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HANSARD

Wednesday, April 12, 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

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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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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, April 12, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The following motion was not placed on today's Notice Paper as the motion was out of order: Motion No. 688, notice of which was given yesterday by the Member for Copperbelt South.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.
Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of International Day of Pink

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the International Day of Pink. This year's theme is "Courage" and it is a reminder that we all need the courage to stand in solidarity with the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in the continued fight for equality and acceptance for all.

Discrimination takes many forms and, unfortunately, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community is no stranger to bullying and violence that stems from hateful beliefs. Although significant progress has been made toward improving these social barriers from our society, discrimination still persists. In fact, in many parts of the world, forms of hatred and discrimination are sadly on the rise. Therefore, on the second Wednesday of April every year, we urge people around the world to wear a pink shirt.

The purpose of the International Day of Pink is to create a world that fully accepts the diversity of, and beauty within, all people regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We encourage young people to continue to speak up when they witness bullying toward their 2SLGBTQIA+ peers. These efforts will help to create a more inclusive society where everyone feels valued and accepted.

In Yukon, all students and staff in public schools have the right to feel safe and included. They also have the right to be treated with respect and dignity regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, ancestry, place of origin, ethnicity, citizenship, religion, age, or ability. To further support 2SLGBTQIA+ students, the Department of Education is currently reviewing and updating its sexual orientation and gender identity policy as outlined in Yukon's LGBTQ2S+ action plan. The department's work on the sexual orientation and gender identity policy includes engagement and consultation with students, educators, and other members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. It is a critical step toward creating

a safe, inclusive learning environment for all students in Yukon's public schools.

Days like the International Day of Pink serve as a reminder that creating an inclusive and diverse world requires constant effort and vigilance. It is not enough to simply tolerate differences; we must celebrate diversity and actively work toward creating a more inclusive society. In Yukon schools, bullying awareness and discussions about gender and diversity are integrated into activities, classroom lessons, and events throughout the school year.

I would like to thank our gender and sexuality alliances and other social groups for their tireless work to shift school culture to be more inclusive and intolerant of bullying. Let us continue to work together to create a Yukon where everyone feels safe, valued, and supported to attend school, pursue their livelihoods, build healthy relationships, and connect to their community.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the International Day of Pink, which falls on April 12 this year.

The purpose behind this international event is to create a more inclusive and diverse world. It began with a ninth grade student being bullied on the first day of school for wearing a pink polo shirt. That day, two classmates not only stood up for him, but distributed 50 pink shirts among their peers to protest the discrimination that the boy had faced that day. E-mails were sent out to the student body to bring awareness to the cause, inspiring a sea of pink.

The movement was a huge success and caught the attention of the youth at Jer's Vision, a grassroots organization that has evolved since into the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity. Jer's Vision founded the International Day of Pink to bring international attention to bullying and discrimination and allow people around the world to take part in the movement.

Today, we celebrate diversity, acceptance, and courage. We celebrate the right to be yourself and the right to live free from hate and discrimination, and we stand up together against bullying, discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia in our schools, our workplaces, and our communities.

So, please be kind to one another and continue to take every step possible to equality and acceptance for all. Wear pink today, but commit every day to challenge discrimination as it happens and show support for an inclusive and safe community for all. Stay humble and kind.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to commemorate International Day of Pink. Today, like us here in the Yukon, millions of people worldwide are standing together against bullying, discrimination, homophobia, transphobia, and transmisogyny.

Today, we celebrate our rich human diversity, our differences, and our commonalities by wearing pink. The International Day of Pink represents authenticity and allyship,

but most importantly, it represents the courage to take on all of these actions.

Discrimination takes many shapes, whether it's based on race, age, disabilities, gender, or sexuality. The 2SLGBTQIA+ community is no stranger to the bullying and violence that stems from hateful beliefs. While progress has been made toward removing these social barriers from our society, discrimination still persists. When it comes to discrimination and hate, it's up to all of us to have the courage to stand up against it. All it takes is one person to stand up for what they think is right to create a tidal wave of support. A revolution of kindness starts when we have the courage to resist hate.

Organizations and activists across Canada are working to stop bullying, discrimination, and homophobia in schools and communities through their activism and education campaigns.

Whether it's in the Yukon, Canada, or beyond, we need to stand together against hateful beliefs. We need to keep the clock from turning backwards on efforts toward establishing equality for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. It is time now to educate the future generation to not repeat history and to teach the older generations to unlearn the hate that they were taught.

International Day of Pink has one purpose — to create a more inclusive and diverse world — and we do this by encouraging young people to challenge societal norms and stand up against bullying toward their 2SLGBTQIA+ peers.

Applause

In recognition of National Volunteer Week

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to National Volunteer Week, which starts this coming Sunday. Volunteers are the heart, the sweat, and the bellwether of our communities. The social and cultural activities and events that flavour our lives are the direct result of volunteers. Efforts of people who keep our community safe and the groups who advocate for the interests and concerns of Yukoners contribute to the well-being of our society. So much of what we consider important simply does not happen without the folks who lend a hand.

If we are not careful, we can overlook the efforts of volunteers, and when we are in the middle of experiencing Adäka, the Dawson City International Short Film Festival, or the Celebration of Swans, we are so immersed that we can forget all of the hard work that has happened in the background to make things happen. No one thinks about the hours of unpaid time that members put into their professional organizations, advocating for protecting Yukoners' interests.

National Volunteer Week is our chance to reflect on how volunteers connect us with each other and our communities and how they make life in the territory so special. Mr. Speaker, there are 656 registered volunteer-driven societies in the territory — each with their own passionate cadre of volunteers who make the lives of Yukoners better through their representations, efforts, and events. This number doesn't even include the elders who share their knowledge at a culture camp, the folks happening to pass the Kluane Mountain Bluegrass Festival set-up crew who stop and lend a hand, the volunteer firefighters and EMS community responders who safeguard our

communities, the coaches who ensure that sports occur for our territory's youth, and the people who can't assist — for whatever reason — and make a donation so that an event they loved as a child can continue.

Volunteers all play a role in keeping the Yukon vibrant. It is not monetary gain; it pays in ways that are infinitely more gratifying and valuable. Volunteers do what they do because it makes us and this place better.

Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of National Volunteer Week, I would like to thank every person who gives their time to an organization that they believe in. Mahsi' cho, merci, günilshish, and thank you — your endeavours make our lives better. For those people who aren't currently volunteering but have the time and interest to get involved, please reach out. There is a group who would love to put you to work, and I assure you that the rewards are immeasurable.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to National Volunteer Week with the 2023 theme, "Volunteering Weaves us Together". Volunteers volunteer — both a noun and a verb. This word encompasses so much and represents a collective community spirit and togetherness. All Yukoners who volunteer their time and energy for a variety of important causes and events across the Yukon are to be commended and honoured not only this week but all year long.

To volunteer benefits the community in so many ways and helps one meet new people with common interests. To volunteer provides a sense of well-being and pride, and many times, it provides the opportunity to learn new skills. There are so many ways that you can help to organize and see through events that we have come to look forward to throughout the territory each and every week. They help run our fundraisers, such as bingos and raffles. They take time to walk dogs for the shelters. They accompany seniors on outings and spend time with them. They translate documents and help with services in the community. They make up boards and committees, dedicating their time to areas in the community that pique their interests and passions.

The Sourdough Rendezvous, the Klondike Road Relay, and the Yukon River Quest are a few of the large events, but dinners, celebrations, and concerts also depend on a huge block of volunteers. They are truly the backbone of any community, working in many capacities with so much professionalism that often we do not even realize that the individual whom we're dealing with is helping us on their own time.

I encourage Yukoners of all ages with time to spare, a willingness to help, and a positive attitude to step forward to volunteer. We all have our talents and we certainly can learn. There is something to do for everyone and you get much more in return. Volunteering has no limits.

We thank all our Yukon volunteers for everything they do and accomplish so that our territory is a vibrant and healthy place to live.

Applause

MLA Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the thousands of volunteers in the Yukon. I think we can all agree that without volunteers, our territory would grind to a halt. So, today, we thank the volunteers who make the Yukon what it is.

We thank coaches for those early morning hours. These are people who are often out of bed before the birds start to sing, encouraging kids with their love of sport. We thank emergency response volunteers for those late-night hours they put in while we are safe in our beds — these volunteers who give their time to fire, EMS, and search and rescue, to name but a few. They make sure that we are safe and secure in our communities. We thank those special people who volunteer with hospice and at the hospital, giving comfort in times of greatest need. We thank all of those volunteers who put their time and effort into sports, arts, and recreational pursuits, from snowboarding to theatre performances, lawn bowling to all-city band, basketball to synchronized swimming, and everything in between. Every extracurricular activity for the young to the old is run with the help of volunteers.

Economic drivers like music, arts, and cultural festivals wouldn't be possible without the countless volunteers who support these important threads that join our communities together. Nothing brings a community together like a celebration, and Yukoners give of themselves freely to make those celebrations happen. There are organizations and groups that embrace those who have fallen on tough times. From the volunteers at food banks to church groups, our neighbours, and volunteer organizations that tackle the tough social issues, those folks are a smile, a bowl of soup, or a hug in our time of greatest need.

We can't forget our friends and neighbours who shovel our driveways when we aren't able, who bring us food when we are sick, who offer us support in times of need or stop to help change tires on the side of the road. All of these actions are given freely and help strengthen our communities.

Mr. Speaker, there are far too many groups and individuals to list, but we feel their contributions to our communities each and every day. Anthropologist Johnnetta B. Cole said, "The ultimate expression of generosity is not in giving of what you have, but in giving of who you are." We couldn't agree more.

On behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus, I want to thank all of those volunteers for sharing yourself and your energy with those around you.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. Van Bibber: I have for tabling a briefing note to the Dawson town council from administration from their April 5 meeting.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions to be presented?

PETITIONS

Petition No. 20

Ms. White: Today I have a petition signed by over 200 Yukoners that reads:

To the Yukon Legislative Assembly:

This petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT infertility is defined as a medical condition which consists of a lack of conception after roughly six months to one year of sexual intercourse without contraception.

THAT one in six couples experience the medical condition of infertility and many more Yukoners of all genders, sexual orientations, and relationship status long to experience parenthood through pregnancy;

THAT within the last two years, the Yukon Liberal Party, the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party have committed to providing equal access to the health care interventions required to treat infertility;

THAT research evidence shows infertility is the cause of mental health concerns, including depression, anxiety, and decreased quality of life;

THAT there is no Yukon based option for investigation and diagnosis by a fertility specialist, or most commonly prescribed treatments, including but not limited to intrauterine insemination and in vitro fertilisation, resulting in significant expense being incurred adding up to about \$25,000 per IVF cycle. This is an insurmountable or financially crippling barrier for most families, especially given the current financial climate, reducing equity in healthcare and barring people from marginalized groups from equal participation in family life;

THAT these costs are partially or wholly covered for residents of many Canadian provinces, and Yukon's rural location adds significantly more complexity and cost than many other jurisdictions for Yukoners;

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Yukon to:

(1) Immediately determine Yukon's funding model for assisted human reproduction, including medical travel, given Yukon's rural and remote location, and implement a funding model by the end of the 2022-2023 fiscal year; and

(2) Simultaneously engage with stakeholders, especially Yukoners dealing with infertility, to understand the complexities of seeking this medical intervention from this remote jurisdiction and what part existing services could play in the removal of barriers.

Speaker: Are there any further petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to help Yukoners struggling with inflation by taking action, including responding to an increasing number of groceries now being taxed as snack items due to reduced package sizes, commonly

known as “shrinkflation”, by revising the GST/HST rules to exempt those food items from GST and HST.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to investigate the legal feasibility of developing legislation to protect the rights of Yukon firearms owners, including considering the innovative approach used by the Province of Saskatchewan in Bill No. 117, *An Act respecting Saskatchewan Firearms*.

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

THAT this House urges the Premier to take action to defend the rights of Yukon firearms owners by writing a letter to the Prime Minister urging the Government of Canada to:

- (1) repeal its May 1, 2020 regulation that reclassified rifles and other unrestricted firearms as prohibited weapons; and
- (2) completely withdraw Bill C-21, *An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms)*.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon seniors income supplement

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today to speak about our government’s ongoing commitment to Yukon seniors and elders.

