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HANSARD

Wednesday, March 29, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Spring Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Deputy Premier Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Environment; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Minister of Finance; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Lane Tredger*	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

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Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
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* Lane Tredger changed their name from Emily Tredger on March 29, 2023

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, March 29, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of personal privilege

Speaker: The Member for Whitehorse Centre, on a point of personal privilege.

MLA Tredger: I rise today on a point of personal privilege. I am announcing a change to my name and pronouns. My first name is changing from Emily to Lane. I am now Lane Tredger. My pronouns are “they” and “them”.

Thank you, everyone.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleagues in the Assembly to welcome a number of individuals who are here today for our tribute to Chris Sorg. Please, can you help me in welcoming, first of all, Sherry Sorg. Thank you for coming today.

Please also welcome Emily Lindley, Brandon Lindley, Heather Keats, Leonard Kireti, Natalie Carlson, Lise Schonewille, Troy Ford, Elaine Smart, Nick Smart, Terry Sutherland, Lauri Horte, Ellen Davignon, as well as Rick Karp. Thank you for joining us today for this tribute.

Applause

MLA Tredger: I am really delighted to introduce a number of students from the Porter Creek Rainbow Room. We have: Emily Graham, Anya Lera, Arianna Charles, Ash Baranyk, Emily Willems, Nevaeh Malcolm, Avery Malcolm, Sylvia Graham, Ben Rumbolt, Maggie King, Aurora Lowey, Akira Thorsteinson, Grace Beauchemin, Donovan Carriedo, Seanna Gee, Laila Mason, Nari Barker, Athena Barker, Azarioa Hogan, Laughlin Muldoon, Jack Istchenko, Parker Gammie, Brooklyn Kunnizzi-Njootli, and their leader, Jason Cook.

I also want to introduce some staff members from my office. We have Jan Stick, Dan Bader, Pascaline Etter, Saba Javed, Erik Pinkerton, and I am also really delighted to introduce my partner, Robin Steudel, who is here today.

I am so grateful for all of you for being here. Thank you.

Applause

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Chris Sorg

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Chris Sorg. Chris was an active member of the Whitehorse business community and a prominent voice for entrepreneurs in the territory, always there to greet you with a smile on his face and exchange with a personable interaction.

He sadly passed away on September 1, 2022 at Vancouver General Hospital after a courageous battle against cancer. I would like to extend condolences to Chris’ family here today and speak about some of his accomplishments.

As the owner of Mac’s Fireweed Books and Murdoch’s Gem Shop on Main Street, Chris was a vocal supporter of shopping local and elevating Whitehorse’s downtown businesses. Chris was born in New Jersey, but after falling in love with the Yukon, he moved to Dawson City in 1987, where he ran a restaurant and eventually purchased Maximilian’s Gold Rush Emporium. Always an active member of the community, Chris also served as the chair of the Dawson City Museum and Historical Society, during his time, fully entrenching himself in the territory’s history and culture.

Chris would go on to move to Whitehorse in 1995, where he and his wife, Sherry, purchased Mac’s Fireweed Books and Paradise Alley and opened Maximilian’s in the Porter Creek mall, a shop many Yukoners still remember fondly. Nicknamed the “mayor of Main Street”, Chris was always passionate about maintaining a thriving downtown core in our capital city and was frequently coming up with new ideas for improving the heart of downtown Whitehorse.

Chris always had plenty of projects on the go, aspiring to make Main Street and Whitehorse a better experience for Yukoners and visitors alike. He spearheaded movements to address many local issues, from downtown parking to supporting local businesses, to create a more attractive Main Street. Among his many accolades, he was given the annual Heritage Award in 2004 for being long involved in the Yukon heritage community and dedicated to preserving and revitalizing historic elements of our streets.

Chris also played an active role in serving the community as the president of the Main Street Society Yukon, as a member on the board of directors of the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, and as a member of the governance council of the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Society.

Chris will be remembered as a leader in the city and the Yukon as a whole. He was a strong representative for entrepreneurs and an example of how shopping local and supporting your fellow Yukoner can have a ripple effect that continues to give back to the community. Chris Sorg has made the Yukon a better place, and I hope you will all join me in recognizing the life of a local icon. He will be missed.

Applause

Mr. Kent: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Chris Sorg, also known unofficially to many as the “mayor of Main Street”.

Many Yukoners knew Chris from years back when he owned and operated the Moose Creek Lodge in the 1980s and later from his time at Maximilian's in Dawson City and, of course, from his many Main Street businesses here in Whitehorse, including Murdoch's Gem Shop, Midnight Sun Emporium, Paradise Alley, and, of course, Mac's Fireweed Books.

Yesterday, I spoke to Elaine Smart, who has joined us here today. She sold Chris' Maximilian's in Dawson City and later Mac's Fireweed here in Whitehorse. She described Chris to me as straightforward and honest and that he cared about the good of the community.

Chris was a well-known business owner and familiar face to many. His passion for our city and for the Yukon was portrayed through his work and through his advocacy for community issues. I know of several Yukon businesses that Chris would take the time to personally thank if they did such things as planting flowers or somehow made their premises more inviting.

Chris greatly supported the literary community and was a great promoter of local talent. He showcased their talents at Mac's Fireweed and did his best to foster an environment that would allow budding local writers to get their start. Rick Karp, also in the gallery here today, told me that when he started writing books, he would visit Chris to discuss issues, and Chris would give his support during the publication process. He would offer book-signing events, put local authors' books in the front window, and so much more.

His involvement in city revitalization projects, Main Street planning, and work with the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce has been instrumental in keeping Whitehorse vibrant, keeping our local economy thriving, and encouraging a sense of civic pride in the downtown core.

If the City of Whitehorse makes their town square idea on Main Street a permanent feature, I can't think of a better person than Chris for them to dedicate it to or perhaps even name it after him.

To Chris' wife, Sherry, his four children, five grandchildren, and his extended family and friends, we offer our sincere condolences and want you to know that Chris has left a lasting impression on our community that will go on for decades.

Applause

Ms. White: Today, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to join in the celebration of Chris Sorg. As we have heard from my colleagues, Chris' life story is unique and full of adventure, from Moose Creek to Main Street, so what strikes me in learning about his remarkable life is that, out of all of the places in the world that he could have chosen to call home, he chose the Yukon. Once he made that choice, he did everything he could to make it better for his family and the community as a whole.

His unique perspective and willingness to lend a hand and offer up creative solutions to problems that he saw will be missed, and they will always be remembered.

So, to his family and friends, we are so sorry for your loss.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today a legislative return in response to questions posed by the Member for Copperbelt North during debate on the supplementary budget and the vote on the Yukon Development Corporation.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter dated February 13, 2023, addressed to the Government of Yukon from the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and the Yukon Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I have four letters for tabling.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, today I have for tabling a notification that was hung saying "Limited to No Vacancy At Whitehorse Hotels March 20, 2023 to March 27, 2023".

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I have two letters for tabling today.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the RCMP M Division and the RCMP Veterans' Association on a Yukon celebration to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the RCMP in 2023.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with Yukon communities to assist them with marking the Yukon's 125th birthday celebrations in 2023.

Mr. Istchenko: I rise in the House today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to use the 2023-24 budget to complete road upgrades on the Champagne access road.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to use the 2023-24 budget to permanently repair the extreme heaving in the road at the Takhini subdivision entrance off the Alaska Highway and build a turning lane.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Extension of LNG plant loan agreement

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise today to provide an update on the extension of the liquefied natural gas — or LNG — plant loan agreement previously advanced by the Government of Yukon to the Yukon Development Corporation.

First, some history: The original loan agreement dates back to 2013, when the Government of Yukon provided a \$39-million short-term loan to the Yukon Development Corporation. This loan was to fund Yukon Energy Corporation's construction of the LNG plant, which came online in 2015. We use our LNG plant the same way we use diesel generators — as backup when there is a blackout and to meet electricity demand, especially in the coldest and darkest of days.

LNG is a fossil fuel. Our population has been growing significantly, and mining activity has been increasing. Despite all of this demand, and guided by the principles of *Our Clean Future*, we are improving our efficiency and adding renewable generation to our grid. Our electricity generation over the past 12 months was still 93-percent renewables and seven-percent fossil fuel-based. That is the good news.

Moving on to less than good news: The Yukon Party government back then made choices that do not paint them as the sound fiscal managers they portray themselves as today. This was a short-term loan without a plan for repayment. I can only assume that the now Official Opposition did not want to fight an election, having just raised electricity rates. The 2016 general rate application left this significant cost out. When we landed as a government in late 2016, we learned that there was no plan to pay off this loan and that it would need to be converted to long-term borrowing.

Mr. Speaker, we believe in fiscal transparency around borrowing and debt. The original loan agreement was established in 2018 for a five-year period, with a 40-year loan payment plan. The loan agreement will be renewed on April 1, 2023, and we will continue to pay \$1 million plus interest each year until the loan is repaid.

I look forward to hearing from colleagues across the aisle.

Mr. Cathers: That was a very creative interpretation of the facts by the Liberals in an attempt to do damage control after the federal budget failed to include over \$100 million in funding that the Premier asked the Prime Minister for to cover the massive funding gap in the Atlin hydro project.

The Liberal government's plan for the territory's energy future is entirely dependent on the Atlin hydro project. They have no plan B and are over \$100 million short of money to build it.

The minister conveniently forgets that the \$39-million loan associated with installing the LNG facility was offset by a multi-million-dollar investment by the Kwanlin Dün First Nation's development corporation. That investment equalled half the project cost. The Chief of KDFN sat beside the Premier

and minister of the day to announce their investment in the project.

Here is what the *Whitehorse Star* said on May 1, 2015: "Chief Doris Bill of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation signed an agreement this morning allowing Kwanlin Dün to buy into the new LNG plant. 'This opportunity will create future wealth for our citizens and strengthen the economic base for Kwanlin Dün,' the chief told a packed room at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre where the signing ceremony occurred ... The agreement allows the First Nation to invest up to 50 percent of the project cost, it was said this morning ... Under the arrangement, the First Nation will have a guaranteed — though fluctuating — rate of return on its investment, in the same way Yukon Energy and ATCO Electric Yukon are provided a guaranteed rate of return."

"At the outset, let me say we view this partnership with the Yukon Development Corporation as an important tool for assisting our First Nation in participating in Yukon's energy future, and in capturing economic benefits from industrial developments in our traditional territory," the chief said."

Chief Doris Bill was also quoted by the *Whitehorse Star*, saying: "Part of my job is to generate wealth for our community... We looked at this agreement, we did our due diligence on it, we hired an independent firm to look at the deal and we have concluded that this would benefit our community."

On May 15, 2015, the *Yukon News* said: "The decision to invest in Yukon Energy's liquefied natural gas plant is supported by the Kwanlin Dün First Nation community, according to the chief. 'Members were provided information about the deal at a packed meeting at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre earlier this year, and almost everyone supported the investment,' said Chief Doris Bill in an interview this week."

When the minister rises, perhaps he can tell this House how much revenue from the LNG project has gone to benefit the KDFN development corporation and the KDFN community.

When the Yukon Party left office, Mr. Speaker, 98 percent of electricity on the grid was renewable, and that is according to Yukon Energy's 2016 annual report. But Yukon Energy's predictions for load growth meant that the territory was going to need more generation capacity added to the grid much faster than a new hydro option could possibly be pursued. So, as government, we faced a choice: add the generation option that the YEC and Yukon Utilities Board said was the most cost-effective, which we did, or do like the Liberal government did and ignore the evidence.

The Liberals, as we know, chose to rent diesel generators, while pretending to be green. They pretend that the diesel rentals are a short-term solution. In 2022, the Yukon Utilities Board slammed the government's claim and called them "disingenuous". The YUB said that YEC "... expects to be renting diesels past 2030. Renting [diesels] for at least 14 years is a not a short-term event or a solution." YUB said: "YEC also confirmed at the hearing that rented diesel units are not as reliable as permanent solutions."

The cost of renting and fuelling them is over \$14 million and climbing. According to YEC's rate increase application: "Higher fuel prices account for \$2.1 million of the 2021 GRA

revenue shortfall.” That’s over \$16 million being added to power bills because of the Liberals’ political decision.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is trying to distract from their failure to get \$106 million for the Atlin hydro project —

Speaker: Order, please.

MLA Tredger: The \$39-million loan that was made to the Yukon Development Corporation by the then-Yukon Party government back in 2013 was before my time in the Legislature, so I have been doing a bit of reading on the topic and was interested to see a motion tabled by the former Member for Whitehorse Centre in 2018. Just a note that this was during the time of the current Liberal government. It reads:

THAT this House urges the government to:

(1) appoint an independent commission to conduct a forensic review of all transactions related to the \$39.2-million loan to the Yukon Development Corporation to build the Whitehorse LNG facility; and

(2) allow for the independent commission to call for witnesses and have unrestricted access to all government and government corporation financial documents and correspondence regarding the \$39.2-million loan to the Yukon Development Corporation to build the Whitehorse LNG facility.

I think that we can probably all agree that building an LNG plant and tying us to fossil fuels was a pretty terrible idea. It’s perhaps not a surprise from the Yukon Party, which I think knows about climate change but has actively voted and campaigned against meaningful climate action. But before the Liberal government spends too much time blaming the Yukon Party, I would ask: Where is the plan to get to the promised 45-percent reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030?

Yesterday, the Minister of Highways and Public Works told me that one of the key suggestions of the Climate Leadership Council is “significantly challenging”. The implication, as I understood it, was that it was too challenging, but I do hope that I’m wrong in that interpretation.

If this government does decide that what the Climate Leadership Council proposed is too challenging, then what is their plan to get us to a 45-percent reduction? *Our Clean Future*, as it stands, does not even get us to 30 percent. They have promised a 45-percent reduction, they have legislated a 45-percent reduction, but I am starting to lose faith that they plan to achieve it.

I know my frustration is showing, so I would like to remind everyone in this House what the goal is. The goal is that we, as a people, survive. The goal is that there is a livable future for us and our children. The goal is that, in the coming years of natural disasters, of mass displacement of climate refugees around the world, of overwhelming changes to our food chains and supply networks, that we have some hope, that we mitigate the inevitable changes to our world as best we can and build resilient systems that can survive them. That has to be our goal. That has to be where our focus lies. That has to be what we pour our energy and resources into — not delaying, not arguing; we have to find a way forward.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I agree that it is imperative that we transition our energy economy. I also believe that, as an islanded grid — until we make a grid connect to British Columbia or, even after the fact — we will still need backup. What we want to do is make sure that those dollars are spent transparently and responsibly.

On the eve of the pending territorial election in 2016, the previous Yukon Party government structured a \$39-million short-term loan for the LNG plant in a questionable way. As I stated earlier, the original short-term loan agreement had no plan in place to pay it back. In fact, one could conclude that the former Yukon Party government took this action so that it would seem like \$30 million was going to be paid back by March 2018. The result was that the government’s books looked better than they really were. This was not realistic or fair to the public.

What’s more, the former Yukon Party government kept the cost of the LNG plant off the rate application to avoid having to increase Yukoners’ power bills just before an election. These decisions were made at the expense of Yukoners.

The reason I sought to give this ministerial statement today is to be up front with Yukoners about the borrowing for the Development Corporation. Transparency is important. I am not criticizing the decision to build the LNG plant; we need thermal backup for our stand-alone Yukon grid, especially given our growth. I am concerned over how the finances were handled by the Yukon Party.

I would also like to note for Yukoners that this renewed loan agreement does not have any implications on operation and maintenance expenditures, capital expenditures, or personnel. Our current total consolidated debt for the Yukon, as reported in the 2021-22 Public Accounts, is \$216 million.

As the Minister of Finance has pointed out, the consolidated debt under the Yukon Party was \$202 million, as per the 2015-16 Public Accounts. The consolidated debt is the total money that we have borrowed. The bulk of this \$216 million is held by Yukon Development Corporation loans at \$173 million.

At 5.8 percent, the Yukon has one of the lowest debt-to-GDP ratios among all provincial and territorial jurisdictions. Part of these best practices involve providing a full accounting of the government’s fiscal indicators.

I am proud of our government’s record in fiscal responsibility and in transparency with Yukoners overall. I am also proud of our work to transition away from fossil fuels to a green economy, while at the same time making sure that our electricity is reliable and affordable.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Physician licensing

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, lack of access to a family doctor is a serious problem in the Yukon. The Liberal government has been slow to act, while thousands of Yukoners are without a family doctor. In November, the president of the

Yukon Medical Association said this: "... the number of physicians who we have here living and working here on a full-time basis has not kept up with the rate of population growth that we've been experiencing."

Both the YMA and the Canadian Medical Association support pan-Canadian licensing for physicians to allow them to freely move and work anywhere in the country.

Will the government agree to finally take action and work with the YMA and the Yukon Medical Council on a solution that allows doctors licensed anywhere in Canada to practise in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question, because I am able to convey to Yukoners that this work is already ongoing. I have had many discussions with my colleagues across the country, as well as with the federal Minister of Health.

National licensure is a critical issue for all jurisdictions that are dealing with physician shortages, and they are from coast to coast to coast. That work is being done.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Medical Association says on its website: "A recent survey of CMA members shows that 95% support pan-Canadian licensure, with 63% indicating it would make them more likely to seek out locum opportunities in other provinces and 75% agreeing that it would improve access to health care in rural, remote and northern communities."

Currently, physicians must seek licences with different regulatory bodies if they want to move. The head of the Yukon Medical Association called that a "bureaucratic and arduous process", and the CMA says this about the acute shortage of family doctors: We need to take action now.

I am pleased to hear the minister indicating she is open to this, but will the minister provide us with a timeline for working with the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon Medical Council on a solution and legislative changes that allow doctors from anywhere in Canada to practise in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This government supports pan-Canadian licensure for all medical professionals. We have brought this issue to the national table. We have led many of the discussions at the national table. The Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Medical Council — we have recently met with them. This is always a topic on our agenda. This work is being done. It's critically important that this problem is solved in a pan-Canadian way.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased by the indication, but I do have to remind the minister that the legislation pertaining to this is Yukon legislation. This government has fumbled the ball for too many years, and thousands of Yukoners are without a family doctor as a result. As the Canadian Medical Association says that we need to take action now.

Nova Scotia and Manitoba both recently announced changes to speed up recognition of doctors trained outside the country. The College of Physicians & Surgeons of Nova Scotia has agreed to accept US board-certified doctors. The CEO of that body also said, "... we're certainly open to the idea of examining which jurisdictions are substantially similar to Canada."

The Yukon could consider that approach and potentially recognize credentials of doctors trained and licensed in the US, the UK, and other countries with high standards of medical education.

Will the government agree to discuss that possible solution with the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon Medical Council and seek their views on a path forward?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, I want to commend the minister, because this is work that has been happening. This is work that has been happening internally. I had a great opportunity to meet with the president of the Canadian Medical Association, as well as the Yukon Medical Association. The conversation was about mobility, but it was also about recognition of foreign credentials.

