairs, but they need them to be groomed to remove roots, mud holes and gravel holes.

People with disabilities and their families are the ones who do the advocacy work on a daily basis. Those of us who enjoy the privilege of being in this Assembly, and all of us being able-bodied, as the Member for Takhini-Kopper King noted, must also work to promote accessibility.

The Minister of Environment said during his remarks that there will be accessible campsites at Conrad, and that is great. I invite the minister to share with the public which campgrounds in the Yukon are already accessible. When a campground is noted as accessible, does that simply mean that it has an accessible outhouse or does it mean that there are accessible campsites and accessible camp shelters and accessible trails? Where are they?

I would agree that we need to see updates on the website so that families of people with disabilities will be able to know where it is that they can look forward to going camping, when the camping season begins in the spring.

The Minister of Environment also spoke about rough terrain being a difficulty and that Highways and Public Works has the ability to shovel a berm and maintain a hard-packed ramp so that his constituent could stop at an accessible outhouse between Haines Junction and Whitehorse. That's what this motion calls on the Yukon government to do for existing and for future campgrounds.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, as it was originally amended, the motion calls for that accessibility of campgrounds to be done at existing campgrounds, including the work that was planned for three specific campgrounds that are having updates. So the intent was never to limit that accessibility to only a few campgrounds.

Making more campgrounds accessible is something the Yukon government could do and should do. I'm pleased to hear that the government is in support of that. People with disabilities have waited a long time to have fair access to campgrounds.

I think it would be a fitting way to mark Human Rights Day tomorrow on December 10 by being able to say that this Legislature has unanimously supported a motion to improve camping opportunities for persons with disabilities and to make our campgrounds and campsites and facilities accessible for all.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Mr. Elias:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Stick:** Agree.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Mr. Tredger:** Agree.

**Mr. Barr:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yea, nil nay.

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

*Motion No. 1093, as amended, agreed to*

**Speaker:** As there is no other private members' business identified today, we will proceed to government bills.

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### Bill No. 93: *Act to Amend the Oil and Gas Act* — Third Reading

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 93, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Kent.

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** I move that Bill No. 93, entitled *Act to Amend the Oil and Gas Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that Bill No. 93, entitled *Act to Amend the Oil and Gas Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** I'm going to be very brief at third reading, as this bill and the aspects of it are fresh in everyone's mind. We accomplished second reading in Committee of the Whole this week. I would like to thank the members opposite — particularly the Member for Mayo-Tatchun for his remarks during second reading and in questions during Committee of the Whole.

This bill was introduced as per the Standing Orders within the first five days of the sitting, but we held back so that additional consultations could be completed with First Nations, particularly the MOA working group. I would again like to thank those officials from Yukon government, as well as the First Nation government officials, for working through toward the two amendments that were presented during Committee of the Whole that addressed the concerns that were raised by First Nations.



With that, Mr. Speaker, I will welcome remarks from the Member for Mayo-Tatchun at third reading and look forward to the passage of this bill and assent.

**Mr. Tredger:** I thank the minister for his remarks. In supporting this bill, I extend my thanks to the Energy, Mines and Resources officials and Yukon First Nations that came together to repair controversial amendments that were originally brought forward with too much haste, as it turns out.

The minister has said this is a new industry in the territory, and that is exactly why he should take more time and a more thoughtful and collaborative approach in drafting the amendments. The most contentious proposal from the discussion document has been removed at First Nation request. When it comes to developing industries in the Yukon, the smartest way to ensure success is through respectful and cooperative relationships with Yukon First Nation governments.

We will support this bill, now that it is improved by the amendments to the amendments that the government made in cooperation with the working group. I appreciate the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources' recognition of different visions regarding how to meet Yukon's future energy needs.

In my closing remarks, I will reference the Earth's climate, Mr. Speaker. Our planet, our home, has one atmosphere, only one, and all Earth's creatures share it. Planning to meet the needs of future generations, I urge all decision-makers to make the needs of the Earth's atmosphere the top priority.

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

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** In my opening comments, I neglected to thank my colleagues on this side of the House, the government caucus, for their work and support in bringing forward this bill, as amended, as well. It's through the work and efforts of all of us on this side of the House, as well as our First Nation partners, that we were able to address the amendments. The section 68 amendments that the member opposite referenced, of course, were removed before the bill was tabled, and then the tenure for permits and the consultation process was altered with the two amendments that we introduced yesterday, so again, thank you to everyone involved for bringing this to a successful conclusion in such a short amount of time.

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

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Yes, as one of my colleagues said, there are only three more days left. I thank all those involved for bringing this to a successful conclusion, and the amount of time that it took should also be appreciated to bring these amendments forward and have them agreed to inside of just a little over a month's time was testament to the commitment of all of the parties in seeing this get done.

Again, thank you very much, and I look forward to voting on this bill.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

#### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

#### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Mr. Elias:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Taylor:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Graham:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Nixon:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Stick:** Agree.

**Ms. Moorcroft:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Mr. Tredger:** Agree.

**Mr. Barr:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yea, nil nay.

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

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 93 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 93 has passed this House.

**Mr. Elias:** 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 5:13 p.m.*

#### The following sessional papers were tabled December 9, 2015:

33-1-182

*Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board Annual Report 2014-2015 (Dixon)*

33-1-183

*Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board Annual Report 2014-2015 (Dixon)*

33-1-184

*Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Fund Annual Report 2014-2015 (Cathers)*