In keeping with these commitments, the Yukon government continues to support fixed-income households with the Yukon seniors income supplement. Yukoners are eligible for the Yukon seniors income supplement if they make their home in the Yukon and receive an income supplement or spouse’s allowance from the Government of Canada under the *Old Age Security Act*.

Yukoners do not need to apply for the Yukon seniors income supplement. The Department of Health and Social Services receives information from the Government of Canada on eligible Yukoners who are 65 years of age or older. If eligible for the Yukon seniors income supplement, Yukoners automatically receive a monthly cheque based on a formula.

This past fiscal year, the Yukon seniors income supplement recipients received a one-time inflationary payment of \$150 in October 2022 to assist with their expenses. This fiscal year, our government is pleased to provide recipients of the Yukon seniors income supplement with a monthly inflation relief payment. This will increase the Yukon seniors income supplement payment by approximately 39 percent. This inflationary relief will continue to be applied monthly through to March 2024. The increase will provide financial relief to support seniors with the additional costs associated with higher inflation and interest rates.

This is made possible by an additional \$808,000 that the Yukon government is allocating to the amount provided for the Yukon seniors income supplement. As we know, rising

inflation rates have continued to increase financial pressures on many Yukoners, especially fixed-income households. We believe that all Yukoners should have access to appropriate income supports to live well and to help cover the rising costs of daily living. This is a step forward in our ongoing commitment to support lower income households in the Yukon.

Additional work, in keeping with the commitments made in our government’s *Aging in Place Action Plan*, includes the Department of Health and Social Services preparing a more in-depth review of income supports for seniors to ensure that they have funding that helps meet their basic needs. This fiscal year, the new temporary relief measure will support seniors in living easier, healthier, and happier lives.

Thank you to all Yukoners who provide programs and services that help seniors stay safe, healthy, active, and engaged. I would also like to thank the Yukon seniors and elders for their contributions in making our community such a diverse, exciting, and exceptional place to live.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the inflation that Canadians and Yukoners have been experiencing for over a year now has hurt people’s finances and forced them to make some tough decisions, and this is why, in our role as the Official Opposition, we have been providing suggestions to help Yukoners combat inflation and make life more affordable.

However, the Liberals have not been listening to our suggestions despite their claims that they would listen to ideas from all sides. We asked questions about the effects of inflation on seniors last spring and issued a press release on April 14 of last year specifically outlining measures that the Liberal government could take to help seniors. Those measures included temporarily suspending collection of the territorial fuel tax, reversing tax increases on insurance, doubling the amount of the pioneer utility grant, and increasing the amount claimed through the homeowners grant to a maximum of \$1,000 for eligible seniors and elders.

Our suggestions went further. Last fall, this House passed a motion to ask Ottawa to get rid of the carbon tax on home heating fuel. However, the Liberals have not respected the will of this Assembly, and not only is the carbon tax still in place on home heating fuel, that tax has increased as of April 1. This doesn’t play into the government’s *Aging in Place Action Plan* to keep seniors in their homes longer. In fact, it may force seniors into making the difficult decision to leave their homes sooner if they can’t afford high home heating bills.

Speaking of taxes on fuel, I would like to go back to our suggestion of suspending the collection of the territorial fuel tax. This move would have put \$9.5 million directly into the pockets of Yukoners. I will give a reminder that the Liberal government’s final supplementary estimates for the 2022-23 fiscal year came in with a budget surplus of \$43.9 million.

It’s not just us who think that this would help Yukoners weather the inflation crisis. Trevor Tombe, the University of Calgary economist and former member of the Liberals’ own Financial Advisory Panel had this to say to *Global News* in January regarding Alberta’s cut to their provincial fuel tax — quote: “The evidence is crystal clear that last year the provincial

gas tax suspension was basically fully passed on to consumers...” However, last spring, the Premier and Minister of Economic Development called this — and I quote — “a boutique move”. I am sure that seniors who are on a fixed income who need to drive to doctors’ appointments or to get groceries don’t think this move is boutique.

Groceries are already becoming too expensive. *Canada’s Food Price Report 2023* predicts a five- to seven-percent food price increase in 2023 with the most substantial increases in vegetables, dairy, and meat. It also forecasts that an average family of four will spend up to \$16,288.41 per year on food. That’s an increase of up to \$1,065.60 from what was observed in 2022. The Liberals are even hiking camping fees for seniors.

We did finally see some action last fall from the Liberals to directly help seniors with inflation. In September, the government announced a one-time 10-percent increase to the pioneer utility grant payment that was not available until February 2023. A reminder that we had suggested doubling the pioneer utility grant last spring to offer immediate relief.

While an increase to the seniors income supplement is welcome, we believe that the Liberal government would have been further ahead in providing real inflation relief for seniors if they had listened to our suggestions from last spring.

Ms. White: So, we appreciate that the government understands that, with the Canadian index price calculation putting inflation at 5.7 percent, seniors and elders are struggling. I am confident that the 39-percent increase until March of next year will be a welcome top-up. Knowing that Yukoners do not need to apply for the Yukon seniors income supplement is important to note. Knowing that the Department of Health and Social Services receives information directly from the Government of Canada on eligible Yukoners is an indication that if it can work for this program, this type of information-sharing should work for others as well. So, why do so many Yukon government programs make seniors, marginalized folks, and others who might struggle with technology or complex forms apply for funding that they are entitled to? Why hasn’t the Government of Yukon recognized that not everyone has access to the Internet or communication devices like computers or cellphones to be able to apply remotely? In the first sentence of the release, the government talks about their ongoing commitment to support low-income households, so I have a few questions to ask the minister.

Clause 3(c) in the confidence and supply agreement that was signed between the Premier and me reads: “apply a \$100 per month increase for social assistance recipients until a more comprehensive enhancement to Social Assistance rates is in place.”

So, it’s our understanding that the government made the decision to only start this top-up beginning in April of this year rather than when the document was signed at the end of January. Why was the decision made by Yukon government to withhold additional financial support to these low-income households for an additional two months?

We have spoken at length about how the government’s inflation relief program tied to ATCO bills doesn’t reach

enough Yukoners — from those in shared housing to people living off-grid or those living in condo buildings where their electricity bill is shared. Why has the decision been made to support only some Yukoners when so many are facing the sting of inflation?

We see the same issue when supporting low-income households applying for the new dental program, a commitment made in the 2021 confidence and supply agreement. Will the minister direct her department to allow coverage for those Yukoners with private insurance that doesn’t reach the \$1,300 amount limit so that they too may have access to this incredible program?

Will she direct her department to use line 23600 of the Canada Revenue Agency notice of assessment when calculating eligibility for the Yukon dental program for individuals who split their income with a partner? This is the same line that is used for the calculation of the pioneer utility grant.

On the issue of the pioneer utility grant, will the government address concerns that have been brought forward about the lack of fairness of this program and allow single seniors to access the same amount of funding as their coupled counterparts?

We too believe that all Yukoners should have access to appropriate income supports to live well and to help cover the rising costs of daily living, so we encourage the minister and her government to act on the suggestions that we’ve made today.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government cares deeply about the safety and the well-being of our elders and our seniors, and we remain committed to ensuring that our aging population can live full, safe, and meaningful lives and stay in their homes as long as possible. I appreciate the comments from the members opposite. That is exactly why we have initiated these and other inflationary measures spread across our communities to address many of the issues that they raise.

The Yukon Liberal government understands the challenges that Yukoners are facing in light of the rising inflationary costs across the country. Our government delivered a budget designed to help make life more affordable for families, individuals, businesses, and territories. Many members of the opposition presumably will not vote for that budget, but that is what it is designed to do, and if they are interested in supporting Yukoners, they might reconsider that position.

This includes extending the inflationary relief rebate program, providing an increase of \$100 per month to eligible social assistance recipients, raising the minimum wage, and many other programs that have been designed to support Yukoners in countless ways. I am happy to speak to the member opposite specifically about the budgeting process and how that works in relation to the \$100 program that is going to social assistance recipients. That program is required to be built into a budget that began, of course, on April 1, 2023.

Given the Yukon Party’s calls for government to fight inflation, we certainly hope that they will consider voting for the budget. Our Yukon Liberal government has also created a

nation-leading universal childcare program that saves parents up to \$700 per child per month, and this makes a big difference to families across the territory — not only financially but socially — so they can do new things, chase new dreams.

Last fall, we provided the pioneer utility grant recipients for the 2022 calendar year with a one-time 10-percent top-up payment. The pioneer utility grant assists Yukon seniors with the cost of heating their homes whether they own or they rent. It is indexed to inflation annually and is based on the consumer price index.

The Department of Health and Social Services is also working to prepare a more in-depth review of income supports for seniors pursuant to the action plan that I mentioned earlier.

Over the next 20 years, the Yukon seniors population is expected to more than double. We all have a role to play in supporting seniors and elders in a sustainable way. As we committed to in the *Aging in Place Action Plan*, our government remains focused on the goals of positive aging where older people age well, are healthy, connected, independent, and respected and are meaningful contributors to our communities and society.

We will continue to take action to better the lives of seniors across the territory. I look forward to that work. I hope it will be supported by the opposition. I appreciate the opportunity to make this statement today.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Building code and standards

Mr. Kent: On March 30 when I asked the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources about a policy change that was made regarding the transfer of land titles, the minister accused me of “mucking around” and playing games.

While the minister may have thought this issue was a game, it has become clear that it is not. Last night, Whitehorse City Council passed a motion raising concerns about this policy change. Here’s what part of that motion said — quote: “... this requirement may create unnecessary delays in the transfer of homes from builder to buyer, and increased costs to home ownership...”

So, will the minister now acknowledge that the policy change is raising serious concerns about its impact on the housing industry?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: When the member opposite asked the question about the process by which we confer title and the changes that had happened there, what I committed to was working with the City of Whitehorse, the building community, and with homeowners to discuss that change and to take a look at it.

I have since had a chance to sit down a couple of times with the City of Whitehorse. I have spoken briefly with the mayor; I have had a pretty long conversation with the council that brought forward the motion. We spent a couple of hours talking about it ahead of time. We were texting back and forth yesterday before the motion was debated. I thank the city for agreeing to have their committee look at this issue. The Energy,

Mines and Resources folks and the Community Services folks from Land Development branch work with that committee, so we are happy to get that feedback. I can answer further questions about the work we have done to reach out to the building sector to talk to them as well.

As I said before, we will work with the building community, but we also want to talk to homeowners to make sure to get this policy as good as we can for Yukoners.

Mr. Kent: Too bad that hadn’t happened, Mr. Speaker, before the policy was introduced to those conversations. So, in the debate at city council last night, there were several letters tabled from industry organizations that are also concerned about the impact of the minister’s policy change on the housing industry.

Here is what the Real Estate Association said about the policy — and I will quote: “We feel this policy, and other recent policies introduced by the Yukon Government, are contributing to increased costs and delays to new home construction...” Here is what the Contractors Association said — and I will quote again: “... we are worried that this policy will actually add red tape and negatively affect the housing market.”

It is becoming clear that the policy change that the minister made is causing some serious concern. So, will the minister agree to cancel this policy change and revert to the old policy and actually consult with the housing industry about its impact before imposing it?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, I am not sure what the member opposite is asking. Do they want us to pull the lottery that is out there right now? This policy was brought back in 2022, and this is now the second lottery in which it is in place, but what we are really talking about is the moment in time when the homeowner, or the lottery winner, can seek to get title on the property.

It was previously at clad to weather, but there was no inspection around that clad to weather. The proposal is to use the moment when there is an inspection for occupancy as the time at which title should be raised. We are happy to continue to look at the policy, and the deputy minister has reached out to the Contractors Association and has reached out to the City of Whitehorse. The department will have that dialogue — that is fine — but I don’t want to slow down the lottery that we have in place right now. So, I don’t think that we should change it on the fly; I think that what we should do is have those conversations and see if they result in a suggestion of a change.

Mr. Kent: So, what we are actually really talking about is a significant policy change made on the fly without consultation. The fact that the policy change that the minister has made is causing issues should not be a surprise to him; I have raised it with him twice by letter; I have asked questions about it, and now we are hearing from the City of Whitehorse and several industry organizations that have expressed concerns with the minister’s unilateral decision to amend this policy.