This is work that our previous Premier brought to the table at the Council of the Federation, alongside Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. At the Canadian trade table back in December, it was a topic of conversation. I was standing there as the Minister of Economic Development. We committed to work with Ontario around a conference this spring on this.

These are the things that we think are extremely important. I appreciate the comments from the Member for Lake Laberge. Any documentation or strategy work that he did as Health and Social Services minister on this topic, please feel free to share. We will go back and take a look at it.

This is, of course, family doctors, and the need for family doctors is not something that happened last year or the year before; this has been an issue over a long period of time.

Again, foreign credentials are key, and I want to commend the minister for working alongside me. We are actually bringing all of the regulatory bodies together — the leadership of health over the next two weeks in the Yukon — and part of the conversation will be fast-tracking foreign credentials, mobility, and all these issues.

Question re: Building code and standards

Mr. Kent: So, a recent policy change by the Yukon government is making it harder for housing contractors to get homes built and sold in a timely way. The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources recently changed the requirement to obtain a land title for a residence from being clad to weather to a residence requiring an occupancy permit issued by the City of Whitehorse. This change is adding yet another layer of process, red tape, and cost onto the home building sector.

Can the minister explain why the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources land branch has made this change that is adding a new layer of process, additional timelines, and additional costs onto home builders during a time when we need more houses built and brought to market?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will go back and check in with the department again. The last time that I inquired about this, the explanation was that it was a more realistic threshold, that it had been done in conjunction working with the City of Whitehorse, and that it was working to assist homeowners overall. It had to do with times when houses were not getting completed, so it is part of the agreement of sale, and it's

information that is put up front for those people putting their names into the lottery system.

I will go back and try to get more details for the member opposite, but my understanding is that this was a common-sense approach that was brought through conversations with the City of Whitehorse.

Mr. Kent: So, the minister and I have exchanged several letters on this issue, which I tabled earlier today. In the most recent letter, the minister said — and I quote: “We discussed the administrative change with the City of Whitehorse before implementing it to ensure we aligned our processes and that the change would support the goal of providing quality housing to future home owners.”

Instead of doing that, all that this process change has done is add timelines, add cost, and add red tape onto home builders. What’s worse is that it seems that the city isn’t on board with it, either. At a March 20 city council meeting, officials confirmed that this policy change was strictly a Yukon government decision, not a City of Whitehorse one.

So, can the minister clarify if this decision was made in consultation with the city or not?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite for reading from the letter that I wrote back to him.

Look, Mr. Speaker, the process around how the letters are developed in these caseworks is that the department is doing the work and drafting the letter for me and then bringing it to me. I usually have a conversation with them; then I sign off on the letter.

So, yes, the department did give me that indication — that they were in conversation with the City of Whitehorse. I will be happy to go and confirm.

I try to have regular meetings with the City of Whitehorse. They haven’t flagged this issue to me. I thank the member opposite for raising it — happy to look into it.

Mr. Kent: I hope I don’t have to remind the minister that he’s the one who signs the letters, and he is accountable for what is in those documents.

We have heard from contractors in the home-building field who are saying that this policy change has created a new process, with months being added to the timelines. Mr. Speaker, in this housing market, the last thing that the housing industry needs is new timelines, new processes, and more red tape, but unfortunately, that’s exactly what the government has given them, and what’s worse is that this will likely result in increased costs that will ultimately have to be passed on to homeowners.

Can the minister tell us what consultation occurred with the home-building industry before he made this policy change?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Again, I take all responsibility for signing the letters that I sign — and as being the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. This is a very specific question; I am happy to dig into it and take another look.

When I spoke with the department previously, we went over these concerns, and they gave me strong answers, which I believed were correct. I will confirm by talking with the City of Whitehorse and making sure what that situation is. I will confirm about how we went off and developed this policy. But,

at its heart, it was about making sure that homeowners got to a place where there was a threshold by which we could all agree that there was significant completion.

It’s about the agreement that is signed up front around how we will get these lots moving and developed so that we see lot development happening here in the territory.

Question re: Emergency medical services staffing

Ms. White: Earlier this week, I asked a question about Yukon Emergency Medical Services. According to a recent access-to-information document, on average, between last January and October, someone called 911 every day and there wasn’t an ambulance available to respond immediately. Many callers waited over two hours for an ambulance to be dispatched, and in one instance, there was a 15-hour wait.

Yukon EMS workers are doing a tremendous job in difficult circumstances, but the minister could make things less difficult for them by funding them adequately. The minister said that EMS services are fully staffed, and that’s good, but it wasn’t what I asked. The fact is that the government does not fund enough paramedic positions to provide adequate coverage for the territory, putting Yukoners’ lives at risk.

Does the minister think that he is providing adequate resources to Yukon EMS? If yes, why are some wait times so long and code reds so frequent?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the opportunity to talk about the great work that Yukon Emergency Medical Services does every day in the territory. I have said it before and I will say it again — virtually every time I am questioned, I will say so — because in one of the most challenging jurisdictions in the country, with one of the smallest populations, with some of the longest distances between communities, and in some of the most challenging environments that we see in the country — weather and that type of climactic issue — our Emergency Medical Services staff provide services to the public, saving their lives and delivering babies every single day. They are doing so under challenging circumstances, so there will be times and situations where incident volumes exceed available resources.

We are a small territory, Mr. Speaker, but this is not a challenge unique to the territory where incident volumes exceed our available resources. This is a situation that is mirrored in every province and territory in the country. We are not dissimilar to anywhere else in the country. EMS manages these situations through a variety of approaches to reduce patient impact and prioritize critical care.

Ms. White: Just to remind the minister, there were shortages last year every day between January and October. Again, this is not a criticism of the amazing work done by EMS teams, but it sure is a criticism of this government.

The Yukon has grown a lot since 2006 — in his own words, by 12.8 percent — but the number of paramedic teams funded by this government has just not kept pace with our growing population. An additional full-time medic unit would go a long way to reducing code reds and wait times. It would reduce stress and burnout for existing medic teams and improve retention in a very difficult profession. Most importantly, it

could save Yukoners' lives in an emergency, but this hypothetical additional team is not budgeted for.

I have a very simple question for the minister: When was the last time the number of paramedic units necessary for our territory was reviewed?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I was saying, Emergency Medical Services manages these situations through a variety of approaches to reduce patient impact and prioritize critical care. At times, this may mean that Emergency Medical Services repositions people and ambulances to ensure coverage, ensures coverage for the nearest units, and utilizes medevac, among other ways to deliver services.

As we speak, we are currently in the midst of transforming our medical care throughout the territory. We are in the process of transferring Emergency Medical Services over to Health and Social Services to have a more integrated approach. It's a timely question and I appreciate it from the member opposite, but the reality is that, right now, we are in the process of retooling the entirety of our medical services — as the Minister of Health and Social Services has said many times on the floor of the Legislature — to make sure that it has resources to better serve Yukoners. This is the most transformative time in the Yukon's health history since before the responsibility for health was actually transferred to the territory. We are looking at this. It's an important overhaul that we are undertaking. It will transform health services to all Yukoners into the future.

I look forward to future questions.

Ms. White: So, I will remind the minister that his government has been responsible for EMS delivery since 2016. I wonder what his briefing note has to say to Yukoners who have had to wait hours for an ambulance to arrive at their houses.

When someone calls 911 for a medical emergency, they expect someone to be dispatched within minutes — not hours. Without enough available paramedics at all times, some people may not make it to the hospital when they are in a medical emergency.

If a person has a stroke and an ambulance takes two hours instead of 20 minutes to arrive, the consequences could be enormous. The Yukon has incredible dedicated and hard-working EMS workers, and this government is letting them down by not budgeting for enough of them to meet the needs of Yukoners.

Will the minister commit to improving Yukon EMS response times by providing permanent funding for additional ambulance crews?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Well, just last year, we increased funding to EMS to fund full-time positions in Watson Lake. We have done the same thing in other municipalities.

As I have said several times on the floor of the Legislature in this session, EMS manages situations through a variety of approaches to reduce patient impact and prioritize critical care. At times, this may mean that Emergency Medical Services repositions people and ambulances to ensure coverage. It ensures coverage from the nearest units; it utilizes medevac among other ways to deliver services.

They are doing a tremendous job. You are not going to get any other answer out of me.

I will say, as well, that this is not a situation unique to the Yukon. We see it in every single city, territory, and province in the country, and we are managing it through maintaining aggressive recruitment. We are training new staff. We have orientation programs. We have training protocols that are going out across the territory. We are always looking for volunteers and professionals.

EMS recruitment strategies have allowed the services to bolster capacity. We are doing a great job as far as EMS, and I am passing it on to my good colleague in Health and Social Services. I am sure that when that transfer is complete, health services are going to improve even more.

Question re: Safe at Home project funding

Ms. Clarke: This morning on CBC Yukon, the Premier was asked about the lack of new funding for housing in the federal budget that was tabled in Ottawa yesterday.

Can the Premier tell us whether there is funding in the new federal budget for the Safe at Home project beyond the significant amount that the Yukon government and CMHC have already invested? If not, what does this lack of federal support mean for the future of the project?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, I was asked today — I think the way the question was posed by CBC is that there didn't seem to be much funding toward housing. Of course, in response to that, I reflected on the consultation that I was involved in earlier this week with Minister Vandal. There is a very significant contribution coming to northern housing. I think the entire envelope is about \$4 billion.

I spoke again to Minister Vandal today on that topic. I talked to him about some of the work that we have done with a number of groups and organizations to pull a cohort together to build out a number of projects and did talk about the monies that we have in place right now.

As I have said all along, I don't know specifically about the conversations between the NGO and CMHC. The member opposite — I think the best way would be to reach out directly to Safe at Home. I would urge my colleague to do that.

Yukon Housing has conversations with a multitude of players. But, no, I am happy to see the money that is there in the budget. I think there is an opportunity for some really significant investment across the north. It is urban, rural, and northern Indigenous housing funds. So, again, I am happy to see that money, and I want to see how it is going to flow and how we can best use it in the Yukon.

Ms. Clarke: Earlier this Sitting, the Premier said that he personally travelled and sat down with the federal Minister of Housing to flag this as a significant priority for the Yukon. He said — and I quote: "Yes, to answer the question, we have pushed hard for support for the Safe at Home Society."

Since this is a significant priority for Yukon and the federal government has not yet come through, will the Yukon government now be stepping in to help advance this project?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Again, I urge my colleague — I mean, community outreach is important and, when in opposition, I

think having a sense from Safe at Home Society directly. I know we have a motion later today, as well, and I certainly did make this a topic when sitting with the federal minister, as well as with CMHC. Their CEO was in the room, and I also had a deputy minister with me in those meetings, because I thought it was really important that Safe at Home's request to CMHC, again, was magnified, and we did that, as I talked about in the House.

Again, there were other parts in the news today. We heard that there was a large request and ask, I believe, from Safe at Home to the City of Whitehorse, I think for almost over \$1 million. There was a commitment made by the City of Whitehorse, as reported by the news, I think, for a bit over \$100,000. I apologize; I can't remember the number. I don't know what that ask for over a million was and then what the response was last night and how that affects the project, either.

So, a number of factors at play. Again, I think that will be conversation back and forth. I will reach out to the mayor as well. I want to just get a sense of what their thoughts, or city council's, are on this topic.

Question re: Federal infrastructure funding

Ms. Van Bibber: I have some questions for the Yukon government about the implications of the federal budget. The federal budget contains no new grant money for the Atlin hydro project. While it does mention the project under the Canada Infrastructure Bank section, the president of THELP has been clear that what is needed to advance this project is new grant money.

Can the government tell us what this means for the project, budget, and timelines and the future of our electric grid?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The budgets did name Atlin directly. The budget did talk about the transition to clean energy, but on the other hand, it didn't have a specific dollar amount that it listed for Atlin; rather, it talked about a couple of opportunities, one being a tax incentive and one being the smart renewables and electrification pathways program.

There was some money identified in the budget, so what I have asked the Development Corporation to do is to reach out to federal counterparts and to investigate those opportunities. We will be working with the federal government to see what opportunity is there for the Atlin project, and I am sure that Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership will also be reaching out to the federal government.

Ms. Van Bibber: The federal budget also was silent on funding for the new convention centre for Yukon. The Yukon government has told us previously that they are expecting significant federal funding for this project.

Can the minister tell us what the lack of new funding for a Yukon convention centre means for this?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that what we did see, when it specifically talked to infrastructure — as for the question about the convention centre was — it talked about how there was time-limited use of infrastructure by provinces and territories, and after a specific date, that money is going to be reallocated to the provinces and territories that have used their infrastructure money. So, again, I think that this validates all of

the decisions that were made by our previous Premier, and now Finance minister, about ensuring that we use this infrastructure money to invest in infrastructure across the territory. That investment was so sorely needed, and now we are in a position where other regions that have not touched their infrastructure money to the same extent — it now will be reallocated.

Again, this morning, I touched on this with Minister Vandal, the minister who is really in charge of the north. I talked about the work that we are doing; I talked about the RFP that we have out — and the work that we have done with Minister Boissonnault. Again, we are looking to see how the reallocation will happen around infrastructure dollars — as we use the infrastructure money that we have. There was a different plan in place in 2016 by the previous government. I am happy that we invested the way we did, and now we are in a position to look to see more infrastructure money from ISIP.

Question re: Federal infrastructure funding

Ms. McLeod: The Investing in Canada infrastructure program is coming to an end later this week. This has been the primary federal infrastructure fund that has allowed the Yukon government to leverage significant funding for municipal and community infrastructure programs. When I asked about this program on November 8 last year, the minister said this — and I quote: “That funding is currently being developed, and I'm sure the federal government will have more information when they table their next budget.” Well, the federal budget came down yesterday, and it is very sparse on details.

Can the Minister of Community Services tell us what Yukon municipalities and communities can expect in terms of federal infrastructure projects beyond April 1?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to talk about the unprecedented investment that the federal government has made in this territory over the last several years and the ability that we have made in leveraging that investment in the territory to our communities' benefit. You can see the spending, Mr. Speaker, in our budget document that goes through, community by community, how much we have invested in our territory's communities. That investment has made life better for all Yukoners, from Old Crow to Watson Lake to Beaver Creek and all points in between.

We have built recreation centres, we have built horizontal infrastructure that has helped improve sewer and water to municipalities, we have built community halls, and we have built arenas. That investment continues and will continue right through until 2033, at this point, and we are going to continue to use that money to invest in our communities. The benefits have come from the delivery of a wide range of priorities: water and sewer projects, as I said; fire halls and public works; and a community hub. I am happy to talk about this all afternoon.

Ms. McLeod: Here is the wording from ICIP about the federal budget — and I quote: “... the government is actively reviewing Canada's continued infrastructure needs as it charts a course for future federal infrastructure programming.” I should remind the Legislature that, last fall, the minister told us clearly that — and I quote: “We have actually spent all of our ICIP money in the territory.”

So, with all the ICIP money spent and no new federal program announced in the budget to replace it, should Yukon municipalities and communities be planning for significantly less expenditure on their priorities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Speculation, hypothetical questions, and fear — that is what we get every day. We are used to it.

What I can say is that we have committed every cent we were given from Ottawa to our communities. Every single dollar of the hundreds of millions of dollars that the federal government has invested has been committed to our municipalities. What we are seeing is that, in Old Crow, 10-unit mixed-use housing has been built. In Dawson City, the Old Territorial Administration Building has seen a retrofit. We have reservoir replacements happening and water and waste-water upgrades. In Pelly Crossing — the Early Childhood Development Centre, road upgrades, and water distribution. In Beaver Creek — the White River Community Centre. In Carmacks — the bypass, environmental office, public works, fire hall, and EMS building. In Burwash — duplexes. In Haines Junction — infrastructure upgrades. In Carcross — a six-unit mixed-use housing development. In Mayo — arena upgrades and community housing projects. In Keno — a fire hall and water service. In Faro — water, sewer, and road work. In Ross River — the Ross River School structural upgrades. In Teslin — the fire hall, the municipal centre, and Teslin Tlingit Council public building green energy retrofits. In Watson Lake — an administrative building retrofit and aerodrome runway improvements. It goes on and on and on. I can talk about this all afternoon. There is great work happening.

Ms. McLeod: Just to recap for Yukoners, the Minister of Community Services has told us that the current ICIP funding has been completely allocated or spent.

When I asked last fall, he said to wait to see what's in the federal budget, and now the federal budget is letting this program end without any announcement of a successor program.

So, with the federal budget silent on the future of municipal infrastructure projects, will the Yukon government be stepping in to fill the gap? Will they agree to boost funding to municipalities to help fill this gap left by the federal government?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Let me take a little shot at trying to recap for Yukoners what has just been said. A portion of the budget language was reiterated by the Member for Watson Lake, which was that they are going to monitor it. The part that wasn't communicated to the public today and to the media was that, if you did not use ICIP — the money that has been allocated — it would be reallocated to those jurisdictions that had used theirs.

Again, let's recap for Yukoners. In 2016, what we heard was: "We don't think we should use this infrastructure money over the next five years." Instead, what we did is that we built out a five-year capital plan. We went out and engaged with our communities to see what the needs were. We invested historically in infrastructure across the Yukon, and now we are in a position to be at the front of the line as we see other

jurisdictions that have not used it. I think that is the actual recap for Yukoners.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 609

Clerk: Motion No. 609, standing in the name of Mr. Hassard.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to allow Yukon trucking companies to continue using paper logs and be exempt from the use of electronic logging devices when the trucking companies remain in Yukon.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak to Motion No. 609.

So, Mr. Speaker, on January 1 of this year, the federal government mandated ELDs, or electronic logging devices, for larger commercial vehicles that are travelling more than 160 kilometres from their home base. Now, traditionally, drivers of large commercial vehicles — or, to simplify terms, "truck drivers" — used paper log systems to keep track of both on-duty and off-duty hours. This, of course, is very important in ensuring the safety of all travellers on our highways. Unfortunately, the decision to mandate electronic logging devices in commercial vehicles does nothing to make our roads any safer. So, this debate is not about safety, and it is not about compliance; this debate is about common sense and simplicity.

Mr. Speaker, industry has questions in regard to ELDs, and I hope to bring to light both some challenges and solutions as a result of this mandate. First off, I would say that, for large companies with trucks travelling through multiple jurisdictions, ELDs can be very helpful as the ELD will track many other things other than just service hours, such as fuel management, maintenance management, and these types of things. So, they are very beneficial for certain companies.

However, for smaller companies that are not travelling outside of their home province or territories, ELDs present a challenge, and I will speak to some of those challenges first. Financial challenges are always important because, as we know, any costs that are incurred by, in this case, trucking companies — those costs naturally get passed on to the consumer, so we would like to mitigate that as much as we can.

So, ELDs, on average, are about \$1,000 per unit, but then the company needs to subscribe to one of the providers off of the list from Transport Canada, and that subscription is, on average, about \$120 a month per ELD unit. So, this means that a company with 10 trucks is looking at somewhere in the range of \$14,000 a year, plus the price of the hardware. A larger

company of, say, 50 trucks is looking at somewhere north of \$70,000 a year, plus the hardware.

So, another challenge that we see with ELDs is, in fact, the technology. Technology can be a blessing and a hindrance, and in these times of labour shortages across virtually all sectors of business, all the way across this country and globally, many trucking companies are turning to hiring retired drivers or older drivers who are semi-retired, and this can help fill the gaps for those shortages.

As I hope the House can appreciate, many older people are a lot like me and not that adept at dealing with new technology. As a matter of fact, many of those folks — and I know many of them — don't even own a cellphone that is capable of being compatible with ELDs. So, this is leading to many of those people turning to full-time retirement. That, of course, is not helpful and, once again, drives up cost to consumers.

So, Mr. Speaker, looking at how this is affecting businesses here in the Yukon, many of the companies that are going to be affected by this are either construction companies or in the mining sector. Of course, these businesses, for the most part, are seasonal and end up paying for these services for months on end while the equipment is actually parked in the yard and not being used.

Now, another problem for Yukoners is that much of their equipment now falls under this mandate, but that equipment only leaves the 160-kilometre circumference from their home base maybe once, twice, or three times a year. So, now someone in Dawson City who makes two or three trips a year to Whitehorse has to pay these thousands of dollars in order to be compliant, and this doesn't make any sense.

So, Mr. Speaker, a couple of things have happened in regard to solutions. Firstly, other jurisdictions in Canada have asked the federal government to allow for exemptions for provincially regulated carriers. So, essentially, trucks that are not leaving their home province or territory are exempt from ELDs and continue to use the traditional paper log system. So, to that end, I wrote to the Minister of Highways and Public Works, and I tabled my letter and his response earlier today. I wrote that letter in December of last year to ask him to consider requesting a similar exemption for Yukon businesses facing the same situation. I will note, Mr. Speaker, that the Northwest Territories, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta have all asked and received this exemption.

However, in response to my letter, the Minister of Highways and Public Works said the following — and I will quote: “Unlike other jurisdictions, Yukon adopts and enforces the federal regulations. Some provinces, such as Alberta, have two sets of relevant regulations whereby carriers that operate within Alberta follow provincial regulations and those that operate outside Alberta follow the federal regulations. With the high volume of outside carriers that operate in and through Yukon, having one set of regulations for all allows for less confusion and ease of enforcement.”

So, this is an interesting statement, because the Whitehorse weigh scales see approximately 200 vehicles per day, and most of that is local traffic, so they're definitely not crossing any borders. Now, I did a quick Google search, and I know some of

you may be surprised that I know how to do a Google search, but I did. On the Sweetgrass-Coutts border crossing — and, Mr. Speaker, they have between 800 and 1,200 trucks per day. That's just one crossing into Alberta, and I wouldn't dare to guess how many cross between Alberta and BC on a daily basis. So, I think that the excuse that the minister has provided is very weak, in my opinion.

When this mandate was first announced back in 2019, industry began to ask questions, but they were told that, because it was coming from the feds, there was nothing that we could do about it, but now we know that, in fact, is not the case.

Now, I know that industry leaders have spoken directly to the Premier on this issue and that he has assured them that he will look into it. So, here is an easy win for him. The government and this Premier, in particular, have spoken so many times about reducing red tape and working with rather than against industry — so, again, easy win. We have heard repeatedly in this Assembly about how good ideas can come from all sides of the House, and I believe that this is one of those good ideas.

Now, I know that this issue isn't one that will be familiar with many people in the Assembly today, and I truly hope that my words today have provided some clarity on the issue. I look forward to hearing from others today on this important topic, and I will commit to trying to fill in any gaps I may have missed when I provide my closing remarks. Please, I encourage members who are speaking to this motion today: If there is something that I didn't cover or you don't understand, please let me know so I can try to cover those bases when I speak again.

Again, this is not about compliance. This is about common sense and easing the burden on both industry and employees. I have one final comment in closing, and that is the fact that the rules on electronic logging stipulate that if you are running an electronic logging device, it is compulsory to also carry traditional paper log in case of issues with the ELD, so if that doesn't speak for itself, I don't know what does.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am rising this afternoon to respond to Motion No. 609, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. This motion reads:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to allow Yukon trucking companies to continue using paper logs and be exempt from the use of electronic logging devices when the trucking companies remain in Yukon.

Truck driving is the second most common occupation for men in Canada. Safety on the roads is paramount. Things can change within a matter of seconds. Lives can be changed forever.

Nearly 2,000 Canadians are killed each year and another 10,000 seriously injured in collisions involving a heavy truck. Even on a per-distance-travelled basis, large trucks have a fatality rate double the rate of other vehicles. The proportion of highway fatalities that involve long-haul trucks is exceedingly high. Sometimes the long-haul truck driver who works long hours is the casualty; sometimes it a family who also shares the highway, and ultimately, both pay a terrible price. Data

suggests that, in heavy truck crashes, 13 percent of the deaths and 26 percent of the injuries were truck occupants; 74 percent and 69 percent were people in other passenger vehicles.

On April 6, 2018, a truck that was travelling at approximately 100 kilometres an hour near Armley, Saskatchewan did not yield at a flashing stop sign. The bus driver came across the intersection, tried to brake, but wasn't able to avoid the collision. The bus struck the truck's front trailer in a T-bone collision. The bus sustained massive damage, and all those sitting at the front of the bus perished almost instantly. Of course, I am describing the horrible Humboldt Broncos bus crash — a national tragedy: 16 deaths and 13 injuries, largely young men who had their lives tragically cut short. A long-haul truck driver will have to live with the fact that his failure to yield at a stop sign led to the death of so many with an awful impact on so many surviving families and countless members of the extended Humboldt community.

Closer to home, on November 3, 2016, a commercial vehicle operated by a Yukon-based company was involved in a single-vehicle crash just south of Whitehorse on the Alaska Highway. The driver was seriously injured. A subsequent investigation by carrier compliance identified serious hours of service violations that led to extreme fatigue and ultimately the crash. The driver and company were charged and convicted in court for hours of service violations.

On August 17, 2017, we had a major road closure and dangerous goods released when a Yukon-owned company truck, loaded with 56,418 litres of gasoline, rolled over at kilometre 1104 on the Alaska Highway. This closure trapped Yukoners and tourists for well over 24 hours due to the risk of explosion from the leaking gasoline. A subsequent investigation by carrier compliance identified a false logbook and extreme fatigue, which led to the crash. The driver and company were charged and convicted in court for hours of service violations.

More recently, on October 20, 2022, the driver of a large commercial vehicle travelling south on the Alaska Highway, near Swan Lake, crossed the centre line and sideswiped an oncoming small passenger car. Luckily, both drivers of both vehicles had minor injuries and walked away. The driver's ELD, or electronic logging device, and forward-facing camera provided critical evidence and indicated that the driver not actually sleeping during his required eight hours of rest and fatigue was a potential factor in the crash. The driver was charged in that crash.

In the past two years, 137 hours of service violations have been found by carrier compliance officers on Yukon highways.

In the US in 2020, 4,842 large trucks were involved in a fatal crash — a four-percent decrease from 2019, but still a 33-percent increase since 2011. The involvement rate per 100 million large-truck miles travelled is down five percent from 2019 but up 18 percent since 2011. Large trucks accounted for nine percent of all vehicles involved in fatal crashes — four percent of all registered vehicles and 10 percent of total vehicle miles travelled.

Canada is the second largest country in the world, and more than 90 percent of all consumer products and perishables are now shipped by truck. There are more than one million trucks on the roads in Canada.

This is about safety. So, what exactly are ELDs? An electronic logging device is a tamper-resistant device that automatically records driving time by syncing with the vehicle's engine. The ELD makes it easier to maintain a driver's record of duty status, or RODS, also known as "daily logs".

Operating with an ELD is now a legal requirement for federally regulated motor carriers and their drivers. In the USA, motor carriers who use paper logs had to become compliant with the electronic logging device mandate by December 18, 2017. The electronic logging device has now been in full effect in the United States since 2019. Adoption of electronic logging device technology is now a standard requirement for operation in the United States of America, much like maintaining proper insurance coverage or even seat belts. We are accustomed to the members opposite — of the Yukon Party — sometimes questioning science, but opposing use of electronic logging devices poses a risk to safety on our roads.

Long-haul truck drivers work long hours. They are sometimes fatigued and, god forbid, if they fall asleep on the job, in contrast to other professions, their life and the lives of those around them are in immediate danger. Truck drivers work hard trying to provide for their families. They spend long hours on the roads, and if they don't have a lead car, then most of the time they are operating in a lonely and often isolated environment.

Mr. Speaker, fatigue is a complex problem that can negatively impact heavy machinery operators' performance in various ways. It can lower processing speed, slow reaction times, can lead to fatigue-related inattention, as well as deteriorate the ability to properly recognize hazards — that is, judgment and decision errors — which can lead to accidents, and when your rig weighs more than 12 tonnes, that becomes a huge risk.

Mr. Speaker, research also demonstrates that crashes involving large trucks where fatigue is a factor are under-reported, often since there is little evidence to prove that the driver was drowsy or if they had fallen asleep. We also know that drivers of large trucks themselves label fatigue as a serious problem while driving a heavy truck. Fatigue is recognized as a major safety problem in the transportation industry. Some estimates are that approximately 15 percent of large truck crashes involving death or serious injury are due to driver fatigue. Furthermore, research observed that long driving hours — roughly eight to 10 hours — are related to falling asleep at the wheel or self-reporting fatigue. Research indicates that truck drivers of large rigs accumulate sleep debt as a result of having limited opportunities to get a full sleep cycle as needed.

The academic literature on truck driver fatigue is extensive and indicates that the causes and effects of sleepiness are due to the long-distance schedules and sometimes monotonous and repetitive tasks that require sustained attention.

There are some facts that I can provide the House about truck drivers. A little less than half of truckers reported sleeping less than seven hours a day. A recent review of Canadian provincial crash databases indicates that approximately 20 crashes per year occurred solely from extreme fatigue. Those who fell asleep and crashed were significantly more likely to be younger and have less driving experience than those who did not crash. To mitigate this, we have hours of service regulations that govern the maximum allowable working hours for drivers of commercial motor vehicles.

A recent study from the United States indicated that truck drivers who often drove beyond their hours of service regulations resulted in increased fatigue-related crashes. Interestingly, it has been observed that truck drivers who were employed on a productivity-based contract were 2.7 times more likely to encounter fatigue. In order to ensure compliance — and encouraged by the United States' implementation of the electronic monitoring devices mandated in 2017, with it coming into full effect since 2019 — Transport Canada announced that ELDs would become mandatory in Canada.

Data in the United States, using carrier records from 2008 to 2012, showed that trucks equipped with electronic logging devices had reduced their crash risk by 11.7 percent and hours of service regulations violations by 53 percent compared to trucks not equipped with electronic logging devices — so, a 11.7-percent reduction of crash risk and a 53-percent reduction of hours of service violations. Mr. Speaker, those are lives saved and injuries prevented. The findings are clear: ELDs can positively benefit the trucking industry and will improve overall safety on the road.

Truckers reported that electronic logging devices can reduce time and effort typically devoted to completing paper-based logs. Compared to paper-based logs, those using electronic logging devices reported spending less time entering information and correcting errors, less mental stress — including, among other things, thinking about when to rest — and they were able to pass the inspection stations more quickly.

Findings also show that those using electronic logging devices, compared to paper-based logs, drove approximately 18,000 kilometres more per year and were reportedly less stressed; 18,000 kilometres is a long way, and those kilometres represent more earnings for truckers and the companies.

Another research paper clearly indicated that truck drivers using electronic logging devices, compared to those without, were significantly more likely to be paid, despite delays in picking up or delivering freight, and had more realistic loading schedules. Mr. Speaker, electronic logging device use reduces fatigue. Survey data showed that those using electronic logging devices were significantly more likely to be less fatigued and have more continuous sleep, compared to broken or interrupted rest, and to fall asleep more quickly and have a better quality of sleep overall.

Mr. Speaker, those using electronic logging devices spent less time driving at night, at inspection stations, and completing driving logs. Their sleep patterns and sleep quality were improved. I think it's safe to say that the driving public will feel safer knowing that truck drivers are getting enough sleep.

Based upon the comprehensive data and research on electronic logging devices, the member opposite is asking for a continued practice that will be objectively less safe on our highways. We will follow the science-based approach and stand with Ontario, Québec, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and British Columbia in the implementation of electronic logging devices.

The opposition rightly is indicating issues of cost. However, nothing could be further from the truth with this government as far as providing support to business. Our carrier compliance section is working hard with industry, and the member opposite is no doubt aware that there are exemptions in place. You do not need an electronic logging device if the truck is a model earlier than 2000, the truck is operating within a 160-kilometre radius — and I'm advised that it is 160 kilometres as the crow flies — of its home terminal and returns to its home terminal at the end of each day, provided that the driver has a minimum of eight hours off between their next shift and that the carrier maintains a record of on-duty hours. To be clear, for example, this includes Whitehorse to Teslin and Whitehorse to Haines Junction and — I am advised — even Whitehorse to Carmacks.

Third, if the truck is subject to a rental of no more than 30 days without extension or renewal.

Fourth, if the truck is operating under a motor carrier permit, typically an oilfield exemption or emergency declaration.

Fifth, if the truck is operated by a motor carrier for which an exemption has been issued by Transport Canada. Currently, Transport Canada has one exemption for drive-away vehicles, which is a vehicle that is being delivered to a client from a manufacturer where the vehicle itself is the product.

Also, Yukon provides an exemption for some vehicles — under a weight of 11,794 kilograms that operate solely in Yukon Territory — for maintaining an ELD, as long as the carrier maintains a record of duty status and the driver gets eight hours of rest between shifts.

Mr. Speaker, we have been in discussions with the industry for the last 18 months through fliers, handouts, Zoom presentations, e-mails, and phone calls, but, of course, we can always do better in reaching out to industry. During this time, I am advised that the department was not approached by any carriers with requests for exemptions.

In June 2021, handouts were given to all carriers who passed through the weigh stations. Rack-card information was continuously distributed through our carrier compliance unit at the Whitehorse weigh scales and the Watson Lake weigh scales.

In November 2022, Highways and Public Works presented to industry on electronic logging devices. Officers were instructed to provide electronic logging devices handouts when performing commercial vehicle safety alliance inspections. Over 1,300 inspections were completed in the past 24 months.

Our efforts are continuous. Calls come in regularly from carriers both from the Yukon and out of the territory to discuss electronic logging devices, regulations, exemptions, and

questions. The department assesses that approximately 100 calls have been fielded. As I previously indicated, electronic logging devices are not a new development in the trucking industry.

The federal mandate for electronic logging devices was introduced into the federal hours of service in *Canada Gazette*, Part II, Volume 153, Number 12, in June 2019. The original implementation date was set for June 12, 2021. It was delayed, as the member opposite has indicated, to January 1, 2023 due to the COVID-19 pandemic — delays in certifying the devices and other regulatory requirements from provinces that had to rewrite their hours of service regulations. As of March, 80 different models of electronic logging devices have been certified, with other models in the certification process. We know that industry has indicated to Transport Canada their satisfaction with the large number of available devices that are compliant. It is clear that implementation of the electronic logging devices mandate will only be successful in dialog with the adopting industry.

As I said, electronic logging devices mandates have been enforced in the United States since 2019. I can confirm that the Department of Highways and Public Works will continue to redouble its efforts in reaching out and continue to facilitate productive discussions with industry.

I certainly note and acknowledge the comments from the member opposite that industry has reached out to Highways and Public Works and has reached out to the Premier's office as well, so those discussions are certainly ongoing. Our government actively supports the trucking industry and recognizes the crucial importance of this industry. In industry, there are always concerns about the implementation of new measures, how they will affect respective businesses, their employees, and ultimately their profitability.

I am also fully aware that the recruitment of truck drivers is currently a significant challenge in North America for a wide variety of reasons. All carriers are dealing with that challenge, and, in fact, in Canada, it is assessed that there is a shortage of approximately 25,000 truck drivers. I and the Department of Highways and Public Works will continue to work closely with industry so that we can implement electronic logging devices and reap the wide-ranging benefits from this technology.

The numerous significant and common-sense exemptions we have in place in the Yukon reflect those recognitions and do provide considerable flexibility. I have heard the member opposite — and if there are further discussions that can take place, I have indicated in my contribution to this debate today that we are certainly open to those conversations continuing. This technology also has the potential to provide benefits to the businesses, such as a reduction of costs and administrative costs.

Electronic logging devices will provide businesses the ability to instantly review a driver's up-to-date hours of service and make a determination if their driver can safely deliver their loads on time. The planners and dispatchers, with up-to-date hours of service, can evaluate in real time whether a driver will have enough hours to make a delivery on time.

To be clear, supporting the safety of truck drivers is absolutely supporting the industry. Safety within the motor freight industry is not only a public safety issue; it is an organizational issue. As I have indicated, accidents involving large commercial trucks can lead to significant costs in human life, but will also impact the supply chain of an organization.

If truck drivers who work very long hours on our Yukon roads are not safe and do not have enough sleep, no one is safe on the roads. I encourage all members of this House to support road safety in the Yukon. As I have indicated, I have heard from the member opposite about concerns, and I certainly urge him and all members of this House to continue providing Highways and Public Works, and my office, with ongoing concerns with respect to delivering this program in the most effective, accountable, and transparent way that we possibly can.

As I indicated, I encourage all members of this House to support road safety in the Yukon and to vote against this motion.

Mr. Dixon: I had not intended to speak on this motion, but hearing the minister's explanation of his position compels me to weigh in.

We have heard from numerous businesses about the implications of this policy change that the government is pursuing and this requirement that will be imposed on the Yukon business community as a result of this change. Hearing some of the arguments from the minister, I just simply need to respond.

First of all, the minister actually made the case that this will reduce costs for businesses, which I think is startling to anyone who is listening, for sure, because the numbers that we have heard from local businesses on their forecasted cost increases as a result of this are in the tens of thousands of dollars up front and then ongoing tens of thousands of dollars in annual costs. I know that doesn't sound like that much to the Minister of Highways and Public Works. He is not concerned about that, but for a small business trying to operate in this territory, those types of costs are a hit to the bottom line and quite frankly are completely unnecessary when we consider what is actually being asked by this.

The minister has made a number of claims about the impacts of long-haul trucking and such. Of course, long-haul truckers have no problem with this; that's not the issue here at all. In fact, we have heard from the long-haul truckers in Yukon who have no problem with the ELD model, but what we're concerned about is those operating within the territory who go a distance longer than 160 kilometres for a job. For instance, if a company is hauling a piece of equipment 161 kilometres down the highway to do a job, they need to install an ELD in their truck. Of course, that comes with additional costs, and that is what we hear is a burden and a problem to some businesses.