If the minister had consulted before this policy was changed, we probably wouldn’t be here where we are. So, will the minister agree to pull this policy back, go back to the former policy, and actually consult with stakeholders before imposing

a new policy that could delay housing coming to market and increased costs for Yukon homeowners?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: No. What we are going to do is to keep going with the lottery that is in place right now. As I wrote to the member opposite, this was an administrative change. That change took place back in 2022. I thank him for raising his concerns. I have directed the department to have conversations with the building community, with the City of Whitehorse, and with homeowners — who I notice he hasn't talked about — that's fine — and we will continue with the lottery process, and we will then take a look, if the policy is deemed to be better in whatever way that the department, through the engagement, has with the building community, with the City of Whitehorse, and with homeowners — away we will go. But we are not going to withdraw the lottery, because we want those lots to keep going to market, and I think that the proof will be in the pudding when we see how many people apply for the lottery.

Question re: Whistle Bend development

Ms. Clarke: Another area where the Yukon government has failed to consult Yukoners and has tried to blame the City of Whitehorse is on the topic of green streets in Whistle Bend. Last fall, the minister was quick to blame the city. Here is what he said — and I quote: “The city planned the neighbourhood and we built to the specifications laid out to us by the City of Whitehorse.”

In response to this, the city has corrected the record. In a social media post directed at residents last fall, the city said that detail design, including grading specs and all aspects of construction including surface works, are managed by YG.

So, will the minister stop blaming the City of Whitehorse and accept responsibility for the green streets blunder?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Green streets are an innovative concept in Whistle Bend for neighbours to gather, play, and connect to a multi-use trail system free from vehicle traffic. Last year, construction on the green streets was paused to hear from residents who were concerned about widening them from three metres to six metres to allow for emergency vehicle access. This was about the need for emergency vehicles to get down the streets to actually provide the emergency services they provide.

We have worked with our partners at the City of Whitehorse; the city has made a decision about the final design option to meet the need for the emergency vehicle winter access, address their policies, and adhere to the original design concept. The Land Development branch will implement the design work through an existing contract and tender. The landscaping work is to begin in early 2023.

Ms. Clarke: The building season is around the corner, and residents of Whistle Bend have still not yet heard about any solution to the problem. The fact remains that the sales agreements are between the residents and the Government of Yukon. The Government of Yukon issued the contract for the paving of the green streets, yet when I asked about this last year, the minister tried to blame the city.

What is the Yukon government doing to rectify the concerns that residents of Whistle Bend green streets have, including the issue that their sales agreements with YG were breached?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The City of Whitehorse is the lead agency on the planning process and the Government of Yukon leads the construction of the Whistle Bend neighbourhood. We adhere to the city's design plan and engineering standards. We will do that going forward.

Ms. Clarke: I continue to hear from residents that they are unsatisfied with the response from the Yukon government so far. Has the minister received a legal opinion on the risk to the Yukon government of failing to live up to the sales agreements, and if so, is the government considering providing compensation to affected residents? If the minister responsible would deign to answer the question, Yukoners will be eternally grateful.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The City of Whitehorse is the lead agency on the planning process and the Government of Yukon leads the construction of the Whistle Bend neighbourhood. We have worked with our partners at the City of Whitehorse. The city has made a decision about the final design option to meet the needs of emergency vehicles having winter access. To address their policies and adhere to the original design concept, the Land Development branch will implement the design work through an existing contract and tender the landscaping work to begin early this year.

Question re: Physician billing system

Ms. White: In recent months, doctors have called out this government for delaying the payments they were owed. These delayed payments point to a deeper issue in the way this government pays our doctors. Right now, Yukon doctors get paid under the old, creaky system called “fee-for-service”. It makes doctors manually submit payment requests for every patient visit. This system is driving away new recruits and is failing to keep the doctors we do have. Fee-for-service is not working and the government knows it. They have heard this from the experts in *Putting People First*, who told them to develop an alternative payment plan. They have heard this from young doctors who want to spend more time practising medicine instead of filling out forms, and they are hearing it from the thousands of Yukoners sitting on a wait-list that is only growing longer because of the barriers that exist with fee-for-service.

When does the minister plan to move away from the fee-for-service payment model for Yukon doctors?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I guess I am surprised by the way in which the questions sometimes come about how cavalierly these changes can be made. We are talking about hundreds of business owners who are physicians here in the territory. We're talking about different options of care that are provided. Certainly, some health professionals here in the territory are provided with contracts and work pursuant to a contract. Others choose fee-for-service, and I don't think we can make the assumption that they don't want that. I think we also have to recognize and make sure that Yukoners are reminded of the fact

that part of medical practice and running that business is, in fact, abiding by the requirements for claims and for billing.

That said, we work to ensure that physicians are paid in an appropriate manner and in an appropriate time frame. As recently as last summer, we negotiated a new memorandum of understanding with the Yukon Medical Association. Fee-for-service opportunities and contracts were included in that MOU. We will continue to work with the physicians here in the territory on the implementation of *Putting People First*, which will provide lots of options.

Ms. White: So, the minister knows that the frustration around fee-for-service isn't new. The *Putting People First* report told her government three years ago to move away from fee-for-service and to develop an alternative payment model in the next contract cycle with Yukon doctors.

Just last fall, as the minister mentioned, this government signed a new memorandum of understanding with the Yukon Medical Association. That memorandum of understanding isn't publicly available despite the fact that the YMA has directly asked for its details to be made accessible. Yukoners, and even Yukon doctors, are being left in the dark about whether or not the minister kept her promise to listen to the experts and move away from fee-for-service in the new agreement.

Can the minister tell Yukoners if the new agreement allows doctors to do away with fee-for-service and use an alternative payment plan?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As I have noted, the Department of Health and Social Services — the opportunities for us to work with the Yukon Medical Association — their representation of their members is something that I won't speak to; that's for the Yukon Medical Association to speak about.

What I am happy to say is that we have a number of alternatives in that work. I am also happy to say that *Putting People First* is the guiding principle of the complete transformation of Yukon's health care system. It is something that has never been tackled by a previous government. It is something that is desperately needed here in the territory. We have expert advice after some 18 months of consultation with Yukoners and with professionals in the health care profession and health care services that indicates how we can improve that system. We have adopted those recommendations. We have worked on many of them already. Many of them have already been implemented — some not necessarily to the satisfaction of the Leader of the Third Party, but nonetheless, they have been achieved.

We will continue to do that work on behalf of Yukoners and to work with our medical professions to the benefit of all Yukon patients.

Ms. White: So, there are mountains of evidence that show that alternative payment plans work. Under these plans, doctors report a higher level of satisfaction, less burnout, and more ability to work collaboratively with other health care providers. By moving away from fee-for-service, governments are more likely to retain existing doctors and recruit new doctors to the area. It's not like this government has no alternatives. There are salaried plans, there are capitation plans, and there are so many more examples.

We can look toward British Columbia. When they moved away from fee-for-service recently, they gave their doctors the ability to provide better care to more patients. When the BC government announced this decision, doctors said that they would — and I quote: "... have choice to provide the care that they have always wanted to do and have not been able to."

So, when will the doctor follow the recommendations of *Putting People First* and allow Yukon doctors to work under an alternative payment plan instead of fee-for-service?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I hope that I haven't been unclear. This work is ongoing. We have accepted the responsibility and the recommendations of *Putting People First*; it is our road map forward. We negotiated last year with the medical profession and the Yukon Medical Association for the purposes of transforming and transitioning through this process.

If the question is: Are we going to impose no fee-for-service access to business owners, physicians here in the territory, unilaterally? — absolutely not. Are we going to work with them as we transition through this process to provide options that they need and that are in the best interests of Yukon patients? Absolutely.

Question re: Hunting in Yukon

Mr. Istchenko: So, in February of last year, the Yukon government announced that it was imposing permit hunt authorizations, or PHAs, in the Sifton-Miners Range and the South Canol moose management units. This proposal was pushed by the Yukon government into the 2019 wildlife regulation process. At the time, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board recommended setting aside the proposal for the PHA in the South Canol and called for more survey work and further public consultation. The minister did not accept that recommendation. Now the department has finally done some more survey work and determined that the low rate they chose for the Sifton-Miners Range should be doubled, but this has raised some questions about the government's initial decision to impose a PHA in this area.

So, why didn't the government wait until they had actual survey data before imposing a PHA in the Sifton-Miners Range?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In 2022, the Department of Environment allocated approximately \$448,000 for three moose-related projects and \$865,000 for monitoring projects related to 12 caribou herds.

The Department of Environment is committed to collecting robust wildlife population data to provide high-quality and up-to-date information that enables evaluations of harvest sustainability. This will support decision-making such as establishing threshold levels, permit numbers, and non-resident quota allocations. To do this, we combine information from harvesters, First Nations, Inuvialuit, and community members with results from our scientific research and monitoring so that the management decisions are well-informed. For example, we also integrate local and Indigenous knowledge to guide how we sample the landscape during our moose surveys.

We carry out targeted population inventories, collect harvest data, and perform ecological assessments annually to gather up-to-date information.

We have recently analyzed the data for several moose surveys that were conducted in November 2021. As the member opposite indicated, results from the Sifton-Miners Range moose management unit survey indicate that densities are higher than previous estimates. We are now reviewing these results together with moose harvest data to determine the number of permits to be issued this year.

Mr. Istchenko: What I had asked is why the government didn't wait until they actually had that survey data before imposing a permit hunt authorization in the Sifton-Miners Range.

So, there is growing concern in the Yukon hunting community that the first instinct of this Yukon Liberal government is to restrict or limit licensed hunters before considering any other action. In this case, they imposed a PHA with 12 permits. They then went out and determined that they had set the limit far too low and now they have announced that the number would be doubled.

My question is simple: Why not do the survey work first before imposing the PHA so that the government can make an evidence-based decision?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. We recognize and appreciate the desire that Yukon hunters have for more hunting opportunities in the Yukon. Managing wildlife harvests, including creating new hunting opportunities, is a collaborative process that is informed by wildlife surveys, scientific, traditional, and local knowledge sources. The Yukon government works with Yukon First Nation governments, as I said, Inuvialuit boards, councils, and Yukon public and stakeholder groups when making harvest decisions. The Yukon government has provided a number of new hunting opportunities over the past several years where wildlife populations allow. Often these new hunting opportunities are made possible as a result of recovery efforts.

Mr. Speaker, in 2022, as a result of 25 years of collaborative recovery efforts and with the signing of the Fortymile caribou harvest management plan, we were able to offer a wildlife threshold hunt of 140 caribou in a summer registration hunt. In 2022, working with the Kluane First Nation and the White River First Nation, we opened a new threshold hunt of 25 caribou for the Nelchina herd. Last year, we also introduced a new adaptive hunting permitting process and made eight additional hunting permits available for hunting elk in the Takhini Valley, increasing the total to 12 permits.

Mr. Speaker, we hear Yukon hunters and we are responding accordingly.

Mr. Istchenko: Like I said, there is a growing sentiment in the hunting community that this government is overly focused on restricting hunting opportunities for licensed hunters before considering any other measures. In this case, it seems that they restricted first — to gather information and data after. So, I have a suggestion for the minister: Will the minister agree to institute a mandatory review of any new zone closures, restrictions, or other regulations changes that reduce hunting

opportunities for Yukoners after the management action has been taken? This will ensure that the restrictions do not necessarily become permanent and will put the onus on the government to demonstrate if and how they are working.

So, will the minister agree to this?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I had the pleasure of meeting with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board yesterday. Certainly, we had a fulsome agenda on a number of topics, and I look forward to meeting with them — and have committed to meeting with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board in late May/early June as well. I thank the executive director, Graham Van Tighem, and the new chair, Michelle Dawson-Beattie, for their dedication and fantastic work. I am certainly very optimistic that we can work through their work plan as well. I can advise that they are supportive of various measures that this government has decided upon recently, including the increase in the number of permit hunt authorizations for the Sifton-Miners Range moose management unit from 12 to 24 permits. They expressed support for the proposed adaptive measures, which include — and was just announced for conservation reasons — the cancellation of the sheep PHA in the Kluane Wildlife Sanctuary.

We are committed to working cooperatively with them. They advise that the board appreciates the department recognizing their mandate. We look forward to continuing discussions about adaptive management in the future.