I also heard from the minister that this is somehow anti-science. He actually made the point that the Yukon Party is being anti-science by taking this position, which is, of course, ludicrous — it is, of course, outrageous. This is exactly the position that other provinces have taken. We are simply asking that the Yukon government adopt a similar position as we have

seen in other provinces. I don't think that the minister would suggest that those provinces are anti-science, but in his fervour to insult or attack the Yukon Party, he has lumped in this policy decision as being anti-science, which is, of course, ridiculous and offensive to anybody who is listening who is advocating for this policy.

He also said that no one in history has ever asked for an exemption. That is simply inconsistent with what we have heard. We have heard from industry that have asked this government multiple times for an exemption. So, for the minister to stand up and say no one has ever asked for this and that this is news to him simply shows how deeply out of touch he is with the Yukon business community.

I would encourage him to reach out to some of these businesses. I know that the Yukon Contractors Association is having their AGM later this week. I encourage the minister to attend and ask local businesses what this will mean for them and whether or not this is a reasonable course of action that will actually improve safety on Yukon highways. What we hear, quite frankly, is the opposite. We hear that this will increase costs for local businesses and that this will make more of a burden on the local business community, but that has become a trend with this government, which is unfortunately borne out by the minister's position on this issue.

I won't add anything further to this, Mr. Speaker, other than pointing out the deep nature of the way that the minister is out of touch with what is going on in this territory.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am rising this afternoon to respond to Motion No. 609, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. Again, the motion reads that this House urges the Government of Yukon to allow Yukon trucking companies to continue using paper logs and be exempt from the use of electronic logging devices when the trucking companies remain in Yukon.

Again, the safety of our roads and those who drive them here in the Yukon is of paramount importance. We have highways and roads that are not only gateways through the Yukon, but also corridors to access all of North America. This is the only place in the world that you can drive to the Arctic Circle to the north and down to Miami and Mexico to the south — the only territory you can go through.

Our roads see a variety of traffic on them throughout all seasons, and the tourist and construction traffic in the summertime can capitalize on the short season with long days and opportunities and see business and industry that drives our economy and projects here in the north — to plow and dump trucks that clear the roads in the long and dark winter months to ensure that they are accessible and safe, and navigating these roads in the best of road conditions is always going to be a challenge here in the winter with our climate and environment.

If we see a situation where we have a fatigued driver added to this equation, it can be a recipe for disaster, and I think that the minister identified a couple of real situations that occurred — not the examples from other long-haul trucking across North America, but just situations that have occurred here in the Yukon where ELDs were used to identify fatigue or identify

situations where people had been not accurately communicating their activities while driving.

The Yukon government sees the implementation of ELDs as a way to ensure safety on our roadways by seeing drivers with less fatigue in their use. Our groceries and many of our goods are brought up the highway, where one accident could see our road and access closed off for multiple days, which we saw last year with one scenario involving long-haul trucking.

There are up to 80 different models of electronic logging devices that have been certified, with a variety of different price ranges to suit the needs of the operators who will need to install these devices. The implementation of such devices, again, is not a new concept across US or Canada; the US mandated it in 2019.

Realizing that implementing the federal hours of service regulations and the use of ELDs in the Yukon would have impacts on the industry and our economy, the government has put together a list of exemptions. My colleague from Riverdale North has mentioned them, but I am just going to highlight a few of those. It's about sitting down and listening to the business community. I think there were some good arguments made today by the opposition and by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, but there is some information that has been provided through interaction with the business community and which led to a number of exemptions. I will just highlight a few.

A truck operating within a 160-kilometre radius of its home base and returning to its home base at the end of each day: That will see the driver with eight hours of time off between shifts. The 160-kilometre radius is calculated as the crow flies, not just as point A to B or not necessarily as marked on road signs on the highway. That was really trying to provide maximum flexibility. If the operating vehicle is older than the year 2000, they will fit into the requirement for these exemptions, not as other jurisdictions.

There's an exemption for vehicles that run up to the weight of 11,794 kilograms and operate strictly within the Yukon, with the carrier maintaining a record-of-duty status and drivers getting eight hours of sleep. Vehicles that are 11,794 kilograms — which equates to about 26,000 pounds — encapsulates vehicles up to a class 6, which includes school buses, single-axle vans, and rack and beverage trucks.

Our government is continuing to reach out to industry to facilitate productive and meaningful conversations and is committed to working with our partners across the industry.

I think there were some good points. I think there was a strong approach by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin to try to come up with ensuring that there is safety, but also ensuring that we understand what is happening out there from industry. I know — I sat down — Mr. Speaker, I went and had breakfast with a number of leaders from the Yukon Contractors Association, and some of them are starting to expand their business and are investing in more equipment and more trucks. Some of them are long-term friends who have been in the industry for a long, long time and have watched the evolution of what has happened, and they are doing work inside of Whitehorse, they are doing work throughout the Yukon, and then there are new investors to the industry.

So, I think — this was one of the topics that there are a number of things — when you look at where the industry is, you look at where infrastructure is, things that are going well and things that, I think, the government was complimented on as well as things where, when you bring in a different set of regulation, you need to see it. So, with my — in the role I am in, in the Premier's office, but also as the Minister of Economic Development, these are things where I want to sit intently and listen to figure out how we ensure people are safe — how do we ensure that those who are out there on our roads are following the rules? How do we ensure that our families and our friends and our children are safe?

It is difficult to find truck drivers. In my role in Economic Development, I've been party to those conversations around mobility — and what we are seeing, as well, are a lot of individuals from around the world who are being recruited to drive trucks — long-haul trucks, primarily in Canada — individuals who do not have the same level of experience and training that we have seen in that industry for a long, long time. For anybody who has driven through a storm from Grande Prairie to Whitehorse at any time, that can be a pretty ferocious piece of highway. I think for anybody who has been recruited and has come here to undertake that type of work in that type of vehicle — again, we are happy to see that there are ELDs being used, and we think it is going to make things safer.

Again, some of the things that we think could be beneficial through this is: Where is there an opportunity — I would say — to save money? I say this in a very respectful way to the leader of the opposition. It's like: Well, I don't understand where people can save money in this. Yes, you know what? It's true. There is an expenditure at the front end for the hardware. There is a subscription fee that has to be put in place, but one of the things that we hope and believe will happen is that when you are going through our process of weigh stations, we can move people through faster. Anyone would know — and we do know — that in business, time is money. If you're sitting there in a lineup when you could be moving, you could be hauling, you could be more active, that is one area.

Do I know if that's an offset? I'm not sure, but I do know that's one of the things. Ensuring that drivers are getting the rest they need to be attentive and present at work is important. We are hoping to see faster processing times through our weigh scales. That's what we are hoping to see with the implementation of these electronic logging devices. I think that will be key to move people through quickly.

I think that there have to be some longer term strategies, even about the location of weigh scales. That has been something that has been brought up by industry. I would say that we are speaking with industry. We are cued in to what is happening, and in this particular case, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, who has a long history around and in this industry — I would not try to compete with that understanding. I was actually looking forward to hearing the opening remarks today on this subject, but I think, you know, a multitude of governments have watched us continue to stand by as governments where we have infrastructure in place in particular places.

When you go out and do the research and you think about centres in Canada and you think about weigh stations and where they are located in areas where there is an urban centre — and it's growing — that's not where you should have weigh stations. That was part of the discussion I had with the Yukon Contractors Association — you know, even understanding how we look at where a weigh station should be located and what would that really mean for fast times, thinking about the weigh station in Watson Lake and then thinking about the weigh station here in Whitehorse and what it would mean for the efficiencies of business inside the city — and of course, another weigh station being in Haines Junction.

So, I think that there is a broader conversation that has to happen about efficiencies when it comes to a supply chain within the territory. I think that has been flagged, and I'm sure that the opposition has heard that flagged. It's a new conversation for me about weigh stations, but I think that it's important.

I also know there are growing pains around ELDs. I think that there is some work that has to be done in monitoring their effectiveness, as well, when it comes to their connectivity, and I think that is something that has to be looked at. I know that the member opposite talked about the log book. I think that the logbook backup — it's a backup scenario that gets implemented if there is a breakdown in the connectivity from the GPS signal. I think that's it. That's my understanding, that it's not consistently doing the log — only if there is a breakdown in the communication piece in an area, then you revert back as your backup. I think that's what I was told by the Contractors Association and truckers. I think that for us — you can see, probably, to the House, again, where I think we would go on the fact that we do believe that this technology should be in place, and I think that the members opposite — my sense is that, even with the way that the motion is positioned, they do agree on the safety aspect on long-haul trucking.

I think we have seen the minister identify a number of exemptions. I think that the Leader of the Official Opposition identified some examples that should be taken into consideration. What happens if you're in a position where you're moving a piece of equipment? Or another example I was told is: What happens if you have to get an inspection and there is not a mechanic in that particular community, and then you have to drive to get something worked on? What happens then? Because you're making that route, does that mean that it triggers something?

What I have seen from the Department of Highways and Public Works, and from the minister, is a commitment to ensuring that there is safety, but also — and under the previous minister — and I can remember mutual colleagues of ours in the House who we know — where there are ways to appropriately support safety but, at the same time, being able to do some work to be flexible, whether that's through different pieces around different types of temporary permits or what it should be. There are things that can happen to still be able to make sure that there is a proper flow of business. And you're right; I think, as it was mentioned by the Leader of the Official Opposition, on Friday, I think at around 10:00 a.m. is when the

Contractors Association AGM starts. I know that I can't be in attendance, because I am at the Yukon Forum, but I made a commitment to meet with the Contractors Association in the days following, and so that's what I am going to do.

Maybe it's the wrong time, but I think that it is Friday when the Contractors Association meeting is, and I know that there are deputy ministers from multiple departments who are committed to being there and who will have an opportunity to report back to the ministers, and then I know that there will be a chance for the Contractors Association leadership to reflect on what has happened at that meeting. There is some work that they have asked me to do on their behalf which will also be happening at the Yukon Forum.

So, I think that there is always an opportunity to work on behalf of Yukoners to make sure that we have the free flow. I think that everybody in the House knows and agrees that we want — safety is paramount — but at the same time, how do we make sure that there is some flexibility around these things? It is always difficult when you are coming in with a regulation, or a set of regulations, that are, of course, difficult to do when it was a free flow before. One of things that I was asked, as well, by members of the industry was: Look, we need to see examples of how this is going to make this safer or examples of where we have seen situations occur that have caused some accidents. And I appreciate the minister today being able to illustrate a series of examples that really speak to why it should work. But I also, listening to my colleagues — I think that this is a good item to debate. I think that the approach by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin was just in good faith, saying: How can we work through this to make sure that there are some opportunities?

So, as I mentioned, the Yukon has looked at some of those exemptions, but we also know that we have not been exempt from seeing the costly — both financial and, most importantly, the human casualties resulting from heavy vehicle accidents.

For those last year, talk about a real scare. When you have responsibility for a number of areas within the government — when we saw, I believe it was a B-train, but a long-haul truck carrying fuel — in this case, of course, they would have an ELD in place, but when you have an accident — because they were shipping from Alberta, I think that they would have an ELD in place; depending on what has happened with the exemption on the Alberta side and if they are crossing borders, I believe that they would have their ELD. It is a challenge in Yukon, and any area, when you have an accident that significant on one bridge.

We were going through a conversation with — it occurred in British Columbia, and we were in conversation with the BC government at the time, and the potential time frame that the road was going to be out of commission was very significant, and the reroute would completely change the entire model for the trucking industry, because if you were working within eight-hour increments, the workaround would now mean a third driver would have to be deployed in order to meet the requirements of the safety standards — just from that one accident on the bridge. In the end, structural engineers approved the bridge, and we were in a position to continue to use it. Those are the things — when you have limited routes for

a supply chain — that you are constantly having to balance and contemplate.

Living in an isolated place, such as the north, these types of incidents carry grave realities within our communities, whether there are accidents or these other situations.

Trucking in itself can be a lonely, isolated, and dangerous career, seeing drivers alone for hours with little contact with others. Through the pandemic, other colleagues in the House made a point of really commending people who were doing that work. We saw, in real time, just how much we rely on truckers and the goods and services they bring to our communities. We want to support these drivers and the industry by reducing fatigue. With proper rest, the drivers will be operating in a safer environment.

Mr. Speaker, you know our position. We think that these should be in place, but I want to say to the House that yes, I think there are opportunities to look at those examples that were brought to us today and still ensure that we have these positions in place. We will hear what the contractors have to say this weekend. I think they will be very vocal on different examples. I am committed to working alongside industry but also with the minister on what we have heard and learned today from members of the opposition.

Ms. White: I will start off by saying what I imagine most already know: I do not drive heavy duty machinery or trucks that fit within the parameters of what vehicles will be captured by the new electronic logging device regulations. I have, however, spent some time reading up on the issue of electronic logging devices, and I have spoken to folks in the trucking industry — both drivers and inspectors.

Studies have shown that driving while tired is as bad as driving while impaired, and a 2016 study by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety in the United States shows that drivers who miss only one to two hours of the recommended seven hours of sleep per night nearly doubled the risk of crashing. Drowsiness has a serious effect on a driver's attention, judgment, decision-making, coordination, vigilance, and reaction time. Though not identical, drowsy driving and drunk driving bear some similarities and are considered equally dangerous. Both conditions slow reaction times and affect alertness and decision-making.

In controlled studies where researchers were able to measure the amount of sleep deprivation, drunk and drowsy driving both result in similar amounts of crashes. After approximately 18 hours of being awake, the effects on reaction time, vigilance, multi-tasking, and hand-eye coordination are comparable to having a blood alcohol content of 0.05 percent. After 20 hours of being awake, drowsy drivers are impaired on a level equitable to a 0.08-percent blood alcohol content, which is the current legal limit in the Yukon. After 24 hours awake, impairment is equivalent to a blood alcohol content of 0.1 percent.

I found some really interesting points in an online publication that may be viewed as an unlikely support for ELDs. I say this because they have all sorts of interesting articles about GHG emissions and how that has affected the

trucking industry. So, David Henry is a long-haul driver and creator and co-host of the *Crazy Canuck Truckin'* podcast. Although I appreciate that the piece I am about to read is from his perspective as a long-haul driver, it's still a driver's perspective, and I think it's important.

His piece, entitled "ELDs eliminated many problems with log books", was published in *trucknews.com* on January 16 of this year. I am going to share that piece: "Hi. My name is David, and I love ELDs.

"I feel much better now that I got that out in the open.

"What's interesting is that there are many drivers these days who don't know why the ELD mandate is a big deal. They have never known a trucking job without the tattletale units in their trucks.

"Those of us who have been around for a few years, or decades, remember a time when there were no logbooks, never mind ELDs. When I started in 1988, logbooks were recommended but I managed to avoid them until the '90s.

"Early in the '90s I received my one and only ticket, and from that point on I learned the tricks of the trade. It was an art form to learn how to color between the lines in the coloring book. All my life I tried to stay within the lines, but it was just the thing to do in trucking.

"I, like many others, bought into the theory that we needed to push the limits to deliver freight. Many conversations with dispatchers were just outright bullying: 'This load needs to get there. I don't care how you do it, get it done. Every other driver can do it, why can't you?'

"Nothing else mattered. Didn't matter if you were sick, the weather was bad, or the truck broke down. Just deliver the load.

"It wasn't a subtle, 'nudge-nudge, wink-wink, get it done'. That came after laws were passed to prevent dispatchers from forcing drivers to run illegally. Then the message was subtle.

"Then came the US ELD mandates. By that time, I had spent about 25 years in the industry was frankly quite tired of making up for horrible planners and dispatchers. Now we have the Canadian mandate, and many are saying the sky is falling.

"Not me.

"I don't need to tell anyone where I am. If I have an issue that's so serious that I can't respond, the office can pinpoint where I am and send help.

"And there is never a question about whether I have the time left to do the run. Lazy dispatchers still ask of course, but my response has been silence until they realize that it is up to them to check.

"No Department of Transportation officer needs to decipher my writing, and I don't need to cram a long city name into a small space. Plus, I don't even need to remember what city I am in when I am waking. Been there, done that, many times. 'Where the H-E-double-hockey-sticks am I?'

"And remember the days of carbon paper? By the end of the month, the carbon copy was useless, but legal. Go figure.

"In a split second, I now know how many hours I have been working in whatever cycle I'm on, in whatever jurisdiction. No more sitting on pins and needles hoping the DOT officer is good at math.

"A good ELD will also have so many options and tools to help educate everyone in the industry and the public.

"After a young man was killed on Winnipeg's South Perimeter a few years ago, there was a lot of talk in the media that truckers were running wild and free. Lauren McNabb of CJOB/Global came for a ride with me and I showed her all the ways we can be tracked, and the tools that help drivers and office staff, and it was a great informative session that was passed on to the public and I believe it helped calm some of the public's fears.

"I don't need to list the issues with ELDs because any problems are easily solved and are far outweighed by the positives.

"I will continue to advocate for ELDs to be used to the best of their ability to keep everyone safe."

So, again, I appreciate that this is from the perspective of a long-haul trucker, but I still think it's important.

So, let's go back for a moment to what I said earlier about the effects of drowsiness and what that means here, and as most people in this room will know, commercial drivers have a strict set of regulations governing how long you are allowed to work in a day. In the provinces, a driver is allowed to drive for 13 hours in a 16-hour period before being legally required to take eight hours off. In the territories, we have the so-called "north of 60 rules" due to the longer distances necessary for drivers in the north. North of 60, drivers can drive for 15 hours on an 18-hour shift while still required to take the mandatory eight hours off. Being awake for 18 hours is the approximate equivalent to having a blood alcohol level of 0.05 percent, which, I might add, in many places, is the legal limit for driving.

So, drivers in the Yukon are always pushing themselves, as we have heard from this article that I just read, and I have heard from Yukoners in the industry that drivers sometimes feel like they are being pushed. So, this is about safety. ELDs provide assurances that everyone is on the same page and following the same rules. Not only can no one falsify the records, but no one can be put under undue pressure to do so. These mandates came into place for a reason, much like blood alcohol limits or seat belts did. They are to ensure the safety not only of the driver, but also of those driving around them.