Question re: Land disposition process

Mr. Cathers: According to public documents provided by the Taku River Tlingit First Nation, the Yukon government has been in negotiations with the TRTFN to establish a new government-to-government agreement between the parties. Included in those discussions is the potential sale of 1,150 hectares of land in the Yukon. This land will apparently be sold as fee simple to a new corporate entity owned by TRTFN and will be sold for the price of \$1.

Further, this will require an amendment to the territorial lands act and the *Lands Act* to allow for raising title on a parcel this large and to waive the normal survey and other costs that a fee simple landowner would normally be expected to pay. Can the Yukon government tell us if this is accurate?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First, I would like to just recognize the positive meeting that we had with the Taku River Tlingit just a few weeks back. We had an opportunity; it really was focused on continuing to have a positive working relationship with the Taku River Tlingit. There are a number of items that were discussed. Of course, one of the topics that we're focused on here over the last while is the project between Yukon Energy Corporation as well as the work on the transmission line — the conversation around the transmission line, which is also a conversation that we're having with Carcross/Tagish First Nation.

I will just get into work on the reconciliation piece. The Yukon government is committed to advancing reconciliation with First Nations, including, of course, the Taku River Tlingit First Nation. There has been a bit of a challenging history over the last number of years. So, there has been a lot of bridge

building, and we have been focused on working on moving files together with them.

We are advancing discussions with the Taku River Tlingit on a number of matters, including consultation on their land interests in the Yukon. These discussions are not treaty negotiations. To support the ongoing discussions, our government withdrew the A Cu Village area from mineral staking land dispositions. That was a withdrawal of about 11 kilometres.

Again, I will wait for questions 2 and 3 and continue on.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier didn't answer my question. In the TRTFN winter 2023 negotiations update to their members, the document says that, since the creation of the Yukon in 1898, the Yukon government has alienated over 70 percent of their land in the Yukon — and I quote: "... for example by allocating extensive areas to Yukon First Nation Treaty Settlements Lands, establishing protected areas under the Umbrella Final Agreement, as well as authorizing mineral and land tenures."

The 1,150 hectares of land that will apparently be sold to TRTFN for \$1 appears to be in the traditional territory of some Yukon First Nations. Have Yukon First Nations — and in particular Carcross/Tagish First Nation and the Teslin Tlingit Council — been consulted about the Yukon government's plans?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First and foremost — it's important to just touch on this — the reconciliation work, not only because of the history in Yukon — but we have to remember that there was a file where there was a campground that was trying to be built just before we came into government and it then went into a lawsuit with the Yukon Party. From there, it was about building a bridge back.

What I can say to the floor is that no matter what we are undertaking, I'm definitely not going to negotiate a government-to-government agreement on the floor because the Member for Lake Laberge is asking me a few questions here today.

What I can say is that we will sit government to government on the file and we will make sure that we have the best interests of all Yukoners in mind. We will make sure that our relationship with our self-governing nations from the Yukon — that we retain the respect that we have built over the last seven years with those relationships. We will ensure that we do the work that we need to do with integrity. When we have information that needs to come to the Legislative Assembly and that is appropriate to bring forward to Yukoners — when decisions have been made — we will do that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cathers: Again, the Premier did not answer my question. Does the Yukon government have plans to consult the public about this proposed sale of land, which, according to TRTFN, will be "the largest fee simple land transfer in the history of the Yukon"?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, it's important to be aware that there is a trend, especially led by the Member for Lake Laberge — and it's usually significant assumptions that are made, usually with an underlying sense of fear.

What I can say is that we will continue to have our discussions government to government. If there is a significant position taken, we will make sure that we are speaking to Yukoners. Absolutely, we will do that. Would we be speaking with First Nations if that affected them as well? We would do that. Again, are there going to be negotiations back and forth with all First Nations? Absolutely.

Does the Member for Lake Laberge want to pull up fear? I went into the last election where the Member for Lake Laberge —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: Accusing another member of trying to bring up fear, much like the term "fearmongering", has been ruled out of order in the Assembly. I would ask you to direct the Premier to retract the remark, apologize for it, and perhaps actually answer the question.

Speaker: Government House Leader, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, you have ruled that we shouldn't use terms like "fearmongering", but that doesn't mean that we can't use the word "fear". It's in the English language. I hope that we are able to just use the word.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: We will review the Blues and get back to the members tomorrow.

Hon. Premier, please continue.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, what I was getting at is that my experience with the member opposite has been — going into the last election, 2021 — that he was reaching out to people in his constituency one by one and telling them that I was going to steal their land. In the end, they were in fear and that was what was trying to be instilled, and that was not true.

So, that is the experience that I have had with the Member for Lake Laberge.

In this particular case, what we will do is that we will have respectful conversations if there is any significant —

Speaker: Order, please.

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 FOR THE PRODUCTION OF PAPERS

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

Motion for the Production of Papers No. 6 — adjourned debate

Ms. Clarke: 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 did a ministerial statement last spring on the Safe at Home project. During that statement, he seemed quite involved in the project and said: “Collaboration with our partners has been key for the success of the project to date. These include the Government of Canada, the City of Whitehorse, the Yukon Housing Corporation, the Safe at Home Society, Northern Vision Development, and others.”

The Yukon Party had asked questions about the due diligence on the project to ensure its viability and to ensure that the cost estimates were accurate, but it certainly seemed like a project with vision to address the housing needs of vulnerable Yukoners and had a strong group to guide the process. In fact, the Premier was very positive in his assessment and added in his statement — and I quote: “Again, as the note said that we provided today, right now we are at \$16 million. That looks like the number at this particular point. There have been no concerns from the company or from the organization on this going forward.

“They are looking to the fall of this year to have people in those spots.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, how things can change in a year. It appears that the Premier is now distancing himself from the project and downplaying the Yukon government’s involvement. This spring at a luncheon hosted by the Yukon Chamber of Commerce to discuss his first budget, the Premier made it very clear to business representatives that the Yukon government was not going to invest any further money in that project. When asked about the statement last week, the Premier said — quote: “As I stated in that chamber meeting, this particular project — which is the revitalization of that structure — we have put a hold on at this point, as we wait for reporting.”

The Safe at Home Society has made it clear that they need millions of dollars more to make the project viable. When asked if they had requested funding through the federal budget, the Premier indicated that — quote: “... until we see what happens between the society and CMHC. Yes, to answer the question, we have pushed hard for support for the Safe at Home Society.”

As Yukoners are no doubt aware, the federal budget ignored the north. The Premier obviously has not adequately expressed the needs of Yukoners to his federal Liberal friends. During Question Period today, he even said that you should go talk to Safe at Home about what no federal money means for the project. He is washing his hands of it.

Yukoners are left wondering how we arrived at this point. What is the purpose of this motion, Mr. Speaker? Yukoners, MLAs, and the public need access to these documents to review how the Safe at Home Society ended up owning a building that they can’t afford to pay for. We need to see what review, supports, and guidance the government provided to Safe at Home. As a relatively new organization with zero experience completing a project like the High Country Inn renovation, Yukoners would like to know what guidance the Premier’s

officials provided to the society and why the Premier has now distanced himself from the project after placing himself front and centre on it just a year ago.

I would just like to go over the documents that this motion requests and what the Premier said about them.

As part of a transfer of taxpayers’ money for a renovation project, we expect that the Premier ensured that due diligence was done on the project. The first two bullets requested the accredited appraisal of the building and the building condition assessment that he referenced on October 27, 2022 when he was speaking as the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation. He said — quote: “There were two types of reviews that CMHC undertook and then informed the Yukon Housing Corporation. In the review of the application, CMHC worked diligently to minimize the risks wherever possible. CMHC’s national housing co-investment fund applies a rigorous review of processes required from the Safe at Home Society, to answer the question. Both an accredited appraisal of the building as well as a recent building condition assessment were completed.”

We hope this will provide transparency for Yukoners about the decision to commit millions to the project. Yukoners are asking how these assessments could have been done, but now Safe at Home is left owning the building and they are millions of dollars short of the actual renovation cost.

The other documents that this motion requests were referenced by the Premier in his letter dated August 25, 2021. The Premier wrote to the Safe at Home Society that — quote: “... capital funding support from the Yukon Housing Corporation was contingent on Yukon Government’s final approval of the capital costs, operational plans, and long-term financial and program viability for this project”.

That letter makes it clear that Yukon Housing would be reviewing and approving capital funding only after ensuring the costs and the viability of the project. So, Yukoners need to see all of these documents to understand how we are at this point and why the Premier no longer wants to be the face of this project. I encourage all members of the Assembly to vote in favour of transparency and helping Yukoners understand how Safe at Home was left struggling to fund the project.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The prepared remarks document is ready, but after those comments, I think there are a few things I would say.

First and foremost, there is definitely a lack of understanding by the member opposite. They are quoting me from today in Question Period about something I didn’t even say. Really, what it is — there have been documents put in front of the member opposite and it’s just: Read those documents whether or not you are going to edit them on the fly or understand them.

The second thing is that it has not been millions of dollars. As critic for housing asking me the questions — there is money that has been put in place by both CMHC and the City of Whitehorse, and we have committed \$1 million. What I have also said in the House over and over again about this particular organization is that it’s hard for a group of volunteers to go out and take on these projects. The last thing they need is somebody

cheering against them. What I heard today again from the critic was: Are you going to give them money, on one hand, but at the same time, they have not much experience and these individuals don't have a track record. I will pull it out of the Blues. It's interesting to have those disparaging remarks from the critic, but at the same time, she is doing this dance where it is: But you're not helping them.

I haven't been front and centre; I have been standing next to them, and I will stand next to any volunteer organization that wants to take on these challenges. We will hear later today about how we got into these challenges. When we think about investment in affordable housing, which was dire up until 2016 — and it was interesting that the Real Estate Association was brought up today, because the member opposite who is asking the questions should ask the colleague from Lake Laberge. That was really the driving force — that's where the direction came from — from the previous housing minister — if affordable housing should be built or not. Again, that's probably a good walk down memory lane at some point to understand how we got into this situation when it comes to affordable housing.

With that being said, I rise to respond to the Motion for the Production of Papers No. 6, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre.

The motion reads: "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..." It goes on to list a number of documents referenced during Oral Question Period on October 27, 2022 and a letter sent to the Safe at Home Society on August 25, 2021.

I appreciate the member opposite quoting what I believe is paragraph 5, which really lays out the obligation from the Housing Corporation as it pertains to — again, I will correct the record — the funding through the HIF program that we have. That was the \$1 million that was supported through our organization where we had the responsibility to look at the accountability for the flow of that money.

Again, the 2021 point count revealed that at least 151 individuals were experiencing homelessness, 85 percent of whom identified as Indigenous, 44 percent as female, and seven percent as youth. I just want to correct the record. The member opposite was really saying that there was no money in housing for the north in this budget and for folks who would need to be supported through this — I think it was \$4 billion and we were consulted last — I actually spoke to that, I think, in the House and I wasn't sure if it was the member opposite who asked me the question, but it is important to correct the record on misinformation for the member opposite.

The Safe at Home Society coordinates the by-name list, a real-time snapshot of individuals experiencing homelessness. The September 2022 by-name list report from Safe at Home Society reported 218 actively homeless, unique applicants. Why is this important? Well, these numbers show that there is a serious need in our community for more supportive housing projects. The Safe at Home Society supportive housing project's objective is to fill the gap in service by providing a 24/7 supportive housing model at a lower level of support than what is provided by the Housing First facility that this

government built on Wood Street. This project presents a unique and innovative opportunity to address identified housing needs and fill critical gaps in service provisions. I referenced this opportunity in the August 2021 letter that is the subject of a number of document requests in this motion.

The Safe at Home Society has had the vision to create access to permanent and affordable housing. Safe at Home's mission is to end and prevent homelessness with the help of and working together with passionate community partners. They are working to prevent homelessness through the efforts of a coordinated, people-centred approach to identify the needs of our housing continuum. Safe at Home works to create meaningful and impactful relationships with service providers and the people who are affected by homelessness — sharing and collecting evidence, data, stories, and experiences of those experiencing homelessness, chronic or otherwise. Safe at Home offers a range of housing services and support programs with low-barrier, harm-reduction, and stage-appropriate orientation.

Each program offered through Safe at Home incorporates cultural safety and traditional knowledge and empowers individuals accessing their services to have a voice and to be a part of the choices that impact their lives. Safe at Home is dedicated to supporting and connecting supports for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Through their dedication to this cause, the Safe at Home Society works with NGOs to create the by-name list for Yukoners who are actively experiencing homelessness. The by-name list is a single list of people shared between these NGOs that is used to make the best possible match referrals to available housing units and partners. The tool helps to identify and understand the scope of homelessness in Whitehorse and the experiences that our most vulnerable are facing in their search for stable housing.

There is an intake process for individuals — for them to have their names entered into the by-name list — which collects the person's accurate current housing and service needs. These intakes can be accessed and completed through housing workers with Blood Ties Four Directions, the Government of Yukon, community outreach services, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, and through the Yukon women's transition home here in Whitehorse.

These intakes can be completed in person at a place where the person feels comfortable or over the phone. The intake itself is confidential and is only shared with partners that are agreed to by the applicant. The Yukon Housing Corporation has worked with Safe at Home over the years on our shared priority to alleviate housing pressures here in Whitehorse. As the minister responsible, I wrote a letter of support as they undertook the application process for the rapid housing initiatives program related to the purchase of the High Country Inn.

Safe at Home works in partnership with Yukon Housing Corporation to help those on the by-name list fill out applications and refers those on the by-name list to our tenancy supports housing coordinators for allocated units that would be a best match. I know that members of the opposition on a couple

of occasions — at least, the critic for housing has spoken to some of that work in a positive manner after some of the sort of conflictual comments today.

It is up to all partners at the table to follow through on their commitments to this end to see these complex projects come to fruition.

Yukon Housing Corporation has a demonstrated history of working with our community partners to help in overcoming those barriers across the territory to meet the diverse needs of people along the housing continuum — for example, the Cornerstone building, which provides 22 supportive housing units and 23 affordable housing units, and agreements and partnerships with development corporations, such as Da Daghay Development Corporation, to house 50 people from the Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list into housing in Whistle Bend.

Our government recently supported the provision of land to the Council of Yukon First Nations to support the development of a new emergency shelter for women. Our government is again proud of our continued support to Department of Education-risk housing projects for development corporations, NGOs, and private industry through our diverse loan and incentive programs.

We are creating partnerships and building relationships to see that Yukon's housing needs are addressed with a community approach by supporting the development of a variety of different housing options across the housing spectrum to meet the diverse needs of housing for Yukoners.

One aspect of Yukon Housing Corporation's strategic plan is to be a trusted housing partner. To realize this plan, we need to overcome challenges and work with a collective effort — dedicated work and due diligence — to see projects come to completion and move forward. Our government is committed to ending and preventing homelessness through community collaboration initiatives with our partners. The Safe at Home Society has been a valued housing partner, and we are proud and supportive of their initiatives and mandate to end homelessness in the Yukon. In 2020, the society looked to make the transition from a support and connection service to a housing provider — no small undertaking for any not-for-profit society.

So, back in 2020, the federal government launched the rapid housing initiatives program to rapidly increase the supply of affordable housing for vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program provides capital funding through two streams: the project stream and the city stream. In 2021, under the city stream, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation provided 30 identified municipalities with a pre-determined allocation of funding. Whitehorse was identified as an eligible municipality and \$5 million was reserved, subject to approval. The CMHC, which is the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, representing the federal government, worked with the City of Whitehorse to identify and assess eligible projects, using their prioritization criteria.

The Safe at Home Society proposal that we are speaking about today, in this motion, was reviewed in the previous rapid housing initiatives intake under the project stream and was

found eligible but was unsuccessful due to funding limitations. As a result, CMHC identified a project opportunity through the city's funding stream.

In August 2021, the City of Whitehorse passed a resolution authorizing their administration to apply for the rapid housing initiatives funding. As Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, I sent a letter — the one referenced in this motion — dated August 25, 2021 to confirm Yukon Housing Corporation's intent to support the application, subject to the federal rapid housing initiatives funding, operational plans, and long-term financial and program viability for the project, as stated by the member opposite.

So, I want to take a moment again to stress this point, so I will quote from my letter. The total provision of Yukon Housing support will be conditional on the formal approval of federal RHI funding. Capital funding support from Yukon Housing Corporation will also be contingent on Yukon government's final approval of capital costs, operational plans, and long-term financial and program viability for this project.

With the City of Whitehorse's endorsement and the Government of Yukon's support, the Safe at Home supportive housing project was approved for \$5 million in funding through the rapid housing initiative's city stream in the fall of 2021 — a federally run and federally approved fund through CMHC, not the Yukon Housing Corporation, as the member opposite would lead you to believe.

Because the City of Whitehorse is not mandated or resourced to develop or operate housing, it passed a resolution in December 2021 and wrote to CMHC to assign the city's allocation of \$5 million to Yukon Housing as a flow-through entity. The Government of Yukon approved the flow-through of funds from Yukon Housing to Safe at Home in December 2022. Yukon Housing then signed an agreement with terms set out by the federal government — CMHC — to disburse the funds to the Safe at Home Society as the flow-through entity. Yukon Housing then signed an agreement with Safe at Home and disbursed the funds as a forgivable loan with set deliverable requirements, as set out by CMHC.

As part of CMHC's application review process, proposals were evaluated based on their financial viability, readiness, and ability to meet the specified goals of the program. Successful candidates are required to uphold reporting requirements and other conditions, as outlined in their funding agreements. The Safe at Home Society's supportive housing project was successful in its funding application process due to the merits of its proposal. It presents a unique and innovative opportunity to address identified housing needs and fill critical gaps in service provision.

The CMHC assessed and approved Safe at Home's application and proposal, which included the initial costing information, appraisals, and building condition assessment.

As the motion for the production of papers referenced, I made reference to this again in Oral Question Period on October 27, 2022. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is a federal agency tasked with overseeing the implementation of *Canada's National Housing Strategy*. The Safe at Home Society has also received funding from the

CMHC through the northern carve-out fund within the national housing co-investment fund. This fund provides low-cost and forgivable loans for affordable, accessible housing projects.

The northern carve-out fund has \$40 million earmarked specifically for the Yukon — \$20 million to the Yukon Housing Corporation and \$20 million to the private sector and NGOs, which is directly administered by CMHC. Applicants to CMHC for the northern housing carve-out must provide extensive documentation, including an appraisal report and a building condition assessment, which are used to form a credit risk assessment for the project. Applicants are also required to commit 25 percent of the value of the project with non-CMHC funds.

In January 2022, the Safe at Home Society was approved by CMHC for a \$10-million forgivable loan through the northern carve-out fund. Like the rapid housing initiatives, the northern carve-out funding agreement with CMHC specifies terms and conditions to receive the loan, such as a payment schedule and outcomes, as well as required quarterly progress reports from the Safe at Home Society.

CMHC funds have provided support for many recently completed projects, including the Boreal Commons building, the Cornerstone community centre, Normandy Living, and 401 Jeckell Street. CMHC provides direct funding to the Yukon government to build more community housing and to help repair our existing housing stock. CMHC also provides funding to housing projects and initiatives across the spectrum of applicants and is available to non-profits, like the Safe at Home Society, the private sector, and local and territorial governments.

CMHC is a critical partner in supporting housing solutions across the continuum in the Yukon. Our goal is to work collaboratively with partners to bring more housing online quickly and increase housing options overall. Our housing challenges are a collective action problem requiring collective action solutions.

The housing initiatives fund administered by the Yukon Housing Corporation has also been supporting Safe at Home. The fund incentivizes the development of long-term affordable housing, either rental or home ownership, in the Yukon. It provides capital grants to eligible applicants looking to address the Yukon's housing challenges. The project has three streams: project concepts, shovel-ready projects in Whitehorse, and shovel-ready projects in rural Yukon.

The housing initiatives fund requires that units are energy efficient, that 20 percent of units in a multi-unit building are accessible, that each project includes a minimum of four affordable units in Whitehorse or one in communities, where "affordability" is defined as median market rent or median market sale price. Affordable units must remain so for 20 years.

The Safe at Home Society was approved for \$1 million in grants through the housing initiatives fund, \$20,000 through the project concept stream, and \$1 million through the shovel-ready stream — again, \$20,000 through the concept stream, \$1 million through the shovel-ready stream.

Since 2018, we have supported almost 600 new homes across the territory through the housing initiatives fund, the

municipal matching rental construction program, and the developer-build loan program. Of these new homes, 220 are below market rate, affordable units. The success of these programs helps to explain the fact that 493 new housing units were built in Whitehorse. Think about that: The success of these programs helps to explain the fact that 493 new housing units were built in Whitehorse in the year 2022 alone — a record-breaking year, according to CMHC data.

Some of these housing projects have been completed in partnership and include the before-mentioned mixed-use Cornerstone community project building — I think we are all happy to see all members of the opposition applauding that project on Main Street — and the 84-unit Normandy Living independent seniors facility as well.

Our government's programs are also supporting the construction of 170 new housing units currently underway or in planning. Through the Yukon Housing Corporation, all of our planning and partnerships with stakeholders, financial and program viability, and eligibility is assessed on an ongoing basis.

Our Liberal government is committed to helping to create more opportunities for residential land development and housing opportunities across the Yukon.

My review of the documents requested through the motion for the production of papers — I took time to review Hansard and the letter, as I mentioned in the motion. On my response to the third question from the Member for Copperbelt South, I stated: "There were two types of reviews that CMHC undertook and then informed the Yukon Housing Corporation. In the review of the application, CMHC worked diligently to minimize risks wherever possible. CMHC's national housing co-investment fund applies a rigorous review of processes required from the Safe at Home Society, to answer the question. Both an accredited appraisal of the building as well as a recent building condition assessment were completed.

"We understand that it was only after the Safe at Home Society began their preliminary work to prepare the building that they had come to understand that there were some additional issues. So, yes, to answer your question, there was an analysis done. As I stated yesterday, CMHC led that. Information was shared with us. To date, we put \$1.02 million toward this project. As of now, this week, we have spent just over \$380,000 on the project."

That was my response to the Member for Copperbelt South at that point. What is referenced in this response is that CMHC undertook the review and led this work. The work and the information that informed it belongs to the Safe at Home Society and CMHC, not the Yukon Housing Corporation. The work that I'm talking about is work and information that informed — and it belongs to — the Safe at Home Society and the federal government, CMHC, not the Yukon Housing Corporation.

So, much of this information is required by CMHC as the lender and investor. Yukon Housing Corporation is not in the same position and therefore did not require these documents, nor does it have access to those documents as they were not

provided. When we look at the itemized list in this motion, I will go through it in order.

So, the first item requested is the accredited appraisal of the building that the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation made reference to during Oral Question Period on Thursday, October 27, 2022.

I have here today for tabling the High Country Inn funding calculation, class D estimates and related budget cost summary, along with a copy of the northern co-investment fund viability assessment calculator and the scoring grid. I do not have the accredited appraisal, as I mentioned earlier, because the Yukon Housing Corporation is not the lender or investor for the purchase. We did not require these documents, nor were we provided those documents. We do have copies of the northern co-investment fund viability assessment calculator and scoring grid, as the Yukon Housing Corporation sits on the review panel and makes recommendations for what projects are supported under this fund.

The second item that was requested is the building condition assessment that the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation made reference to during Oral Question Period on Thursday, October 27, 2022. This document was provided to CMHC and not Yukon Housing Corporation, and therefore, it is unavailable for production here in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. Again, this is not a document required for our programs but is required for CMHC as the lender and investor of the project.

Item 3 is the operational plans that the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation made reference to in his letter to the Safe at Home Society dated August 25, 2021. I have here today for tabling the full rapid housing initiatives program plan that was submitted by Safe at Home, so I will submit that. That includes the operational plan that I spoke about.

Item 4 requests the Yukon Housing assessment and long-term financial and program viability of the project that the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation made reference to in his letter to Safe at Home on August 25, 2021.

Financial statements were provided directly to CMHC and were not provided to Yukon Housing Corporation as they were the lead in assessing the project for the funding streams — again, as the lender and investor. These documents are not in our possession.

The final item is a bit more open-ended, requesting all other relevant documents pertaining to Yukon government's final approval of 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.