The Canadian Trucking Alliance and Teamsters Canada have both not only spoken in favour of ELD mandates, but were at the forefront of the push to get ELDs into trucks. In 2020, François Laporte, the president of Teamsters Canada, said: "... ELDs will help enforce hours of service rules designed to reduce driver fatigue, prevent accidents and ultimately save lives." So, the Yukon already has exceptions for drivers working within 160 kilometres from their home base, as well as the Yukon-only exemption for drivers operating vehicles registered under the 11,794 kilograms that operate solely within the Yukon. So, I appreciate the comments from the member for Pelly-Nisutlin, and I heard the Premier say that there was a willingness to work with the industry, but today we will be voting against this motion.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This afternoon, I am beginning with a question: How do we, as a Legislature, reconcile this motion this afternoon? How specifically does the Yukon Party square it? I ask this because the digital logs that we are speaking about this afternoon owe their implementation to a national tragedy, one the Yukon Party has spoken passionately about. To be clear, digital logs are something that Canada has implemented to avoid a similar tragedy in the future. So, how does the Yukon Party square this? I am paying attention. I don't quite get it yet.

I have heard that it is about common sense and simplicity. I have heard from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin that it's not about safety. That assertion is, unfortunately, simply not correct — not correct at all, as I will show over the next few minutes.

Let me be perfectly clear: I will be voting against the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin's motion this afternoon.

As a former highways minister who was in the role when the Humboldt Broncos tragedy happened, I have some insight into the national discussion — the aftermath of that horrible tragedy — and I do not support exempting Yukon companies from such an important national safety initiative born from that tragedy.

In essence, this motion this afternoon is a blanket exemption for Yukon truck drivers and companies to avoid using a critical tool in enforcing a national traffic safety standard. It would lead to two safety standards in the Yukon: one for national carriers and one for local carriers.

Now, let's be clear. I understand where the Yukon Party is coming from. Modern technology is not the Yukon Party's bag. The Yukon Party is more rotary phone than cellphone, more coal than lithium, more paper and pen than iPad and Kindle.

I know this because when we came into office in late 2016, we inherited a 21st century institution run on 18th century technology. Sure, it was cutting edge 18th century technology, but it was still 18th century tech. Much as we have been working to overcome the housing deficit left by the Yukon Party, we have also been trying to overcome the technology deficit that we inherited. So, we have been modernizing our government internally and externally — providing more online services to our citizens and making their interaction with government more secure, easier, and safer. At its heart today, it's about using these incredible digital tools to make our modern roads safer — to move from the paper logs favoured by the Yukon Party to the digital logs used in every other jurisdiction in the country, with a couple of notable exemptions, and this is important. Driving truck is the second most common occupation for men in Canada.

When I was Minister of Highways and Public Works pre-COVID, there was concern about having enough truck drivers to carry all our modern goods across the continent. Those companies were working hard to recruit and retain their drivers. Improving safety is important; it remains critically important today because we are getting many new truck drivers on the road. Modern roads are wide, they are fast, and our highways carry exponentially more traffic than they did in 1990, than they did in 1980, than they did in 1970. They have far more traffic than they did in 1938 when paper logs for truckers and bus drivers were first adopted in North America.

By those in the know, they have ever since been called “comic books” or, in some cases, “colouring books”, easily manipulated to cover gross safety violations. They were, and remain, impossible to verify, said Trump-era US Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx in 2015, when the US moved to implement digital logs.

This automated technology not only brings logging records into the modern age, it also allows roadside safety inspectors to unmask violations of federal law that put lives at risk.

International studies of the commercial truck industry indicate that work rules commonly are flouted. Hours of service regulations govern how much time truck drivers can be on the road and when and for how long they need to rest. Forcing better compliance than that provided by the comic books will reduce the number of tired drivers on our roads.

There are other ancillary benefits. Requiring all truckers to use electronic logs levels the playing field by removing any competitive advantage to violating work rules compared with carriers who follow the rules. Not to put too fine a point on it, but allowing a local exception creates a two-tier safety system. Sure, it grants local truckers a short-lived competitive advantage at the cost of increased risk to public safety against their more sophisticated North American rivals, but our roads are less safe, and our local companies become more removed from modern standards and therefore less competitive nationally, as do the drivers. By ignoring national standards, we become a backwater. On the other hand, adopting the standard — like most modern, sophisticated jurisdictions on the continent, heck, in the world — ensures that our local companies know how to operate in and compete in this competitive field and, of course, their drivers are more rested and alert when they are on the road. Our roads are safer. Fewer people are injured. Fewer people are killed. Safety on our Yukon roads is paramount.

When you are driving on a remote road, cutting across some of the most challenging geography in the most extreme weather on the continent at 80 to 110 kilometres an hour, things can change in a fraction of a second. Lives are forever changed in a heartbeat. As legislators, we know this; we know this, Mr. Speaker. We can't hide aversion to change behind words like “common sense” and “simplicity”. It simply is not good enough. We know that tightening up on transport logs, moving from comic books to a digital system, far harder to fake or manipulate, will force change in a culture that too often pushes drivers beyond their limits to deliver that profitable load and move to the next when you might be too tired to safely drive. The Republican-led US knew this. It started implementing the system in 2015.

Not only are electronic logs saving lives, these logs are saving money. Around 2016, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration estimated that it would save trucking companies a billion dollars by eliminating useless paperwork. This initiative cuts red tape; it does not add to it. The member opposite asserts that it increases red tape. That doesn't bear up to scrutiny. We have paper logs now. Drivers relying on them less in favour of a passive technology solution cuts red tape; it doesn't add to it. The fact is that the logs won't be needed

unless there is a malfunction in the system; in that case, paper logs will be adapted.

These electronic logs encourage compliance with rules that reduce fatigue and improve safety. As I was saying, we know that a tired driver can change a life in a heartbeat. Nearly 2,000 Canadians are killed each year in collisions with heavy trucks. Another 10,000 are seriously injured in such altercations. Even on a per-distance-travelled basis, large trucks have a fatality rate double that of all other vehicles. If you didn't know that before entering this debate, you should have. If you did, you shouldn't be supporting this motion — full stop.

Let me continue. The proportion of highway fatalities involving long-haul trucks is exceedingly high. Occasionally, a commercial truck driver working long hours is the casualty, but most of the time, it's a family who shares the highway who pays the ultimate price. As my colleague noted earlier, in heavy truck crashes, 13 percent of the deaths and 26 percent of the injuries were truck occupants, but 74 percent of those killed were in passenger vehicles, and 69 percent of the injured were collateral damage in industry crashes.

These problems were brought home to the nation on April 2, 2018, as my colleague noted, when the Humboldt Broncos bus crash killed 16 and injured 13, some critically. The long-haul truck driver who failed to yield at a light that evening will carry the weight of that calamitous error to his grave. The event persists in the national consciousness. I saw the jerseys in this Legislative Assembly; I heard the tributes in this Assembly; I saw the hockey sticks in the hall downstairs, and I still do every year.

So, I wonder why we are here on this motion this afternoon. How do you square that? How does the Yukon Party square this? Contrary to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin's assertion, this isn't just about common sense, and it's not about simplicity. It is very much about the death of a number of people riding a bus late at night in April 2018. As Highways and Public Works minister when the Humboldt bus tragedy happened, nine months after that tragedy, every single transport minister met in Montréal. Humboldt was on the agenda. We gathered to discuss ways we could improve our highways in the aftermath of that horrible tragedy, a tragedy that affected the nation.

It was not an accident. I have been trained at workers' compensation to eliminate that word from such events. Accidents suggest that something can't be prevented. This can be prevented, and Liberal, Conservative, and New Democrat transport ministers worked together that day in Montréal to advance safety across the nation in the shadow of that tragedy. On January 21, 2019, the Hon. Marc Garneau, Canada's Minister of Transport, and the Hon. Lori Carr, Minister of Highways and Infrastructure for Saskatchewan — she is a member of the conservative Saskatchewan Party — co-chaired the annual Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety. Humboldt was the focus of that meeting; the goal was improving traffic safety. Every member in that room committed their jurisdiction to strengthen road safety. Improving commercial safety was one of those agenda items. Harmonizing electronic logging devices across the country was

another item on our agenda, and every single minister signed that communique. We all committed to doing it.

And here we are, in the Yukon, four years after the Humboldt tragedy, trying to implement a national standard to improve road safety, and that work is being undermined by the Yukon Party, which seeks to hive off an exemption from this national — indeed continental — standard and retain comic book logs, because — as I said, Mr. Speaker, I am trying to understand, and I can't. I am still trying to square this circle. Let me continue.

Canada is the second largest country in the world and more than 90 percent of all consumer products and perishables are now shipped by truck. We certainly see a huge proportion of that here in the territory. There are more than one million trucks on the roads in Canada. This initiative is about safety.

So, what exactly is an electronic log? As my colleague said, it is a tamper-resistant device that automatically records driving time by syncing with the vehicle's engine. The electronic log makes it easier to maintain a driver's record of duty status, also known as "daily logs". Operating with an electronic log is now a legal requirement for federally regulated motor carriers and their drivers. In the US, motor carriers who used paper logs had to become compliant with the electronic logging device mandate by December 2017.

Electronic logging devices have been in full effect in the US since 2019. The option of electronic logging devices is now a standard requirement for operation in the US, much like maintaining proper insurance coverage or even seatbelts. We are accustomed to the Yukon Party questioning science, but opposing the use of electronic logging devices undermines safety on our roads.

Like my colleague has said, fatigue is a complex problem that negatively impacts a heavy machinery operator's performance in various ways. I certainly saw that when I was working at workers' compensation. It slows reaction time; it fosters inattention and impairs one's ability to recognize hazards; it impairs your judgment and your decision-making; it causes errors.

Research also shows that large truck crashes where fatigue is a factor is under-reported, because there is little evidence to prove that the driver was drowsy or that they had fallen asleep. In fact, commercial drivers label fatigue as a serious problem. Fatigue is recognized as a major safety problem in the transportation industry. Some estimates are that 15 percent of large truck crashes involving death or serious injury are due to driver fatigue.

Furthermore, research observed that long driving hours — roughly eight to 10 hours — are related to falling asleep at the wheel or self-reporting fatigue. Research indicates that commercial drivers accumulate sleep debt as a result of having limited opportunities to get a full sleep cycle, as needed.

The academic literature, as you can see, is extensive. To mitigate this, we have hours of service regulations which govern the maximum allowable working hours for drivers of commercial motor vehicles. A recent study from the US indicated that truck drivers who often drove beyond their hours of service resulted in increased fatigue-related crashes.

Don't make a mistake. This is a problem in the Yukon as well. In the last two years, 137 hours of service violations have been found by the carrier compliance officers on Yukon highways. The research is clear. Based on the comprehensive data and research on electronic logging devices, the member opposite is asking for a continued practice that will objectively endanger Yukoners travelling on our highways. The member opposite wants the Yukon to stand strong with Alberta and Saskatchewan against electronic logging devices. Again, both of those provinces supported this initiative in 2019 in Montréal.

We will follow the science-based approach and stand with Ontario, Québec, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Northwest Territories, British Columbia, the United States, and most European countries in the implementation of electronic logging devices. Our government is not against businesses. Nothing could be further from the truth, as the Premier just said. Our carrier compliance section is working hard with industry. As my colleague has asserted, we will work with industry to make sure this works for Yukoners, but the exception is not the rule.

As I previously indicated, electronic logging devices are not a new development in the trucking industry. The federal mandate was introduced into the federal hours of service in the *Canada Gazette*, Part II, Volume 153, Number 12, in June 2019, shortly after our meeting in Montréal. The original implementation date was set for June 12, 2021. The pandemic interfered with that deadline; however, we are now here.

Our government actively supports the trucking industry and recognizes the crucial importance of this industry to the territory — can't understate that. Then, of course, there is often concern about the implementation of new measures — how they will affect the respective businesses, their employers, and ultimately their profitability — but, as the Premier and my colleague has said, we are going to work with industry to make sure this works.

But supporting truckers and Yukoners and their safety is absolutely supporting this industry. Safety within the motor freight industry is not only a national public safety issue; it is a Yukon issue. It is born out of the calamity at Humboldt. I don't know how you can reconcile that with an exemption from the national safety standards stemming from that tragedy. Again, I will say that I don't know how the Yukon Party can square it. I have heard nothing compelling this afternoon. We are supposed to learn from tragedy — to work to prevent it in the future. That is what we do in this Chamber.

I cannot, in all good conscience, vote in favour of something that undermines a national safety standard like this, something that flies in the face of the international research and, frankly, international practice and something that creates a two-tiered standard that will complicate compliance and sow confusion — an approach that undermines our industry and drivers' national competitiveness and essentially makes our territory a backwater.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how the Yukon Party can square this motion; so far, they haven't. I will square it for myself by voting against it.

MLA Tredger: So, whenever I hear about a motion that is going to affect people's working conditions, the first thing I want to do is find out what the workers think about that. So, I looked at who represents truckers, and I immediately looked at Teamsters because they are the largest union in the trucking industry. They represent 1.4 million workers across North America.

I want to read briefly from a blog post from the Teamsters Canada website. This is on June 13, 2019, which was when Transport Canada announced that they were mandating the usage of electronic logging devices, or ELDs. They wrote: "It is a welcome development," said the president of Teamsters Canada, François Laporte.

"Electronic logging devices monitor drivers' hours of service and are tamper-proof. Currently, hours of service are tracked in paper-based daily logbooks. Because paper logbooks can easily be falsified, they are not effective at stopping drivers from being forced to work dangerously long hours." Another quote from that blog article is: "As the largest union in the trucking industry, Teamsters Canada has been working on this file for over twenty years with the government and our industry partners. Overall, we are pleased with the result," said the national director of the Teamsters Canada Freight Division, John McCann." That is the end of the quote from the blog.

They have been advocating for years for electronic logging devices and have been very welcoming of this change from the federal government. We have rules in place for a reason. We have them to protect people on the road and we also have them to protect drivers. It is not easy, as a worker, to stand up to an employer about enforcing your rights, the rules that keep you and everyone else safe. First, you have to know the rules and know your rights, which, let's be honest, many, many workers do not. We don't have a good system for teaching people their labour laws. Not many of us sit down with the *Employment Standards Act* or any of the regulations for our industries, so we count on our employers to tell us, for the most part. That means that a lot of workers don't necessarily know their rights. And even if they do, there is such a power imbalance between employers and employees that it is very hard to say no to your employer, particularly when your livelihood is on the line. There is an immense amount of pressure on workers to do what they are being asked to do.

So, what these devices do is they equal that playing field. They make it so that there is no option for workers to be pressured into breaking these rules; they have proof. It's just an even system. It is the same for everyone, and that, I think, is a step forward for workers' rights. I know that truckers want to do the right thing. They want to practise safe driving habits and keep everyone on the road safe, but I also know that they are under a lot of pressure to arrive on schedule and to drive through fatigue and other issues in order to get their cargo where it needs to go. We can't enforce timelines at the cost of the safety of drivers and other people on the road, and that's why I will be voting against this motion. I am proud to stand today with Teamsters and other truckers in support of electronic logging devices.

Mr. Hassard: It is unfortunate that the Minister of Community Services felt the need to insult the hard-working employees of the Yukon government just because of my own ignorance of technology, but I certainly won't waste the time of this House debating his ignorance, and I'm certainly not surprised that he wouldn't understand the concept of common sense. So, I will direct my comments to the members of this Legislative Assembly who are actually interested in listening to what others have to say, rather than insult them.

So, maybe the approach that I took at the beginning of this debate was the wrong approach. I tried to be short and to the point rather than being very long and drawn out with multiple examples and different scenarios. I know that there are other motions on the floor of the Legislature that people would like to get to. So, my point was to try to get it done quickly, and maybe that was my demise, I guess, so I will apologize to the people out there on whose behalf I brought this motion forward for my ignorance on that as well.

Mr. Speaker, you know, no one in this Assembly spends more time on the road than I do, and safety is paramount. The only thing that I heard in here today that we can all agree on is that safety is paramount. I agree that it's number one. But, as I said in the beginning of my comments, ELDs are not about safety.

I guess there are two things that we would all agree on. Long-haul trucking and ELDs are important, but that's why my motion wasn't about long-haul trucking; my motion was about trucking in the Yukon. There was talk about hours of work and hours of service. The Yukon and the Northwest Territories have longer hours. We have the north of 60 exemption that allows drivers to go for 15 hours. You can drive from Watson Lake to Dawson City with a load in 12 hours.

So, we're not talking about travelling from Florida to Alaska with a load of produce; we're talking about Garry Gammie in Dawson City getting a call from Highways and Public Works saying, "We have a culvert washout on the Dempster Highway, and we need four gravel trucks up here for three days." Well, he can't do that unless he installs electronic logging devices in his dump trucks, because he can't make it there and back in a day. You can't make it up there and go to work for the day and come back and be at home that night, unless he wants to actually haul gravel for three hours a day, and that doesn't make any sense.

There are so many examples that we could use and so many of the things that the members opposite have said that could be rebutted. We heard about how ELDs are quicker than paper logbooks, so when the driver gets to the end of his day, he can get into bed and go to sleep more quickly. Well, Mr. Speaker, if you work all day here in the Legislature, when you get home at the end of the day, you don't just lay down and go to sleep, because you have to get up, you have to go for a walk, you have to take your dog for a walk, and you have to get some exercise and have a breath of fresh air and kick your tires.

So, it's not a matter of whether that three minutes of making the line in the logbook gets you to bed more quickly. That's a comment from someone who has no concept of how

industry works. That's fine; I don't begrudge anyone that. All I ask is that, if you don't know, go and ask. Go and talk to the people who this is affecting. I appreciate that the Third Party spoke to the union, but the Minister of Highways and Public Works sure didn't talk to anyone. He said that industry hasn't even complained about this or hasn't asked for exemptions. That is completely untrue, but he has not gone and talked to industry.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Please continue, Member for Pelly-Nisutlin.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another item that was brought up was about the trucks that are from the year 2000 and older. So, you know, here we are — we talk probably a lot about emissions and greener economy and the importance of reducing our emissions. Yet this policy allows for older trucks with less emissions to be exempt. So, we are now encouraging trucking companies to drive older, less efficient vehicles. That doesn't make any sense.

Another problem with that — and this is the part that I was trying to not get into in the beginning. You have a truck that is a 2004 and you blow the motor in it and you don't have a lot of money, so you find your buddy down the road has a 1997 with a good engine in it. So, you put that in your truck so that you can get back to work. Well, guess what? The ECM, the engine control module, isn't compatible for ELDs. So, now what does that person do? He has a 2004 truck — well, it has to have an ELD, but the motor is from 1997, and so he can't use an ELD — so, another problem.

There are a lot of these things. I am just trying to pick a few out of the air and talk about things that others have brought up. It is very frustrating to listen to this, because all of the, or most all of the, disputes against what I had to say today were actually about long-haul trucking, and there is no argument about long-haul trucking needing ELDs. It is a good idea, like I said in my beginning speech. It helps them in other ways as well.

Obviously, I don't think that I have changed anyone's mind here today, but it really is frustrating to listen to people talk about something that they have no concept — that they refuse to go and talk to the people who know about the situation so that we can look at solutions.