I have for tabling — which we thought were appropriate to provide today, and we think it's with complete accountability to the House — the signed housing initiatives funding agreement — this is the money that we committed — with the Safe at Home Society and the signed housing initiatives fund transfer payment agreement and project concept, which we have. So, we have the HIF agreement for the \$20,000, which was the early stream, and then we also have the agreement and

the transfer payment agreement both here as well. So, these are any outstanding documents that we think will give a clearer picture.

The other thing that I will do as well — I'm hearing murmurs across the way — is that I will table a letter in the House either tomorrow or probably next week — because I think it is prudent that we send a letter to CMHC and Safe at Home, based on where this motion may go today — that will be requesting copies of all the other documents that the Yukon Housing Corporation does not currently have — because we didn't have them — and are being sought through this motion for the production of papers — absolutely no issue and no problem.

Should these documents be provided to me, I will return with copies for the Legislative Assembly through a legislative return — any of those documents. As third-party documents, we will wait and see what CMHC and Safe at Home — I also urge the opposition, as I have said before, to reach out and speak to those organizations as well.

Again, as you can see from the documents here today, an extraordinary degree of hard work has gone into this project so far, driven by the Safe at Home Society's efforts to form partnerships and apply for funding. With approximately \$15 million contributed, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has so far provided the bulk of the project funding. The Yukon Housing Corporation — again, our allocation was just over \$1 million.

In the assessment of the Safe at Home Society's funding application, CMHC worked diligently to minimize risks wherever possible and reviewed a completed appraisal of the 4th Avenue building as well as a building condition assessment. CMHC has kept the Yukon Housing Corporation apprised of the progress against the required due diligence and the evaluation of Safe at Home's building acquisition.

Again, our government has a strong vision and is taking decisive action to improve housing outcomes for all Yukoners. We have made historic investments to increase overall supply, to improve housing services, and to ensure that needs are being met across the housing continuum. The Yukon Housing Corporation is hard at work increasing housing availability through capital development projects and partnerships, improving affordability, and developing innovative solutions and alliances to meet housing needs across the territory. We are committed to supporting all Yukoners to secure an affordable and supportive place to call home. I cannot stress this enough: A strong housing system is the bedrock of a healthy society and a growing economy.

With the support of our federal colleagues through the national housing strategy, the Yukon Housing Corporation completed several new builds in the past year. We, of course, want to see further momentum in support of more Yukoners with housing needs. We also recognize the value of money and being responsible with public money, and it is an important consideration when weighing investment options.

The member opposite referenced comments from the chamber lunch the day after this spring's budget was tabled. I think it is important to reference exactly what I meant

pertaining to that question; it was really about Safe at Home. What is going to happen with Safe at Home? — I think that was sort of the gist of the question. What I said was that we did not have money in our budget. We have a five-year capital budget, and there has been a lot of different dialogue that has happened here in the House around a series of projects. We know collectively in this House the projects that have been talked about.

We have continued, over the last five years, to work alongside the Vimy group. They have had some stumbles; they have really persevered through a number of challenges. Their work started deep into the previous government's mandate — one of the champions of that project originally was the former Yukon Party Speaker — and then there wasn't really progress. There was land committed to them and we have continued to work on that with them. We have funded and supported through a number of departments, both Economic Development and Yukon Housing Corporation. Again, we are moving on that.

So, we are looking at how we can financially support it. The second one, which we have talked about, is Watson Lake and the commitment to Watson Lake. I'm looking at the numbers that we put together. It is \$900,000 per unit, and I have been criticized by the Member for Watson Lake on the number that we put per unit. I hope that it's not that number, but I know what we have paid for a duplex through a tendering process — and in certain areas when they are coming in at \$1.2 million for a duplex, it's certainly not what we would have seen in years gone by. We're committed to getting Watson built.

We also have a commitment in Dawson City. It's a 30-unit complex. There has been lots of consultation and dialogue with the community and we have continued to work on that. We know that there is at least one replacement project that has been talked about here in Whitehorse. So, there is a series of things that our team at Yukon Housing Corporation has been working on.

We know, as I stated earlier today, that I was in a consultation with Minister Vandal. It really was focused on how we are going to see this new fund — rural and urban Indigenous fund — roll out across the country. We have been working; we have reached out to all Yukon First Nations about putting together a submission. That is work that we are committed to doing. We are waiting to see what this new fund will look like.

So, going back to the comments, the main point I was trying to make is that we will work along with NGOs, and we certainly have been with Safe at Home. They have come up against some unforeseen costs based on the type of use that they want within that project. The challenge for us is that we have been planning and allocating our housing money. So, am I supportive of what they are doing? Absolutely. Have we spoken to CMHC to ask: Is there a chance for you to support Safe at Home in a bigger way? Yes, we have. I had opportunities to speak with the minister responsible for housing back at the end of 2022. I have also had the opportunity to have our senior officials reach out to CMHC's senior officials on the topic. That's key. I think it's appropriate to share with the House

exactly what the intent of the comment was so that it's not misconstrued through comments from the opposition.

The second thing is that I think it's important — no matter which of these projects — to stand by folks. I don't think you will find any NGO with a volunteer group that takes on these significant projects that won't have bumps along the way — whether it's the Cornerstone project or you name it. That's because they are complex projects, they are filling a need that government hasn't taken on, and there are people, in many cases, who are working a full-time job during the day and then coming to volunteer their time to do that work.

One thing I have learned — and I will not shy away from it in the Legislative Assembly or in this work — is: believing in the public servants who are around you and at times taking a calculated risk. We have supported a number of NGOs. A number of them have built significant infrastructure, and we have filled gaps that were left — gaps that we found in 2016 — and we have more to fill because of the needs in our community.

The things that we have, in my experience as a government, really received some praise for are the things we have done where we have seen a need, made decisions, and taken those on. I think about, collectively across government, what happened with COVID programs. I think about the housing investments. I think about walking into this job and, for all of us collectively, there was no mechanism for independent power. Nobody wanted to — there was a chance to take. How do you do that? And that led to renewable energy projects across the north. At times, you have to look at your projects; you support the people who are there — in this case, Safe at Home. I have watched their team and leadership do good work in the community for a long, long time.

The first time I saw a housing project tabled by that organization — I know the member opposite said that they have only been around for a little while. That was 2010; I was sitting on city council, and their executive director, Kate Mechan, brought forward their first project almost 12 years ago. So, they have played a significant role in working with Health and Social Services and working with other organizations to support — and in this case, yes, there is a challenge in front of them. What are we doing? We are making sure that we do have to be accountable to taxpayers; we have to be accountable with the public purse.

So, as the member opposite laid out, there was a series of things that we requested that we need to see. I spoke to what CMHC — what their relationship is with the organization, and we have flowed a portion of the \$1.02 million but not all of it. There are some things that we have received, and there are things that we are still looking to receive. So, there are a number of things that still have to be there.

So, yes, the job is to ensure that you work with integrity on your projects so that when you get called, not just because it is the right thing to do, but then when you get taken on a Wednesday afternoon on what seems to be, you know — anyway, some due diligence, we will say — I will be polite — that I could come in and make sure I bring all of the documentation we have. I can share with everybody in this

Legislative Assembly exactly the steps that we took in our decision-making. I can completely disseminate whose responsibility is pertaining to which funding agreement. You can lay out the decision-making that we made. You can see the commitments that have been made by the organization, especially in the transfer payment agreement and Appendix D in the back. You will see, as well, an opportunity to lay out some of the key things and deliverables that we need.

So, yes, it is a fine balance between ensuring that you are, again, having a framework of accountability and still being supportive to an organization that has a vision and wants to do better for folks in our community. As stated, you know, I think that the member opposite may have more information that can be touched upon — spoke to a number of different pieces, more on the financial side. But, yes, they are making decisions, moving forward, on trying to find more funding, because the use of the building, as I understand it — the change in use has triggered more structural work. So, they are trying to figure that out, and we are trying to support them going forward.

So, that is where the project is. We know that there is a need in the community, specifically for these 55 units. We know that there's a need for those victims of violence. We know that there is a need for youth who are aging out. That's part of what that would do, but part of what we are doing is making sure that, as I spoke to earlier in my statement, we support the Council of Yukon First Nations and their endeavour — support their land and some of the needs they have, because they are also focused on helping a very similar, if not overlapping, group of people in our community who are vulnerable and need help. So, it's not just focusing on one project to support a group of folks who have similar challenges; it's about making sure that you are working with a number of organizations to undertake these challenges.

Again, the majority of our projects that we have partnered with folks on have worked to really see great success and are moving ahead. Yes, I get it. It makes good sense, what we're doing here. We are going to focus on this project. We are going to put a complete negative spin that, yes, this project — the words, you know, that I was front and centre — it started this mudslinging — will sling mud at me because of challenges with the project. We know what it is. Let's break this down. We know that's what it is, but the reality is that I am standing here providing document after document on exactly the process. I know that there is a big move for the "I gotcha" moment, but the reality is that the documents are there. You can go through the documents, but let's be absolutely clear about whose responsibility is whose as we go through this.

We do hope that other organizations will continue to take on these projects and not see some of this behavior where they are going to be pulled into a political ring, because it's going to make political hay for one group of folks. At the end of the day, we all know how this will be. We have media that listens as we go through it. Where does that leave the folks from Safe at Home? They are just trying to do the project, and we are just trying to make sure that we are supporting this need.

All housing developments that we undertake carry risk and complexity. We are committed to working with our partners to

address Yukon's housing challenges and reduce the number of homeless people in the Yukon. We will continue to undertake this important work.

So, I will table that letter as soon as it is — as soon as we send it off, I will bring it into the House and I will table it so that members will know that it has been sent off to both organizations. Upon receipt of any of those documents that were requested that are not in our possession but with CMHC or Safe at Home, I will take them, and I will table them in a legislative return.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker, for giving me the chance to speak to this motion today.

Ms. White: Thank you, Deputy Speaker, and I thank the minister for his points today. I just really want to say right now that we will be voting in favour of this motion but for very different reasons than the Yukon Party. The work done at Safe at Home has — well, it has been huge, and it continues to be huge. Their efforts behind turning the High Country Inn into actual individual apartments is a really big deal. I attended the Mickey Mouse Daycare in the basement of the High Country Inn when it was the YMCA. You know, it has gone from YMCA to hostel to hotel, and we are finally going back to where it started, which was housing for folks, and I think that is a really important thing.

I want to say very clearly on the floor that I fundamentally believe and support the work being done by Safe at Home. I was in this Chamber between 2011 and 2016 when the Yukon Party government sat on more than \$13 million of affordable housing money, as opposed to using it in a way that could have actually addressed some of the issues that were happening at that time, during a housing crisis.

There was the Lot 262 up in Takhini that — there was a pretty phenomenal proposal that came forward from a company out of territory, looking to put in hundreds of units of housing, but the Yukon government wanted to sell the lot, so they turned it down. There were lots of projects. It is interesting — I was trying to find the right wording. There was a proposal that was put forward to the Yukon Party government that was very much the same project as the Safe at Home — what they are proposing now — but at the time, the price tag was \$500,000, and it wasn't even entertained at that time by the then-Yukon Party government.

Homelessness has been an issue in the territory — it has always been an issue — whether we choose to recognize it, whether we choose to see it, whether we choose to admit that it happens here, it happens.

It happens, and one of the hardest populations ever is the hidden homeless population — people who are precariously housed, people who are in hotels who will be asked to vacate during the prime tourism season, people who are couch surfing, people who are trading things that none of us here would wish to trade for safe housing. That is a reality.

I remember when YAPC started Whitehorse Connects. I remember the very first point-in-time count that was held here and just that crushing realization of the population of folks in the territory who did not have access to safe housing. The

challenge really becomes — since that first point-in-time count, that number has continued to rise. It's not just one demographic; it's not just men; it's not just women. It's also men, women, and families; it's also children.

So, the effort being put in by the Safe at Home Society right now is huge. So, we are voting in favour of this motion but for different reasons. We think that government transparency — we think that's important — but I just want to say right now that we, the Yukon NDP, support the Safe at Home Society and the work that they are doing. We appreciate that they are doing the work that many would rather not do.