This isn't something where the Yukon Party is trying to square a circle. This is something that was done by other jurisdictions. I didn't dream this exemption up; other jurisdictions did. Those people believe in science. They believe in safety, but they also believe in common sense. They believe in trying to work with industry. They believe in listening to what industry has to say and actually listening to them, not just talk about: "Oh, well, I have met with 800 contractors, and I have heard this and I've heard that", but actually listen to them.

Mr. Speaker, like I said, I am sure that I didn't change any minds here today, but I will take my seat and allow the Legislature to move on to other very important topics of the day, so thank you for your time.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Madam Deputy Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Blake: Disagree.

MLA Tredger: Disagree.

Deputy Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are eight yea, 10 nay.

Speaker: The nays have it.
I declare the motion defeated.

Motion No. 609 negatived

Motion No. 649

Deputy Clerk: Motion No. 649, standing in the name of Ms. White.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to create a public health lodge in Whitehorse for rural Yukoners who are attending medical appointments.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to my colleagues. I will just give everyone the heads-up that it's a wordy response today, but it's because it's an issue that I have been passionate about for a long number of years.

For decades, Yukoners in communities have travelled to Whitehorse and beyond for the medical care they need. From emergency procedures to specialist visits to routine dental and eye care, thousands of Yukoners across the territory depend on health care services only offered in Whitehorse. While health services expand in the communities, some medical care will only ever be able to be provided in Whitehorse. Because of this, these Yukoners continue to drive and fly into Whitehorse for their health care needs. Medical travel is a critically important part of the Yukon's health care system, but Yukoners are paying out of pocket to stay in cramped hotel rooms, sometimes

for weeks at a time. Some of them are going hundreds, even thousands, of dollars in debt.

It doesn't have to be this way. This motion, in line with the recommendations in *Putting People First*, urges the government to keep its promise to Yukoners and to the authors of the *Putting People First* report. In *Putting People First*, the report recommended — and I quote: “Create residences in Whitehorse and Vancouver to reduce the need for hotel accommodations for medical travellers, provide a base for more coordinated out-of-territory care and discharge back to care in Yukon, and support those who may need help navigating care away from home.”

The Liberal platform from 2021 promised to — and I quote: “Create a health lodge in Whitehorse for rural residents who are attending medical appointments.” Today's motion urges the government to create a public health lodge in Whitehorse for rural residents travelling for medical appointments. When the NDP brought the idea of a health lodge back into the conversation this spring, many Yukoners reached out to us to share their support.

One person wrote: Why isn't there a dorm or some kind of housing in Whitehorse for medical travel? The travel bursary doesn't cover the cost of most hotels and lots of hotels are booked solid 90 percent of the time if you have less than two weeks' notice.

Another person said: Accommodations cover here in Whitehorse for community members is completely doable. It's a money saving, stress-relief idea for sure.

Yet another person said: Great idea. Many people choose not to seek medical care because of the stress of travel. This would hopefully help some of those people.

Right now, the system isn't working for people who have to travel for medical care, but it can be better. We can make medical travel easier for everyone by opening a public health lodge in Whitehorse.

Let's talk about what exists right now for folks who have to travel for medical care and why it's just not enough. Even with the last increase, it's not even close to enough. Yukoners have told this government in letters through our office and in the media that the medical travel subsidy is simply not enough. Right now, the medical travel subsidy is \$166 a day. That's hardly enough to cover a hotel room. For a lot of people, this money is all they have to afford accommodations, food, and transportation.

I want to break that down. Most medical travel is booked within two weeks. So, I took a look at the travel sites for a hotel room for two adults — that is, one bed in a single room. The average hotel room right now, for one bed in a hotel room in Whitehorse, is \$183.82. So, that leaves someone with negative \$17.82 for food and transportation. So, I thought that maybe short-term rentals would be better — nope. In fact, when trying to book something two weeks from now, the average price for two adults is a whopping \$336.85 in Whitehorse. So, for the sake of just doing the math again, it leaves Yukoners who are travelling for their health care with negative \$170.85. There is the medical travel subsidy for escorts, but it is even less money — just \$78 a day. So, maybe if the patient and the escort share

a bed in their hotel room, they will have just enough to get to and from the airport.

It is interesting, because I escorted someone down south for medical travel just a few months ago, and until recently, I was under the assumption that escorts get an equal amount of money to subsidize medical travel, but they don't; they get even less. I never did apply for the subsidy, though, because of just how onerous the process of applying is.

So, when we proposed a health lodge, a Yukoner reached out and said that it was — and I quote: “Totally necessary — Airbnb's are too expensive and hotels don't have kitchens or enough space.” Yukoners feel the squeeze of expensive accommodations every time they travel for medical care. It is March. This is the shoulder season, with some of the lowest numbers of tourists outside of the Native Hockey Tournament. Yukoners know that these prices and the serious lack of availability of hotel rooms and short-term rentals only gets worse in the summer.

No matter which way you look at it, what exists right now is forcing Yukoners to pay out of their own pocket and going into debt for health care. This isn't news. In the fall, a news article entitled “Yukon's medical travel subsidy falls short of hotel costs” told the story of a Yukon senior named Reginald Clements who faced serious barriers in accessing the medical care that he needed down south. Reginald, who lives on a fixed income, had to go down south for a cancer operation, but hotels cost more than \$200 a night, which was just unaffordable, and even if Reginald had the money, he didn't own a credit card, so booking a hotel room was never an option.

So, here is another quote from that story that makes this point abundantly clear — quote: “Clements said the Yukon's per diem for medical travel ... is simply not enough to cover a hotel room in Vancouver, let alone meals and other expenses.” So, given the cost of hotels in Whitehorse that I just outlined, the same subsidy isn't even enough to cover hotels in this territory, let alone Outside.

Here is another article, and it is from December last year, entitled “Yukon's medical travel subsidy still nowhere near enough, critics say”. In that article, a parent of someone with a chronic condition said — and I quote: “Every other month, I'm out a significant amount of money for, you know, for missing work and from having expenses that I cannot afford ... Then you're forced to look at, OK, is the care that I'm going for more important than being able to pay my rent? Or more important than being able to buy groceries?”

That is a terrible position to be put in — to choose between rent or food or the health care that you need or that a family member needs. Even with the doubling of the medical care subsidy, this Liberal government is forcing people to pay for costs associated with their health care. That was not the fundamental belief of the universal health care system. It means that some people are forced to choose not to get the medical attention they need because it is just too expensive.

Last week when I asked about this brutally low subsidy, Yukoners were shocked to hear what this government really felt about paying out of pocket for health care. So, the minister stated, and I quote: “... let's be clear about the purpose of the

medical travel subsidy. It is for the purpose of giving patients some increased options and to assist with the appropriate travel destination and the costs that they might have at that location. It is not to cover everyone's expenses. Medical travel subsidies are to assist with a person's expenses, not to cover them.”

So, I will repeat myself from last week. What a privilege it is to say that the medical travel subsidy is an add-on to give Yukoners — and I quote — “more options”. As we made clear, the subsidy doesn't even cover one night in a hotel room, let alone food or transportation on top of that. This government expects people to already have the money to afford to travel, to afford a hotel room, three meals at restaurants, and taxis for all the time that they are travelling for medical care — medical care that, through no fault of their own, they need to travel for. For people who don't already have the cash, I guess they are out of luck, because the only options they have are to either take out hundreds or thousands of dollars of debt, borrow it from friends or family, or cancel their medical appointments altogether.

I think back to the story that I told last week of the expectant mother living in a rural community in the Yukon. When she was pregnant, her doctor recommended that she come down to Whitehorse two months before her due date to be monitored because there were complications. This was a medical recommendation, and for those two months, she had to live in a cramped hotel room, and she had to pay up front for it. So, while she was reimbursed eventually, she had to pay \$7,000 up front. This is a huge amount of money up front to cough up for your own medically advised care.

In an article that I quoted earlier, the mother of a child with chronic conditions had this to say about the upfront payment — and I quote again: “It's helpful, obviously, to get some of those funds back. But I have to come up with them in the first place, and then I have to wait six, eight weeks to recoup, you know, whatever, 40, 50 per cent of what I spent — if that.”

So, the idea proposed by the minister that the medical travel subsidy is not to cover the expenses of medical travel but rather just act as a top-up is financially punitive. It doesn't make sense. So, what is clear to so many is that the system isn't working.

In the same exchange during Question Period last week, the minister said — and I quote: “It is also important to know that there are many, many places in Canada where individuals need to travel for care and where there is no such thing as a medical travel subsidy — most places in Canada.”

The argument that “things are worse in other places so we should be grateful” is not good policy-making. It's telling Yukoners to accept inadequate support because things could be worse. Well, the Yukon NDP and so many Yukoners believe and know that things can be better. The Liberals know it too. It's why they promised a health lodge in their own election platform just two years ago. As leaders, it's our job to imagine a better future for Yukoners, and I would like to think that this is why many of us in this room got into politics in the first place — to make life better for Yukoners, to really listen to people when they come to us and tell us what isn't working, and to offer real solutions, because there are so many creative,

effective, and economical ideas right in front of us if we take the time to look. That includes the medical travel lodge. The Liberals had this imagination during election time. So, what we are asking for is for them to keep their promise to Yukoners instead of telling them to accept the bare minimum.

Four years ago, the *Putting People First* authors told the government to do what we are asking, and, again, they recommended the creation of residences in both Whitehorse and Vancouver for medical travellers. You only need to look at the document that I tabled earlier today to see just how difficult it is to get accommodation for medical travel in Whitehorse. For those who don't have it or haven't seen it, this note from NIHB was posted one week ago to the "Faro Yukon Buy & Sell" Facebook group. It's titled: "Limited to No Vacancy At Whitehorse Hotels March 20, 2023 to March 27, 2023". Notices like this where hotels are full up and patients are left to figure out accommodations on their own are all too common. The Yukon's tourism industry is roaring back to life after the pandemic and we are grateful, but hotels and short-term rentals are raking in profits and are frequently sold out because of it, as they should be; they are for-profit businesses. Again, the *Putting People First* report recommended four whole years ago that this government "Create residences in Whitehorse and Vancouver to reduce the need for hotel accommodations for medical travellers..."

Medical travel is not a vacation and people need reliably available accommodations. Unlike vacations, people don't have weeks or months to plan for medical travel. Sometimes medical travel is an emergency, and you have to find a place to stay the next day, maybe even the same day. Expecting individuals to search out the most affordable and available hotel room or Airbnb while dealing with the emotional and mental stress of a loved one or themselves being sick and needing medical attention isn't acceptable. Beyond the financial costs and lack of availability, there is the issue of dignity and comfort. It's not just that the subsidy isn't enough or that there aren't enough rooms available; it's the system that isn't working for almost anyone. One gentleman came into our office not long ago and called the medical travel system — and I am quoting — "bureaucratic nonsense".

Mr. Speaker, you know, I hear that fairly often. Nearly every Yukoner who has experienced the medical travel system has a story about just how nonsensical, inflexible, and confusing the system is, and this isn't a criticism of the people doing the work on the front lines; this is a criticism of the system and the policies that they have to follow.

First, there is the issue for many Yukoners, particularly seniors and low-income folk, of not owning a credit card. Without a credit card, almost no hotel will accept a booking, and this means hours of calling the department and trying to convince them to work with the hotel to accept something else. Some folks have reached out to us with fears about having to cancel their medical appointments altogether because they don't have a credit card or don't have that kind of credit even available. And if you are lucky enough to have a credit card, the system is still a nightmare to navigate, because even when you have explicit orders from your health care provider that you

have to travel for medical care, it doesn't guarantee that this government will support you.

Over and over again, we hear both directly and in the media from Yukoners who are denied the medical travel subsidy for travel that their doctor or even their specialist has recommended. We have heard from health care providers. One of them told us — and I quote: "I have patients more stressed out about where they will stay than their radiation treatments."

Take a recent article entitled "Yukon gov't denies travel subsidy for Dawson City child with cancer..." Mr. Speaker, this headline is anything but salacious. It lays out clearly the basic fact that a child in Dawson living with leukemia, as well as his mom as a caregiver, were denied the medical travel subsidy. Even though his oncologist, the best person to know what is good for this child's health, advised him to stay in Whitehorse, the medical travel system said, "No, you won't have our help."

Comments provided by the government in this article — and I am quoting: "This case was handled in accordance with those processes that are put in place to ensure that all Yukoners can access the services they need." So, again, the policies and the systems that folks have to follow aren't working. What is clear in the stories that we are sharing, and will continue to share this afternoon, is that Yukoners aren't accessing the services they need because of these processes.

We believe that every Yukoner deserves to have access to the health care services that they need, and every Yukoner, no matter what their financial position, deserves dignity and comfort while receiving health care. I'm sure the ministers and this government spent time travelling, staying in hotel rooms across the country, and they would know, then, that most hotel rooms don't have a kitchen; they don't have a table to eat at or many places to sit. If you are in an especially nice room, maybe you will have a chair and a desk, and you might even have a little kitchenette. But, more often than not, especially in Whitehorse, you are in a room with one or two beds and a little ledge of a desk, and maybe you have a kettle to boil water. These are the rooms that this government expects people to live in when they come down for medical care right now.

Mr. Speaker, travelling for medical care, again, is not a vacation. While it's fun to imagine eating pizza on your bed when you are up for a fun trip to the big city, it's horrible to imagine the same scenario every single day, sometimes for weeks at a time, while you are sick and receiving medical attention — no place to sit, no place to cook, no place to gather, and spending all of your time either in town or in the same room as where you sleep. There is no dignity in being forced to live in a hotel room when you are sick, and there is even less dignity in having to pay for this fate.

No one should have to pay for costs associated with their health care. It's why, in the motion that we are debating today, we included the word "public" in urging the government to create a health lodge. Experts and Yukoners agree that the best form of health care is one that is free, without barriers, and public. There is a reason why public health care is a Canadian value, and it's not just nostalgia. Canadians know that when governments invest in strong public health care, everyone

benefits. *Putting People First*, a document that this government has repeatedly committed to using as a guide to transform our health care system, upholds public health care repeatedly. It emphasizes how essential upstream investments are to the health of Yukoners.

Interestingly enough, in the article entitled “Yukon’s medical travel subsidy falls short on hotel costs”, a representative of Yukon’s Health and Social Services department said that he — and I quote: “... acknowledged that hotels can be difficult to afford and said that the health system review also recommended setting up government-operated residences in Whitehorse and Vancouver to reduce the need for medical travellers to stay in hotels.” I believe that he is referring to *Putting People First* there.

In another article I mentioned earlier entitled “Yukon’s medical travel subsidy still nowhere near enough...”, another different representative of the same department said — and I quote: “... the government is looking at other options, including the potential for medical residences in Whitehorse and Vancouver so patients don’t have to pay for pricey hotel stays.”

So, our interpretation of “public” — just like it seems the department’s interpretation is — is a residence that is government-operated, not an accommodation that is a public/private partnership where the work is off-loaded onto a private business, because businesses work for profit. That is their incentive — their metric of success. When you allow corporations to make a profit from people’s health care, you are skewing all of the metrics and incentives of health care provision. Health care must be provided because it is a right, and those decisions should be made by understanding what is best for the patient’s health and dignity and not what is cheapest and makes the quickest buck.

As long as the Yukon does not have a public health lodge, hotels and short-term rental companies will continue to make a profit from medical care. Sure, we might see hotels continue to be built and short-term rentals continue to crop up, but that also means more lots for commercial purposes instead of being zoned for the dense housing that we need. Even if this government can continue to increase the medical travel subsidy, hotels and short-term rentals can continue to raise their prices and, in turn, the government will need to increase the subsidy and so on and so on and so on.

It’s a never-ending cycle of squeezing profits out of health care, but it doesn’t have to be this way. The government has the ability to end this privatization cycle and open a public health lodge in Whitehorse.

The public health lodge in Whitehorse could accommodate folks of all kinds coming in from communities for their medical care. It should be open to families, seniors, and to everyone in between who are in Whitehorse for medical reasons — for routine medical appointments, including primary and extended care like dental, physio, mental health, and optometric care. It could serve as a residence for expecting parents from the communities who have come to Whitehorse in the weeks and, in some cases, months before their due date. It could serve as an accommodation for folks who are visiting Whitehorse to see loved ones at the hospital, for parents who wish to see their

children while they are in the hospital, for family members wanting to visit relatives in long-term care homes. This lodge can be a brilliant, beautiful thing if the government fulfills their promise and invests in it.

The government has countless examples in front of them on which to base this public health lodge. We can look at other jurisdictions to learn what is and isn’t working and how other places have created safe, comfortable places for medical travellers to stay. There are the medical health lodges in Yellowknife and in Edmonton for the citizens from the Northwest Territories; there’s the Ronald McDonald House in BC for Yukoners and British Columbian families whose children are in BC for medical care; there is the Easter Seals House in BC, which also offers folks a place to stay in Vancouver. We can draw on the success of all of these residences and more to provide quality accommodations for all Yukoners who are coming into Whitehorse for medical care.

This public health lodge can be a wonderful place to stay for Yukoners if the government has the vision and determination to make it happen. It could be a safe, comfortable, and spacious place to rest while travelling for medical care. Imagine, after the exhaustion of travelling for medical attention, that you are able to stay, free of charge, in a bright space with private, soundproof rooms to enjoy peace of mind while resting up. Imagine a full kitchen with dishwasher, oven, stove, large fridge and freezer to store food, counters to prepare the food, and all the kitchen tools that you need to cook and enjoy a homecooked meal while away from home.

Imagine having a place to gather in communal spaces with comfortable chairs, couches, and tables to eat meals together, a space where you can spend time with family members outside of clinical settings, like the waiting rooms of hospitals and clinics. Like other medical travel residences, this site would even have a playground or a recreation room with games, a TV, and comfortable seating for kids to spend time together, to play and feel normal, instead of getting bored waiting in a hotel room all day.

Imagine programming that could be offered in a space like this where people can opt in whenever they feel like they need it. Folks could access everything from beading and cultural activities to a drop-in and supports, including social workers to help navigate all of the complexities of medical travel and medical treatment, family counselling services, and other mental health supports.

These are just some of the ideas that have been shared with us. This government can continue to adapt the lodge once it opens, depending on feedback from residents and advisement from the lived experience committee. This lodge could receive annual funding from the Health and Social Services budget to ensure programming in the facility is maintained.

So, what Yukoners really want to know today is where everybody stands and whether the Liberals will keep their promise. The folks across the way, you know, might say things like: “This is going to take a long time; it won’t happen overnight.” But it has been almost four years since the *Putting People First* recommendations were released; it has been four years since this government accepted that report, and it has

been two years since the 2021 election, and thousands of Yukoners are still waiting for this commitment to be realized.

So, the motion before us is very simple. The details, you know, are going to be up to the Liberals, and if they have been working as diligently on this project as they have said, they will have had the last two years plus the two before that as a majority government to get this project done. This idea is a surprise to no one, and it should certainly not be a surprise to the government that I brought this forward. We are asking this government to keep its word and do the right thing by Yukoners.