I just wanted to make sure that we had that conversation today. I look forward to reading the documents. I think it is also really interesting that I believe this is the first time — in my memory — that a production of papers motion has been debated on the floor, and it's different from other motions because it's binding. So, it's an interesting day just for that, as far as the Yukon parliamentary system goes, but I do want to reiterate that we stand with the Safe at Home Society.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Today we are talking about this House forcing the government to produce papers relating to a housing project, Safe at Home. We have no problem, in principle, providing the papers requested, as you just heard the Premier say. The wrinkle, however, is that we don't have some of those papers and we don't have authority to release them. Again, the Premier is going to work this out. He's going to reach out to the responsible parties and seek the documents that the House is requesting. We have no problem with that.

The question I have this afternoon is: What is the opposition looking for specifically? This is ostensibly an afternoon fishing expedition dressed up as House business.

The opposition could be clear as to what their aim is here and what precisely they are looking for. Perhaps we could avoid all this paper shuffling and get down to the brass tacks on the issue of Safe at Home's project. At the beating heart of this whole affair is an important issue for Yukoners — housing for people who need it, which Safe at Home is working diligently to provide through a significant renovation of the old High Country Inn.

History has shown that the Yukon Party is not sympathetic to this issue — the issue of affordable housing for Yukoners.

It is very hard to get multiple chambers of commerce, the City of Whitehorse, and the Anti-Poverty Coalition to agree on anything, but in 2014, there was consensus around a plan to create affordable housing in Whitehorse using money provided by the federal government. The MLA for Lake Laberge, who was housing minister at the time, cancelled this plan at 11:59 p.m. after doing a laser-precise consultation with one group — one — the Yukon Real Estate Association. Following that talk, he did a 720-degree turn, fast and loose-like, and pledged the \$12 million or so to the new Salvation Army building — a building that was not supported by anybody. This is what the Member for Lake Laberge's realtors and his realtors alone wanted.

I am going to quote from a June 2014 *Yukon News* article: "As the political boss of the Yukon Housing Corporation, [the

Member for Lake Laberge] is entitled to call the shots. But he is also expected to keep his word — something he has failed to do by scrapping plans to spend nearly \$12 million on bolstering affordable housing in Whitehorse."

The article noted that the Member for Laberge had long supported the affordable housing plan and that the Yukon Housing Corporation would decide how to spend the money until he unexpectedly pulled support and changed tack. So much for that, the newspaper noted. The Member for Laberge, upon learning that realtors and landlords were enraged by the plans, caved, overturning the Housing Corporation board's approval.

It goes on to say: "He now claims he misunderstood his role in things when he spoke in the House. Is this supposed to be reassuring, that [the Member for Lake Laberge] apparently didn't understand his job as minister?" Thus ended six years of careful planning and consensus building. The paper concludes that it is a testament to the Yukon Party government's ineptitude and indifference that we're now back at square one to sort out what to do with this project.

From this, we can draw two conclusions: The Yukon Party will simply block affordable housing projects at the request of a single stakeholder, or perhaps they are woefully ignorant about the job of a minister and the merits of affordable housing projects. Neither is a good look. It begs the question this afternoon of: What is really going on here? What does the Yukon Party really want to accomplish? Are they trying to discredit Safe at Home? Are they trying to put an end to another affordable housing project that someone doesn't like?

For context, Safe at Home is executing its renovation with the assistance of the federal Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The goal is laudable. People should be entitled to feel safe at home. This is where we raise our families, where we sleep at night and generally relax when we aren't busy with work or other activities. The fact that many Yukoners do not feel safe at home or even have a home is a tragedy. There's no easy solution to fix this problem. In fact, no government I know has satisfactorily solved the problem of homelessness. Nevertheless, we should never abandon the goal of having safe housing available for everyone. With no silver bullet, we are trying to tackle this issue from many different directions.

I am not sure if debating the provision of papers is the most direct route, but here we are. That aside, the beating heart of this issue is, as we have said, safe housing in the entire housing continuum. Housing supply in the market provides a foundation for helping people to have a home and be safe at home. Through increased supply, we reduce the average prices that in turn allows lower income and vulnerable Yukoners to find a place to live. Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services are doing everything they can to facilitate the growth of housing stock by developing lots and getting them out to the public as quickly as possible.

The Land Development branch in Community Services specifically prepares land for Yukoners to build their homes. The branch works with municipalities, guided by their official community plans, to develop an assortment of lots to meet the demands of our fast-growing territory. Land Development

branch works with many partners and stakeholders. The branch develops master plans that guide tender-ready land development projects in municipalities to stay ahead of the demand curve and thus allow more people to have safe and secure homes.

After seven years of Liberal government, the Yukon is a vibrant and growing place, and we expect a persistent and long-term demand for housing. Here, we work with our partners at the City of Whitehorse to meet this demand and help Whitehorse grow to its potential. In fact, we work with municipalities across the territory.

We are also collaborating with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council to support their land development objectives within the City of Whitehorse. Whistle Bend is our focus for lot development currently to meet this demand in a rapidly growing city, and when complete in four to six years, Whistle Bend will comprise \$300 million of investment and provide a full-service, sustainable neighbourhood of more than 2,000 lots to accommodate our growing population.

This year, in addition to phased development in Whistle Bend, the Land Development branch is advancing multiple landscaping projects, a new lift station, and necessary storm water infrastructure to promote further growth.

This afternoon, the Yukon Party has simply asked for papers to be produced. There is a lot more to providing affordable housing in the Yukon; Safe at Home is one avenue. In addition to Whistle Bend, we are advancing feasibility planning and design work throughout Whitehorse for the city's new official community plan. Under the new First Nation land development support program, we are expanding our partnerships with the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation to advance joint projects like Range Point road and to support their efforts to develop their own lands.

The Land Development branch has a range of land development work underway in Whitehorse, including continued Whistle Bend lot development. Hemlock Street extension — planning for that project is underway; YESA detailed design work is underway as well; and it is going to be tendered in the fall of this year or early in 2024. South access highway industrial subdivision — this is a joint development with the Kwanlin Dün. Feasibility work is complete, the city is planning for it, and the tender is expected to go out early in 2024. We have Range Point road — finalizing a joint Kwanlin Dün and Yukon government master plan — YESA work, detailed design tendering — again, 2024. Copper Ridge parcel for private sector developers — the city is planning it, Energy, Mines and Resources is going to release the parcel, and that is expected to go in 2024. There is a value-produced south master plan, including the tank farm. The city is leading a multi-owner master plan for late summer completion. Whistle Bend south bench — working with the city on approval to harvest granular material for 2024 area projects.

The goal here is to create and maintain lot inventories in Whitehorse and the communities. We also want to support opportunities for private sector land development projects and

to support First Nations in developing their land. Municipal and First Nation roles can vary by community. In general, the Land Development branch supports municipalities and First Nation governments during official community planning or integrated planning processes to confirm areas of interest for development through feasibility studies. Where possible, joint processes with Yukon First Nations and municipal governments are applied to advance master plans and preliminary designs prior to approval by the municipal council. A key principle under the recently approved First Nation land development program is to promote the highest and best use of land by targeting cost recovery through lot sales or leases and by requiring landowners to pay for development of their land. The Government of Yukon pays for all costs associated with developing public land and recovers those costs through lot sales.

This afternoon, the Yukon Party has simply asked for papers to be produced. There is a lot more to providing affordable housing in the Yukon. Safe at Home is one avenue; there are others. We have a lot of work to do. Two key Land Development branch partners are the Land Management branch in Energy, Mines and Resources, which manages all YG lot releases, and the Yukon Housing Corporation, which manages the new housing unit land and infrastructure development assistance program and the Yukon government's housing-related programs.

We know that Whistle Bend is a popular topic in this House. As I have noted, the branch is advancing the neighbourhood of Whistle Bend as a main priority to meet lot demand in Whitehorse. Nearly 300 lots will be completed in the coming months, all of which will be targeted for release in the winter of 2023-24. Through my frequent talks with Mayor Cabott, I know that Safe at Home-style housing is very important to her and her council.

The Land Development branch will work with the city to advance planning and release infill parcels to the private sector for planning and development. We're working on planning projects for Hemlock Road extension, Whistle Bend south bench, highway industrial, and Copper Ridge. As I have said earlier, I know that this type of housing is also important to the Kwanlin Dün First Nation government. To that point, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Yukon government joint master planning process for the Range Point road area is wrapping up and we are actively setting out next steps — YESAA, zoning subdivision, and detail design toward the construction start in 2024. This new integrated subdivision will provide a variety of lots for more than 300 housing units for Yukoners on both Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Yukon government land.

The Land Development branch is also working with the city to advance more detailed feasibility work on the north and south urban containment expansion areas for future development.

Community Services is primarily focused on land development within municipal boundaries to address the current high demand. They are also wrapping up work outside of Whitehorse to provide country residential lots in places like Grizzly Valley and other rural residential neighbourhoods.

This afternoon, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party has simply asked for papers to be produced. There is a lot more to providing affordable housing in the Yukon. Safe at Home is one avenue.

Again, I asked the Yukon Party to clarify what it wants here. It seems to be targeting a local non-governmental organization simply trying to help the least fortunate in our society. We have heard the Yukon Party, which is a conservative-leaning organization with a track record of nixing affordable housing projects, ask very pointed questions about the Safe at Home Society. Now we are, as a House, contemplating ordering the production of papers that we have no objection to providing, except that a couple of them are not ours are to give. We are going to work through that.

So, what is it about this project — what specifically does the Yukon Party want to probe? Is it because this project focuses on those most in need? It seems really odd until you look at the history. This motion from the Member for Porter Creek Centre seems, on the surface, to be targeting a group trying to do good work. It is a tricky approach. It could lead to discouraging good people from volunteering for organizations in our community in the future, especially organizations that aim to lift up those most in need.

Now, maybe the goal is to discredit our government on housing, which I suppose is fair game, except that there is no smoke here, Mr. Speaker. We are willing to provide the documents we have and to seek those we don't. So, what is really at play here? I asked the Member for Porter Creek Centre to clarify things for us. I ask any Yukon Party member to provide much-needed clarity this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the Yukon Party this afternoon to stop beating around the bush and just come out with a direct accusation, which seems to underpin their questions in motions when it comes to the Safe at Home Society and its affordable housing project.

MLA Tredger: To really understand this project, I think we need to think a little bit about the context from which it came. We have been in a housing crisis for about 10 or 11 years now. People trying to buy houses were watching them disappear, even as they bid \$50,000 over asking and waived conditions for an inspection. Still, they were just gone like that. People looking to rent were turned away from place after place. Any post you saw on Facebook advertising a place to rent had 20 or 30 comments within hours of people trying to find a place to live. People were accepting job offers in the Yukon and then saying that actually they couldn't come because there was nowhere for them to live. People were moving up for jobs or to be closer to family or just because they love the Yukon and then leaving because they had nowhere to live.

There is one story that always sticks in my mind, which is of a senior who had to move in with her daughter after being evicted. She had to sell her plants, put her stuff in storage, and she said she was lucky. She was right; she was lucky that she had a daughter to move in with, because many do not.

When you have a housing crisis like that, when you have that crunch, everybody's feeling it, but the people who are

feeling it the most are the people who are precariously housed and homeless. I think about the conversations I have had with people working trying to support people who are homeless — conversations with people at Safe at Home, at Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, and at Blood Ties. I am sure there are more that I'm not naming right now, such as First Nations. The feeling is desperation and panic. It's like: What are we going to do? There's nowhere for people to go. Last spring, we saw people camping under the clay cliffs risking a landslide coming down on them, because they had nowhere else to go.

So, that was the void that Safe at Home stepped into. They said that they couldn't do their work to support people with housing if there is no housing to support them in, so something has to be done. They stepped into that void. The importance of their work cannot be overstated, and I cannot commend them enough for seeing this gap that went on for years and years and stepping into it, saying: Fine, we are going to make it happen. I think supported housing has been one of the biggest gaps. For people who need support to stay housed, there just has been so few, if any, options. Safe at Home has taken on this enormous mandate to end and prevent homelessness in the territory. They know it's not good to have people living in a shelter. Nobody wants to be living there. They know that having people camping in unsafe places is not the solution. They know that people need safe housing as the first step in being well — as the first step in being a healthy person, you need housing.

So, I just really want to start today by thanking them so much for their work. Their board and their staff have really put years of their lives into this project. They have done incredible work to make this happen.