I am hopeful that the government believes in strong public health care — that they believe that no one should be paying out of pocket for their health care, that each and every one of the stories shared today by me and which you will hear from my NDP colleagues are real. It is real people who send us notes — these stories are important, and at times, they are going to be tough to hear, but they were even more tough for those folks to live through. Each of those stories matter, and I hope that everyone in this room will listen to these stories and these experiences closely, because I know that many in this room have been told similar stories about the hardships of medical travel.

As leaders in this room, we have the unique opportunity, not just to see problems in the system, but to dream of real solutions. Even better than that, we can make those solutions a reality. We can make real investments, dedicate real time and compassion, and get things done quickly, if that is what we really want to do.

So, I look forward to my colleagues' comments, because I want to know where everybody stands today, and I look forward, hopefully, to a positive vote on this motion.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased today to be able to speak to Motion No. 649, which looks to me like a replacement for the original Motion No. 622, which was tabled on March 9. The Leader of the Third Party has tabled this motion, urging the Government of Yukon to create a health lodge in Whitehorse for rural residents attending medical appointments. This, as was noted by the member opposite, was referenced in the 2021 Yukon Liberal platform. In fact, it was referenced in the original motion, but the new motion took that part of the wording out. It was, in fact, in the Yukon Liberal platform in 2021. In fact, the wording is: "Create a health lodge in Whitehorse for rural residents who are attending medical appointments" — almost word for word. I am proud that was included in that platform.

It won't be a surprise, presumably, to anyone — at least, this is the way that I operate — it was in *Putting People First*, and in *Putting People First*, there were 76 recommendations, and we accepted all of those and are working on them diligently, so of course, by a logical conclusion, we are supportive of a health lodge in Whitehorse for rural residents who are attending medical appointments.

As I have noted, the government accepted the recommendations in *Putting People First* — which I think there has been a reference to almost four years ago. I recollect that

Putting People First — which I have with me — was issued in April of 2020, I believe — I could be corrected about that, but over three years for sure, not quite four. We have accepted the recommendations in *Putting People First* and are exploring the options related to medical travel residences, including potentially securing hotel rooms in the interim. I think a residence is a smart idea.

I will have several comments with respect to some of the ones that currently exist and the concept of free accommodation at such a residence, but that's all to be worked out in the future. The government has implemented several of the medical travel program enhancements from *Putting People First*. I can remind everyone that, in addition to the *Putting People First* actual report and the executive summary of that report, we issued a report card, if you will — an annual report from 2022. If it has not been tabled in this House, I will make sure that it is, but I believe that it was with respect to chapter 2, which is about the concepts of recommendations that focused on achieving integrated, person-centred care across the health and social system. Chapter 2's references are mostly the ones we are speaking about today; although, as I have said, there are 76 of them, and the opportunity to work on all of those is critical for the Department of Health and Social Services and our health care partners.

I will note that 2.4 of *Putting People First* is double the current medical travel subsidy from \$75 per day to \$150 per day, which went to \$155. The major change with respect to that was to have it begin on the first day of travel, if an overnight stay is needed, and to index inflation going forward. That has all been done. That increased the opportunity for people to have some access to that subsidy almost immediately.

We are also — 2.5 — conducting more research on the cost and benefits to provide an additional subsidy for low-income Yukoners who may not receive care due to travel-related cost barriers. That is not acceptable here in the Yukon. We know that individuals who choose to have medical care and have cost-related barriers need to be accommodated.

Item 2.6 is: "Create residences in Whitehorse and Vancouver to reduce the need for hotel accommodations for medical travellers." I appreciated all the comments from the member opposite about the difficulty and the cost of hotels. I think we are very much aware of this. I don't think she intended to indicate that we would only be aware of hotel costs for pleasure or vacation. Nobody has ever equated medical travel in the territory or out of the territory as a vacation. It is just simply not even an acceptable concept.

We are extremely aware of the incredibly stressful activity when a family member or a loved one is ill. It's even more stressful when somebody has to travel for care and be separated from their support system and their loved ones or even have them come with them as an escort or companion.

Being out of your normal life and dealing with a stressful medical situation is something — if we haven't been through it, we certainly can understand what people are going through. I know what that's like. I have been through it recently with a loved one in a very serious situation, and I also had to travel for medical for myself and, 23 years ago at the birth of my child, I

spent far too much time at BC Children's Hospital, having been medevaced as a result of that. It's not something you forget anytime soon, and I have first-hand experience, like many of the stories from the member opposite — but first-hand experience with understanding the stress of that situation and what kinds of decisions have to be made.

We are making progress to implement the entire *Putting People First* report, and we have made progress when it comes to medical travel. We have doubled the daily subsidy, giving it to patients on the first day; we have increased options for the most appropriate travel destination, which is in *Putting People First* — 2.8 in *Putting People First* is a recommendation to eliminate the restriction of medical travel destinations in the current medical travel regulations, which was back out before 2020 under the *Travel for Medical Treatment Act*. We have increased the opportunities not only for people to have access to different cities and places for care, but to make sure that there are more options for people to have care at home.

Back in December 2020, we released a “what we heard” document that informed feedback that we had received during the medical travel program review. As part of that process, we received survey results from approximately 2,378 individuals who had used the medical travel program, as well as from 196 individuals who attended an in-person session.

During that engagement, respondents indicated that finding accommodations in their destination city was an area of concern. I absolutely agree. My entire caucus agrees. The *Putting People First* report's recommendation 2.6, as I've noted, is the concept of creating a residence.

The Department of Health and Social Services has already begun exploring options related to medical travel residences. We have also had conversations with many of our partners in other levels of government, as well as organization partnerships, on how we might best achieve this for Yukoners.

While we consider longer term options related to medical travel residences, we are also working to explore short-term options. We are currently exploring opportunities to secure hotel rooms for use by medical travellers in both Whitehorse and Vancouver — it being the destination that most people attend outside of the Yukon.

This fiscal year, as of February 21, 2023, Insured Health medical travel has supported 3,613 in-territory medical travel cases, 2,940 out-of-territory medical travel cases, 351 in-territory medevac cases, and 307 out-of-territory medevac cases.

During the 2019-20 fiscal year, it was estimated that there was a total of 5,259 overnight stays for medical travel in Vancouver and 1,769 overnight stays for medical travel in Whitehorse, with the majority of these visits lasting one or two nights. During this same period, it is estimated that there was an average of 19 people on medical travel requiring an overnight stay in Vancouver and five people per day requiring an overnight stay in Whitehorse.

As we conduct further research and assessment around securing hotel rooms, I can assure Yukoners that we continue to move forward with other medical travel program enhancements, some of which I have noted are in *Putting*

People First. We increased the medical travel subsidy, as I have said, back in January 2021, almost as soon as possible following the engagement with Yukoners. We have indexed it to inflation annually. It begins on the first day of your travel for medical reasons. Starting on April 1, just in a few days, the medical travel subsidy will increase to \$166 per day. We have removed restrictions on the gateway cities and introduced an escort policy that has ensured that the medical travel subsidy is now available, as I have said, on the first day. The member opposite has noted that there is also a medical travel subsidy for escorts.

As part of the 2023 confidence and supply agreement, we have committed to including fertility treatments in medical travel. We are currently working on that file. We are currently in the planning stages of this work and recognize that an initiative of this magnitude will take significant work, as we conduct the necessary review of the regulations and the legislative assessments and amendments, but I certainly have instructed the department to do that as soon as possible.

We look forward to updating Yukoners as soon as we can about the medical travel aspect of including fertility treatments. There are other commitments about supporting the cost of fertility treatments in that agreement, and, again, we are moving forward on that.

We are exploring the recommendations to deliver a safe and alternative driving service for Yukoners. Again, this is something, in speaking to other levels of government about it — First Nation governments and other partners — so that Yukoners who need to travel to Whitehorse can access care in a way that might not involve them driving their own vehicles, if they either don't have them or that is not something they can do.

We are also working to increase access to virtual care alternatives and conducting research on how to address travel-related barriers for low-income Yukoners. Again, that is a provision and recommendation of *Putting People First*.

Additionally, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation have recently started a quality improvement initiative called “Bridges to Home” with the British Columbia Patient Safety and Quality Council. It is focused on improving care transitions between hospital, home, and community. This is an incredibly important aspect of the work that is being done.

It is jolting to be plucked out of your own life — either because of a medical emergency or something that needs to be addressed quickly — to find yourself perhaps in hospital, perhaps away from your home community. Perhaps you live in Whitehorse, and all of a sudden you find yourself in a hospital in another city with some family or supports or without them. Then you are required to assess medical information and perhaps make decisions or help a loved one make decisions that are critical to their care. You often have very little time to do that and very little support in the way that you might normally make those kinds of important decisions, and then you might be just as quickly returning from that situation — to return to your home or to your home community — with very little support or very little opportunity to process that situation and

what may have happened to you. The Bridges to Home program understands that and understands that assisting people with those transitions is incredibly important and will overall improve health and experiences of individuals who are having to make such decisions or having such experiences.

Bridges to Home is a recommendation in *Putting People First* and is promoted by Healthcare Excellence Canada, and it builds upon other similar successful initiatives in other jurisdictions. This initiative helps patients as they transition from the hospital to their homes — or through the experience, like I have described — while also improving outcomes and reducing the risk of readmission, because folks can have some care and some ability to process what is next for them.

We will continue to explore ways to enhance the medical travel experience for Yukoners as we work to implement the recommendations of *Putting People First*.

I want to note that I appreciate the political points of view, or the tactics, in putting forward these kinds of motions. This is a motion that we will support, but it is just as important to make sure that we have realistic expectations.

I'm not going to say that this will take a long time. This is something that we have been working on, and we will continue to work on, to make sure that we can improve the experiences for Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have earned the reputation for solving problems for Yukoners. We have built partnerships with other governments and other non-governmental organizations. I dare say that each of the stories and experiences — all of which are incredibly important — described by the member opposite, when brought to my attention and the attention of the department officials, were resolved. It is important that people who experience what is available through the Department of Health and Social Services and experience it in a way that is less than optimum bring that to our attention, because we must make sure that, if mistakes are made, we correct them.

A residence that we support will, of course, be open for families. The experience of Ronald McDonald House is an example of an amazing supportive lodge. They need to be safe, comfortable spaces, compassionate spaces, places where people can work to heal or work to support those who are dealing with a health issue.

I should note and will note that they are not all free of charge. I think that's something new that has been brought to the attention of the Legislative Assembly today through the submissions here.

Certainly, it is something that we can look at. For instance, they are heavily subsidized in my experience — as we know, for instance, the BC cancer lodge that currently exists in Vancouver is a beautiful facility. It has a fee of \$50 per night, so it is heavily subsidized. It allows individuals to stay there, including food and meals, for that amount, which, of course, would benefit them.

I am very pleased to have been able to speak about the importance of the medical travel improvements that our government has made and will continue to make. I am very

pleased to be able to speak in favour of that motion, but I will take my seat.

Ms. Blake: I am grateful today to speak about the motion to create a public health lodge in Whitehorse for rural residents coming into the city for medical travel. The creation of a place for people to come and stay in Whitehorse when they travel here for medical reasons is so important for every Yukoner. No matter who you are, what income you have, whether you are Indigenous or non-Indigenous, everyone deserves access to health care without barriers.

For people living in my home community of Old Crow and Yukoners across all of the communities, Whitehorse remains a hub where people go to access their medical care. There are so many services that are simply unavailable in the communities. In Old Crow, for example, we must come to Whitehorse for optometry care, physiotherapy, adult dental care, any specialist visit, prenatal and delivery care, radiation for cancer, and much more. Many people must organize multiple appointments to fit across just a few days so that they are not constantly flying into Whitehorse. A big part of this planning is the financial barriers that one faces when coming into Whitehorse.

While some might think that a visit to town is a fun vacation, people who travel in for medical appointments know that this is not the case. It's often a stressful, isolating, and extremely expensive process. The paperwork is overwhelming and the policies that you have to navigate are confusing to many. Some might say that there are community hospitals, such as the ones in Dawson and Watson Lake, but people in communities know that the services provided by these hospitals are very limited. People from the communities still have to come to Whitehorse for physio, eye care, certain surgeries, births, and other services.

Governments have known for decades that cost and lack of accommodations remain a barrier to people coming into Whitehorse for all of these medical services. A public health lodge can significantly remove that barrier and create substantive equality to health care for rural Yukoners.

The issue of finding accommodation when travelling to access medical care is one that I have heard throughout my entire life. When I was a child listening to elders and community leaders, this was a topic of meetings and discussions at all levels of First Nation government.

When I was a teenager, I continued to witness individuals who experienced hardship when trying to find — let alone afford — a place to stay in the city where they are receiving medical care. As an adult, the stories of lack of accommodation and financial barriers continued. This time, I saw the impact directly in my career, working in various sectors of the health and social services field.

I think back to the time that I worked for the First Nation health programs at the hospital. When I was in this role, a man was medevaced down south for a serious emergency. I noticed that his spouse and their daughter were standing outside in distress. When I went to them to offer support, the spouse told me about her primary concern. In that stressful moment, her greatest concern was the financial barriers in front of them. She

told me she didn't know how she would afford a hotel and food and transportation while her spouse was receiving care.

No one should have to worry about finances when thinking about their health. When you are already in crisis, your focus should be how to return to health, but that is not the lived experience for many Yukoners, especially those who live in communities. One individual shared with us — and I quote: “Many people cannot afford to eat when travelling because they do not receive an advance per diem to cover the cost of food. Same issue with transportation. Many people cannot walk or take transit & rely on a taxi. This is very costly & sometimes people choose not go at all.”

Many Yukoners have to think about the money that they don't have in their bank accounts. They have to think about how to make nothing stretch across multiple days. One group that experiences the most difficult barriers in medical travel is expecting parents. When you are pregnant in a community, you are told to come into Whitehorse at least two weeks before your due date. For many folks, they end up coming in even earlier.

I think back to my own experiences when I was living in Old Crow during each pregnancy for my two sons. Both times, I was told to come into Whitehorse before my due date. I arrived in Whitehorse with very little money and very pregnant. I ended up spending six whole weeks in a cramped hotel room for each of my pregnancies. It was an uncomfortable, isolating, and extremely expensive experience both times. In my hotel room, I was lucky enough to have a kitchenette so that I could at least cook my own food, but the groceries were expensive, and I could hardly afford any of the food that I needed to eat. If I had been in my own community, I could have relied on friends, family, and neighbours for support, but away from that community in Whitehorse, I was left without any of that support.

These personal experiences happened two decades ago, and we hear the same exact stories from pregnant Yukoners today. In all of that time, almost nothing has improved for this experience, except for a medical travel subsidy increase that is still not enough. One of the more recent stories was of a woman who did not have the finances to pay the costs of a hotel and food up front. Her only option was to borrow money and go into debt or hope that the one available unit for pregnant women at the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre was available. One parent looked back at their experience and told us that — quote: “I think my birth would have gone different if I had had access to affordable, private accommodation in Whitehorse. YG has a standard accommodation rate and it only covers two weeks.” “I've seen similar comments in the Yukon babies Facebook groups too...” “I know people who can afford it get Airbnb's, but booking is tricky given that birth timing is generally unpredictable.”

Another parent shared with us that they had to travel to Whitehorse from one of the communities. Their birth had some complications, and they ended up having to be medevaced to Vancouver. Then, they had to stay in Whitehorse for extra time to be close to the hospital. They said — and I quote: “Two months and thousands of dollars later ... families don't need the extra stress”.

Another Yukoner had this to say: “So absurd that birthing folks, who may need to bring a partner and other children, get the regular travel amount. Visitors can't house and feed a family of 3 or 4 for \$150/day in Whitehorse. The only free housing option is provided by a non-profit.”

Yet another individual shared — quote: “So I just got back from Inuvik where they have a transient unit/hotel on top of the hospital for those coming in from out of town/waiting to have their babies. In my mat experience it's often the status folks who get put up in hotels to wait to have their babes (sometimes up to 10 weeks prior pending on the condition) which leaves a larger portion of Yukoners without that option. I've had immigrant populations from Beaver Creek camping outside in the winter because they couldn't afford the confinement period in Whitehorse! Also there are those that choose to stay in their communities as we can't offer places for families to stay together.”

For decades, this government has continued to require pregnant Yukoners to leave their community and pay up front to live in a hotel room for weeks at a time, and once the baby is born, many continue to pay out of pocket to stay close to medical care. Experts and birthing people know how important it is to reduce stress during this vulnerable time. We heard many of the same stories when the Yukon NDP developed our 2021 election platform where we committed to creating a birthing lodge in Whitehorse for expecting parents from the communities. Just like a birthing lodge, the public health lodge would offer those same supports. This lodge would be an amazing support for expecting parents to stay without financial hardship.

I also want to speak for a moment about the different systems Yukoners are under for medical travel support. I was raised under the *Indian Act* and so many government policies that did a disservice to Indigenous people. Over the years, I also saw powerful leaders and advocates change the systems designed to fail us. One example has shown up in my daily work in the health and social services field before I was elected as an MLA.

I have been able to see how, over the years, Indigenous leaders and clients have advocated to improve the non-insured health benefits program, but we still have so much further to go. Whether you fall under that non-insured health benefits program or Yukon health, finding and affording a place to stay for medical travel is almost impossible. Just last year, I spoke with the Yukon's Member of Parliament about these very issues. We see now in the most recent federal budget that an increase was made in the non-insured health benefits program for medical travel. Again, this is a system that only some Yukoners fall under. Other Yukoners must still rely on the very low \$166-per-day medical travel subsidy through the Yukon government. The differences between these systems are confusing and give Yukoners unequal access to health care.

When looking at what currently exists for Yukoners, either through the non-insured health benefits program or Yukon health, I ask myself and everyone in this House this: Why can't we take the best parts of the current systems and create something that works for everyone across the entire territory?

We hear from all Yukoners that the medical travel subsidy is not enough and that a public health lodge would help, so why can't this government create a public health lodge for Yukoners?

I am reminded every time I stand in this House about our responsibility as leaders in the territory. When we work in these positions of power, I think about how important it is to be removing systemic barriers for the people we represent. I continue to see so many people suffer from an approach that prioritizes how to provide services as cheaply as possible at the cost of Yukoners' real needs. I continue to see people suffer from policies that do not work for people. I think about how every part of our work must be toward substantive equality for every Yukoner.

Creating a public health lodge is a part of this work. It would help many people who are struggling right now under a system that does not work for many. I am hopeful that this government will listen to the many Yukoners whose stories we have shared and create a public health lodge.

Mahsi' cho.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Cathers: In beginning to speak to this motion, I would just note that we do support the concept of increasing support for people from rural Yukon who come into Whitehorse for necessary health care services. It is interesting that "medical appointments" was the phrasing of this motion, not, for example, any mention of surgeries or other necessary treatment. It may not have been the intent of the motion to exclude those people, but it is just something that struck me when looking at the wording of it.

What I would just note in conveying our questions about the vision and the impacts of this is, to begin with, that we have questions about the cost implications, and while — I wanted to emphasize, as well, that noting that you need to consider the cost implications is not necessarily an argument against ultimately proceeding, but it is a very key step in any significant government initiative, because ultimately, you have to pay for it, and it is important to consider options for doing what you are trying to achieve and to understand both the initial cost of those options and the ongoing cost of those options and determining how you are going to address them. That is something that we don't see here in the motion.

I also noted what seemed to be different visions by the Leader of the Third Party and the Minister of Health and Social Services for what a public health lodge would mean in Whitehorse and how that would be operated and whether it would be free of charge or whether there would be a cost for it. Those are important considerations. Ultimately, where we do agree with the NDP is that we don't want to see anyone in a situation where they are unable to receive the health care that they need as a result of the cost of accommodation being a barrier, but government spending also comes with decisions, and if a significant amount of money is being spent here, it may

limit government's flexibility to invest in other areas of health care where money may be more urgently required.

I will again remind the government of the fact that, for the current fiscal year, the Yukon Hospital Corporation is short over \$14.5 million, a hole in their budget that the government has yet to fund, despite their rhetoric claiming they are meeting the hospital's needs. We see that the amount that the government is providing for the upcoming fiscal year is substantially less than the \$103.5 million that the Hospital Corporation told us they need for the current year, and that is having a direct impact on health care delivery in the Yukon. It is also something that is directly contributing to the problem of cancelled surgeries, and it falls at the feet of this government for failing to adequately fund the hospital.

I am going to talk about another area — again, to my point about the need to understand the costs and also to understand what other cost pressures may be out there for government.

The Leader of the Third Party brought up today — and I believe it was yesterday in Question Period — issues related to Emergency Medical Services and the lack of capacity to meet the current demand. The Leader of the Third Party also asked a question to which she didn't get an answer from the minister — but I think I can answer it — which was when they last saw a change to their model and an increase. In fact, it was under a Yukon Party government that we increased resources for EMS. We also, in the last term, I'm proud to say, built two ambulance stations. Both ambulance stations in Whitehorse were built. The one at the top of Two Mile Hill did not previously exist. We provided that to improve coverage and response times — both within Whitehorse and for people, including my constituents outside of city limits — by putting it at a more central location. Previously, of course, from the old ambulance station on the hospital grounds, ambulances had to travel to the bridge, across the bridge, and through downtown before being in a position to respond to calls in other parts of the city or to areas both north of town and south of town — I guess I should also add "and west of town".

Those investments helped to improve response times and additionally, to the specific question the member asked, came with an increase to the number of paramedic positions and vehicles that were on the road.

I agree that the resourcing needs of EMS need to be given a serious look at right now — as I noted, I do agree with the Leader of Third Party that it's a problem. If you call an ambulance and there is no one available to come — and when this is a frequent occurrence — it is an issue. Again, to my point, in considering this proposal — which does have merit — government should also be looking at the context of what other supports and investments, including directly within health care, may be impacted as a result of this.

Again, I want to emphasize that we don't disagree with the concept of looking at this, by any means. We have questions about the specific proposal that have not been answered by either the Leader of the Third Party or the minister.

There are also other considerations that should be looked at, such as what the best model is for this situation. The concept of creating a public health lodge for rural Yukoners attending

medical appointments raises the question of scope. By “scope” of that, I mean: Does it apply to people who are in hospital for surgery, either just before or just after? That was not mentioned in this motion. Does it cover people attending any doctor’s appointment in Whitehorse? What about dental appointments, optometrist and physiotherapist appointments, and what about their families? The reason for it is that, beyond the concept of this, the scope and cost implications associated with it are the biggest question in our minds related to it, because it is important to understand, first of all, the scope and volume of what would be entered into, how many people from rural Yukon you are attempting to be able to support, and whether it is available for people who, for example, need some assistance after being in the hospital and having had a surgical procedure or whether it is widely and broadly open to people who do not need any assistance. Again, it has a very large impact on the potential size of such a facility.

I would also suggest that, considering all of the people from rural Yukon — both in the communities and in areas where people are simply living in rural areas — who do come into Whitehorse, there needs to be an understanding and assessment of the scope of this before committing to a specific path, and options should be considered. The Leader of the NDP seems to have in mind a model whereby a facility would be built by government, owned by government, and staffed by government, and the Minister of Health and Social Services seems to have the view that the facility would have a charge associated with staying there. The Leader of the NDP is clearly of the view that it should be free.

We, on the other hand, question — for at least some of the many people coming into Whitehorse from rural communities — whether this type of facility is the best model to proceed with for all of them. I would suggest that other options should be considered, including the private sector providing a facility if a facility is needed. I understand that the NDP is philosophically against that. We, however, recognize the value that is provided to Yukoners by doctors, for example, in providing health care services. A key and integral part of our health care system — and the way it has run for decades — is doctors operating in private practice. They provide a very important, high-quality service to Yukoners, and we believe, in fact, that this model is likely more efficient than if government were to try to absorb everything within government-run polyclinics, as suggested in their comprehensive health care review.

I do have to just touch on the fact that this government still has yet to cost out what it would take to implement their comprehensive health care review recommendations. They accepted all the recommendations. They said they would do it, and then even the panel members admitted that no one knew what it was going to cost to implement. Making major decisions without having the foggiest notion of the costs associated with them is not the right approach to take. You need to understand the costs before making major decisions.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Cathers: Madam Deputy Speaker, I hear the kibitzing off-mic from the Liberal Party and the NDP, but I would point out that they are welcome to take the approach, if

they wish, of committing to something without understanding the implications.

Other options that should be considered, as I noted, include having the private sector provide a facility or facilities. There should also be a look taken to see if, potentially, some of the needs of rural Yukoners in Whitehorse can be better addressed through steps such as government proceeding with a competitive process to get cheaper hotel rates through a block purchase agreement from hotels for people who are coming in from communities.

The same sort of agreement could be entered into through bed and breakfasts, for example, through a standing-offer agreement program. My point is not to pitch any one of these models, but simply to note that there are a number of different models that should be explored, and the government should do a good assessment of what those options are, understand the respective costs, consult with people who are affected by it, and understand what is being entertained and the costs associated therewith.

So, I just want to emphasize with this that we support exploring the concept of this, but we do believe that other options should be looked at and that there really needs to be full consideration of what they are and what the implications of those models may be.

I will propose an amendment to this motion.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Cathers: I move:

THAT Motion No. 649 be amended by replacing the word “create” with the phrase “consult with Yukoners, Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nation governments, municipal governments, and organizations delivering similar services about options and costs associated with creating”.

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge:

THAT Motion No. 649 be amended by replacing the word “create” with the phrase “consult with Yukoners, Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nation governments, municipal governments, and organizations delivering similar services about options and costs associated with creating”.

The motion, as amended, would read:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consult with Yukoners, Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nation governments, municipal governments, and organizations delivering similar services about options and costs associated with creating a public health lodge in Whitehorse for rural Yukoners who are attending medical appointments.

The Member for Lake Laberge, on the amendment.

Mr. Cathers: As noted in suggesting this amendment, we are suggesting that government do consider what was proposed by the NDP but also explore other options. As I made clear in my introduction, I hope, we are of the view that there are likely other options for at least some of the Yukoners coming into Whitehorse for health services that would be more

cost-effective than providing that through a public health lodge. Again, Mr. Speaker, in proceeding down this road, whatever option or options are proceeded with, it is important to understand what the demand would be, what the volume would be, how many Yukoners would require a facility, and, as noted, particularly for those who don't have specific medical support needs related to the reason that they are in Whitehorse, it is very likely that there are cheaper options for assisting those Yukoners than providing a public health lodge.

I would also just mention that, in looking at those total costs, as I mentioned, it does have an impact on the other things that government can do, including in the health care area, such as, potentially, I note, that competitive priorities which could be there for government include that, instead of going with an expensive option for these services, other potential needs include the possibility of increasing support and the size of Emergency Medical Services and their response capacity as well as better supporting volunteers in rural Yukon. Also, in comparison to this — and that should be considered in doing the consultation that we propose to this amendment — there should also be a good understanding of comparative options, not only for the cost of options being considered in Whitehorse, but the possibility of providing more health care services in rural Yukon instead of simply going further down the road of trying to help rural Yukoners coming into Whitehorse.

At a certain point, the comparison of those costs may result in a situation where it would be better for government to have a less broad program to support people needing accommodation in Whitehorse related to health care services and that more good could be done through increasing the capacity of health care services in rural Yukon, whether that be through more visits by physicians, expanding nurse practitioners in rural facilities, and so on.

As we noted in the proposed amendment, consultation with Yukoners is important. It's important to understand their needs. It is important, as well, to consult with First Nation governments and municipal governments, including the City of Whitehorse, which would be responsible for zoning associated with any proposed facility or facilities and also to consult with organizations that deliver similar services in other places, such as the ones that I have mentioned down south: facilities such as Ronald McDonald House — and I'm blanking on the proper name for the cancer care facility that is there, but there are models that are run by NGOs in other jurisdictions for supportive accommodation for people attending health care appointments that have both experience with delivering services and an understanding about the model and the potential costs associated with these matters.

I recognize that the NDP is likely to prefer the specific model that they had proposed, but we are providing an alternate vision that includes doing a list of the full range of options, and I am attempting to explain clearly to this House why we believe it's very important to do that — to look at options, to fully cost out those options, and to have a good understanding of what other investments in health care might not be possible if those options are pursued simply because there is not an endless supply of money, and decisions do have to be made.

Ms. White: To no surprise, I'm sure, to anyone in the room, I disagree with the Member for Lake Laberge. I would suggest that the extensive consultation of *Putting People First* was consultation with community. In quick conversation with my colleague from Vuntut Gwitchin, she has reminded me that First Nation governments have been asking for this for years. This is not a new idea — the health lodge in Whitehorse — and so I disagree with the amendment.

I think we have gone past that, and it's a fresh new idea from the Member for Lake Laberge to talk about the need for consultation when his government built the hospitals both in Watson Lake and Dawson City without consultation and didn't cost out the cost of running the Whistle Bend continuing care facility prior to its construction. So, although I appreciate his perspective, I disagree.

Mr. Kent: I just wanted to speak briefly on the amendment, because I believe it strengthens the initial motion put forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. There's an opportunity here to engage with Yukoners, Yukon First Nation governments, municipal governments, and organizations delivering similar services about options and costs associated with creating this health lodge here in the City of Whitehorse.

My experience with this goes back to my time with the Canadian Cancer Society, which, as my colleague mentioned, ran similar facilities, starting in Vancouver with the Jean Barber Lodge and then built similar facilities in Prince George, Victoria, and Kelowna. I think, as mentioned, we're all aware of what Ronald McDonald House provides — the services they provide to Yukoners who have to travel to Vancouver and families who are down there while their children are receiving medical care.

Also, the Easter Seals House is another example, and you see examples throughout British Columbia — in cities like Prince George, for instance, that services a lot of northern British Columbia with specialty care. I think there is some opportunity — perhaps associated with consulting with those types of organizations about the different options and costs associated with this type of a facility.

As we have seen with the Yukon Liberal government on consultation after the fact, the Minister of Community Services, in his role as Highways and Public Works minister — the very first piece of legislation that he brought to the floor of the House was the airports act. Unfortunately, he took what I believe was an unprecedented step of attributing a comment in a news release to an organization that he later had to retract, with respect to consultation on that airports act. He is also the architect of the Better Buildings program — that had legislation before this House that had to be delayed from the Fall Sitting to the Spring Sitting while he went out and properly consulted with municipalities on that program — and then, of course, the First Nation procurement policy that he announced without talking to industry and individuals who would be affected.

More recently, we saw the unveiling last year of the move of École Whitehorse Elementary School from the downtown

area up to Takhini with little or no consultation with affected stakeholders, like the downtown community, the Takhini residents, the First Nation School Board, and the Whitehorse Elementary School Council, and then that led to a motion that we debated in here a couple of weeks ago, which was put forward by the NDP with respect to a downtown school.

So, I think that engaging in this consultation up front will help us to better understand the options and costs associated with creating this type of a facility, and it will essentially lead to a better facility in the end. I'm hoping that members will see this as an amendment that strengthens the original motion while maintaining the spirit and intent of that original motion and it doesn't box us, as elected representatives, into one specific model that can be used; instead, we're looking at a number of different options that can be explored to help Yukoners who are travelling in from rural Yukon and require health care services here in the City of Whitehorse.

With that, again, I would hope that members in the Legislature would consider supporting this amendment that I believe strengthens the original motion put forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

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.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Blake: Disagree.

MLA Tredger: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are eight yea, 10 nay.

Speaker: The nays have it.

I declare the amendment defeated.

Amendment to Motion No. 649 negatived

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the main motion?

Mr. Dixon: I think that I would like to make a few quick points here before we bring this to a vote, and the reason for that is because I have to say that I have come full circle on this motion. When it was originally tabled and identified by the Third Party, I was in favour of it, but hearing the Leader of the NDP explain some of the provisions and comments about her vision for this lodge raised some concerns for me, so I wanted to note those. I also note that what was described by the Leader of the Third Party and the Minister of Health and Social Services seemed to be quite different, so it's clear that there are different visions about what this lodge may end up looking like.

I do think, though, that we all agree that there should be a lodge of some kind here in Whitehorse to provide the services that have been articulated by our colleagues, but I do have some concerns and reservations about the outright dismissal of the idea that there is any role here at all for the private sector, for NGOs, or for any other type of alternative models of running this lodge, other than simply having the government run the lodge, staff the lodge, and operate the lodge.

The intent of the amendment that my colleague put forward previously sought to open up some other options that could be considered. That was defeated, obviously, and we are left with the motion as it stands, and so I think that I should say, Mr. Speaker, that we will support the motion, but I do want my reservations noted for the record, because what I don't want to happen is that we vote in favour of this motion, we unanimously agree to this motion, and then we walk out of here with at least three different perceptions of what we have all agreed to.

What I heard from the minister was different than what I heard from the Leader of the Third Party, and it is certainly different from the vision that I have. As my colleague from Copperbelt South noted, there are some very successful models of NGOs running lodges like this in other parts of the country — whether it is the Ronald McDonald House, whether it is the cancer lodge in Prince George or other parts of British Columbia. I don't think that we should dismiss things like this outright, and I know, from the impression that I was left with from the Leader of the NDP, it was that there is a predetermined notion that this is going to be a 100-percent government-run lodge with no role for the private sector and no role for NGOs, and I don't think that I am comfortable with that articulation of what this ought to be.

That being said, I do support the idea of a lodge. I support that there should be one, and we will vote in favour of this motion, but I didn't want to do that — I didn't want to vote in favour and my colleagues and I vote in favour of this — without noting our reservations with the comments that some members have made about this. So, while we agree with the notion of the lodge, we do have concerns, and we hope that the government, in acting on this, takes a much broader view of the way in which this lodge can be delivered than the one specifically articulated by the Leader of the NDP. I am not as averse to the idea that the private sector could play a role in this; I am not as averse to the idea that an NGO could play a role in this, and I don't think that we — the Yukon government — should be as averse to that as well.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think that I will conclude my remarks, and I think that we will probably allow this to move forward, but I wanted to note my reservations about this and hope that they are taken seriously by the government in acting on this motion.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: These are just a few quick remarks — I think we want to get to a vote today, so I think it's important to just point out that there were 17 months of consultation that came to this decision.

The idea of this particular infrastructure is in *Putting People First*. All First Nations, the exhaustive list that was read out by the Member for Lake Laberge — all of those things were covered, so that is why we didn't support the amendment, because that consultation has already concluded. That work has already been done. The second part, I would say, is that the intent of this is very simple. Do you support having infrastructure in place? The motion is not keenly descriptive. It just said: Do you support this model?

Of course, the other thing we don't do is build program models on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. We know the intent would be there, so that is really what is key to this — to make sure.

Let's get to a vote. We have cleared up the questions from the Official Opposition regarding the lack of research that was done, and I think it's time to get to a vote, and we will see where everybody lands on this important topic for Yukoners.

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

Ms. White: I wanted to apologize to the Minister of Health and Social Services in remembering when *Putting People First* was tabled or brought forward. I remembered it was spring but not the right year, so I thank the minister for that correction.

I look forward to a vote, and really, this conversation is going to continue on, but it is important that we have a health lodge in the territory.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 649 agreed to

Motion for the Production of Papers No. 6

Clerk: Motion for the Production of Papers No. 6, standing in the name of Ms. Clarke.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek Centre:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the following documents related to the Safe at Home Society's purchase of the former High Country Inn:

(1) the accredited appraisal of the building the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation made reference to during Oral Question Period on Thursday, October 27, 2022;

(2) the building condition assessment the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation made reference to during Oral Question Period on Thursday, October 27, 2022;

(3) the operational plans the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation made reference to in his letter to the Safe at Home Society dated August 25, 2021;

(4) the Yukon government's assessment of the long-term financial and program viability of the project, which the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation made reference to in his letter to the Safe at Home Society dated August 25, 2021; and

(5) all other relevant documents pertaining to the Yukon government's final approval of the capital costs, operational plans, and long-term financial and program viability for the Safe at Home project, which the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation made reference to in his letter to the Safe at Home Society dated August 25, 2021.

Ms. Clarke: Salamat. The Premier has often spoken about supporting the work of Safe at Home and providing them with whatever they need to be successful. He was so involved with the project that he made a ministerial statement last spring on the Safe at Home project. During that statement —

Speaker: Order, please.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on Motion for the Production of Papers No. 6 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following legislative return was tabled March 29, 2023:

35-1-84

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Dixon related to general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 207, *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23* — utility rates (Streicker)

The following documents were filed March 29, 2023:

35-1-134

2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement, letter re (dated February 13, 2023) from Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and Yukon Chamber of Commerce to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Premier (Dixon)

35-1-135

Permitting of houses, letter re (dated December 14, 2022) from Scott Kent, Member for Copperbelt South to Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Kent)

35-1-136

Transfer of title process, letter re (dated January 9, 2023) from Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to Scott Kent, Member for Copperbelt South (Kent)

35-1-137

Transfer of land title process, letter re (dated January 19, 2023) Scott Kent, Member for Copperbelt South to Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Kent)

35-1-138

Agreement for sale building commitment changes and transfer of title, letter re (dated February 13, 2023) from Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to Scott Kent, Member for Copperbelt South (Kent)

35-1-139

Electronic logging device mandate, letter re (dated December 21, 2022) from Stacey Hassard, Member for Pelly-Nisutlin to Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works (Hassard)

35-1-140

Federal electronic logging devices (ELD), letter re (dated December 30, 2022) from Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works to Stacey Hassard, Member for Pelly-Nisutlin (Hassard)