That is something that I had hoped that everyone in this House would support, but it doesn't seem like that is the case today. It is very disappointing to see a non-profit organization questioned like this — called into question — their reputation, their ability to deliver on this project. It is not new. When the Yukon Party was in power, they did this often; whether it was environmental groups or social service providers or housing advocates, there was always the threat of funding cuts.

So, today, the Yukon Party is talking about affordability and housing and social supports, but we know their track record. What affordable housing did they build over their decade and a half in power? What did they do with \$13 million available to them for housing during a housing crisis?

So, it is disappointing, but perhaps not surprising, to see the Yukon Party bring this motion forward, and I really worry — I worry about what their questions in this motion will do to the reputation of Safe at Home and their ability to secure funding in the future, but I am also really concerned about the position that the society is in — the corner they have been backed into by the government and their partners.

I question, if they had known the full extent of the work that this building required, if they would have taken it over or taken it over under the same conditions. There were a lot of other options available. The government could have taken on the building, conducted the renovations themselves, and then contracted the society to operate it. That is the model that they have used with the shelter. There are a lot of questions to be

asked about how Safe at Home has ended up in this really difficult, really messy position.

I don't expect that this motion will answer all of them, but I am looking forward to reading the documents that the Premier has tabled, and I am looking forward to the letter that he is going to table asking for the remaining documents, and when those documents come, I am looking forward to reading them, because I think that Yukoners want to see that information made public so that they can give that deal its proper scrutiny and know what to think.

You know, we have heard a lot today talking about: CMHC is the partner; CMHC is going provide the funding; CMHC is going to do the work. Why not the Yukon government? We have a non-profit that stepped into this enormous void in our social supports and is working incredibly hard to fill it. Why isn't the Yukon government there with them?

They already have 22 people living at the old High Country over the winter. That is incredible, given the circumstances, how quickly they were able to pivot and make sure that project could be a home to so many people during the winter months, when they truly had nowhere else to go, but they will have to move out in June so that more renovations can take place. It's hard to watch them struggle with this on their own. It feels like they have been abandoned. It feels like they are on their own.

The Yukon Party might question why Safe at Home didn't do their homework. I ask why Safe at Home is being left to deal with this on their own. That is why I will be voting in favour of this motion. It's not for the same reasons as the Yukon Party but to support Safe at Home and make sure that they get the support they need.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. Clarke: Salamat, Mr. Speaker. At its heart, this motion was very simple. We are just asking the Premier to provide documents that he has referenced in the Yukon Legislative Assembly and in letters. It's about transparency and openness. It is to help Yukoners better understand how we got to this point with a project to renovate the old High Country Inn and provide affordable housing.

The Premier provided this House with a lot of background on Safe at Home, the High Country Inn project, and housing in general — for a Premier who continues to tell us to talk to Safe at Home if we want information on the project and that the Yukon government wasn't very involved. Well, he had a lot of information to share with the Legislative Assembly during debate, and I thank him for sharing those documents. It shouldn't have required a motion to have these shared.

I also feel that I should comment on his remarks. The Premier noted that I misspoke in my opening speech and said "today" when I was referring to two weeks ago when I wrote this speech. Despite this slip, my opening comments remain correct overall and I stand by them. I found the Premier's comments about me not understanding this issue to be disrespectful and inappropriate. It was also surprising that he

would criticize me for using a written speech, when he spent so much time reading from his own prepared speech — but I will leave it at that.

The important thing is that we get more information about this project and see the documents that I have requested. I encourage all members to vote in favour of this motion.

Salamat po.

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: I think the yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for the Production of Papers No. 6 agreed to

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 664

Clerk: Motion No. 664, standing in the name of Ms. Van Bibber.

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

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

Ms. Van Bibber: The 125th birthday of Yukon — I think this motion is fairly straightforward and timely. After a few bleak years of shutdowns, road checks, social distancing, and wearing of masks, we are all in the mood for a celebration, and what better than a birthday?

In 1898, shortly after the discovery of gold on Rabbit Creek, the Yukon became the first territory carved out of

Rupert's land. We had an influx of people in a very short time, so the world definitely knew about the Klondike Gold Rush, despite being in the far away north, and most likely, most stampeders had not a clue of where they were heading or what to expect, but they came.

As I travel the Yukon River in the height of summer in our modern boat, I often think of those men and women who made their way to the dream of a fortune. Then the decades passed and changes happened — the World War transitioning the southern part of Yukon with the building of the Alaska Highway so Americans could access their northern state, the start of tourism and visitors from around the world wanting to see what it was all about, but also our wilderness, wildlife, and beautiful scenery — our assets.

To celebrate a birthday, we usually have decorations, mementos, cake, and treats, but we also send out invitations. So, let us let the communities and the NGOs know that this isn't just a Dawson City event but a territory-wide event. Let's allow Yukoners in each community the opportunity to host something unique in their town or village so they can celebrate the age of our territory properly. I see this happening as soon as possible. With the actual birthday date just two months away, the planning time will be short but doable, and access to a fund to encourage residents to relax and enjoy even a small event — a picnic, a tea, an open house — to honour our home — there are so many other ways that we could accomplish this to enhance the year.

I have heard of the state of our signage and have witnessed it as well. Paint chipping, leaning signs, and outdated information are all concerns. The large entrance signs coming into the territory at our borders could all use a facelift. Perhaps this is the year to rectify this with a focused sweep of immediate repairs so our visitors and locals can see our pride of place. Appropriate banners stating we are having a 125th birthday would be a great addition and maybe collectible pins — the list could go on and on.

I look forward to a collaborative discussion on this motion and a celebration for all Yukoners would be a welcome diversion. As we know, the government released a news release today on my motion, and I'm sure they are fully supportive. So, 125 candles, 125 balloons, and 125 whatever — the imagination can run wild to create a simple celebration, and it doesn't have to be costly. It is a time to laugh and sing: Happy birthday, Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It's my pleasure to rise to speak to this motion today — Motion No. 664 — and I want to begin by thanking the Member for Porter Creek North for bringing forward the motion. I think it's good to mark the birthday of the territory — not of the Yukon but of the territory — and I think there is one small thing I will mention. The last time there were some collectible pins that I was involved with, it ended up with the closure of the Arctic Winter Games and the start of — so I am a little gun shy around collectible pins, but the principle is very good.

Let me just chime in. I am supportive of the motion, of course, and we did do some work. When I first got the role as

Minister of Tourism and Culture, the Premier came to me and spoke about the 125th anniversary of the territory and asked me to work with Tourism and Culture as one of the ways to market, in particular, how we would support our communities.

Then we had talked here, and the Premier put forward a motion to host a Special Sitting in Dawson on that anniversary. As part of that conversation, he reminded me that what he needed to see was that there was work going to be happening or support across all of our communities. The motion in front of us today is talking about that very thing.

The Yukon became a territory, joining the Canadian Confederation on June 13, 1898, and this summer will be the 125th anniversary of the Yukon as a territory.

The history of the Yukon, of course, goes back much, much further into time. The territory is named after the Yukon River, and if you think about the river, it connects us. I was talking about this. The very first opening remarks, as the Minister of Tourism and Culture, that I gave was to the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, when they held their meetings. They were at the MacBride Museum, which is right alongside the Yukon River. I talked about how the river connects us. It's a huge river, of course. I think it's the third largest in North America. If you go upriver, you go past my place, and you will get to Carcross at the intersection of the Nares and Bennett lakes. Then you come downstream, and you get to Tagish along the Six Mile River, or the Tagish River, and down to Whitehorse, but you can also get to Ross River along the Pelly River, and you can get to Old Crow on the Porcupine.

All of these communities — the only one you are far away from or that is on a completely different river system is actually Watson Lake, which is on the Liard River system.

What the river does is it connects us in time, in transportation, and, of course, in sustenance, and it really ties us together. So, the history of the Yukon goes far back in time. And so, even though the 125th anniversary is the moment in time in which we joined Canada as a territory, there is more to think about in terms of the history of the Yukon, but it is worth commemorating.

There are other anniversaries that are happening this year as well. We have just had some really great celebrations of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* — the 50th anniversary, which happened on February 14 this year, but we also have — we marked 20 years since devolution happened when the Yukon, as a territory, got responsibility for our natural resources and province-like powers without becoming a province.

There are a number of things that we should mark in time as we look at this opportunity. The member opposite noted that we put out a press release today talking about support for commemorating the Yukon's 125th anniversary. This is a fund that we have identified. We have been working over the past month or so to find a partner who would work with us in allocating the funding, and what we have pulled together, under Tourism and Culture, is a fund for \$400,000, about half of which would be dedicated to First Nations and to municipalities to provide some support funding for a commemoration in whichever way they would choose to mark it. I thank the

member opposite for lots of great ideas about how that might be. There is another half of that funding which will require small applications around it to go to our non-governmental organizations, committees, and groups, if they wish to apply.

What we are looking to do with the funding is to support community events, celebrations, and gatherings. They can go to improve community spaces, maybe with landscaping or some artwork; they can go to creative projects with performance; they can go to research or education projects that focus on the Yukon's heritage, our culture, or our history and I think, as well, celebrating or talking about where we wish to go as a territory. So, it is a way in which to mark that passage of time — the 125 years — but also to give a sense about where we want to go — the journey of the Yukon.

I think that it is worthwhile to consider our story as a place, and I think about how each of us has a relationship to this place. I know that we are all staunch supporters of the Yukon, and I think that most Yukoners are. When I talk to people who visit the territory for the first time and I let them know about this place, I always talk about it as a place of intention — a place where you might have grown up here and you will inevitably, at some point, journey outside of the territory — maybe to go to school, maybe to find some work — and you will go and see other parts of Canada, sometimes other parts of the world, and many of those Yukoners return home. They come home, and they are so appreciative of this place and what we have here.

Others, like me, drift across the Yukon. I have lived in many parts of Canada, and when I first came to the Yukon and saw this place, I was in awe. Like others, when you come here, it can be our bold landscapes; it can be the history that I was already talking about. For me, I remember — I was brought up by an engineering firm to do some work over the summer, and each day I went out hiking in a new direction, and on the weekends, I would go up to the Alaska Highway and hitchhike, and one long weekend I got to Kluane Park. I was supposed to go hiking with a friend, but they weren't able to make it, so I went in on a several-day solo hike up to the Kaskawulsh Glacier — a beautiful hike along the Slims River — and I remember going through some flats. A fog had rolled in, and everywhere I went, I could see bear paw prints and bear scat. So, there was fog, and you couldn't see very far; I remember singing at the top of my lungs to try to let the bears know who I was and to make sure that our encounters would be friendly.

I came up out of the fog up over a bit of rise, and I remember looking out over the valley of the Slims River as the sun burned off the fog. You could see grizzlies across the river. I remember thinking, "Wow, this is just so amazing that you can have so much access to this beautiful space." I remember that, right away, living in the Yukon made the top of my life list. On that same trip, I got up to the Kaskawulsh Glacier and I came back to Whitehorse, and I started asking questions — I think it was up at the Archives, or maybe it was at the library — about where the name "Kaskawulsh" came from. I started to learn about the history of the First Nations in this place. I remember seeing a poster of Angela Sidney in the library saying, "Reading makes you wise". I remember starting to learn

about self-government and where the Yukon was going. It just reinforced in me this notion that this was a special place.

When you think about that story or almost every Yukoner's story or a lot of the stories and threads that we pull together — almost like the flow of the river itself — and how it draws us all together, a lot of people live here because they love this place. There is this really strong relationship. Whether it's our communities or those amazing landscapes that the Member for Porter Creek North was talking about and that I have just described or the journey that we are on to shape reconciliation, this place, I find, is woven through us as Yukoners.

I think it is good to commemorate including some of the challenges that we have as a territory and some of the hard history that we have and to acknowledge some of that and to talk about where we want to go as a territory.

I think it is important to do this. I think it's especially important, and I thank the member for the motion, talking about wanting to work with our communities. I so believe in this notion of community here, and the simple meaning is talking about places, whether that is Beaver Creek or Watson Lake or Old Crow, but I think it is also talking about communities of people and how we connect with each other, whether that is the Association franco-yukonnaise or teams or other communities of people who exist in the Yukon.

So, the idea of the fund that we're putting out there is to allow our physical communities, as well as our communities of relationship, to take a moment to commemorate in the ways in which they see fit. It might be a birthday cake, or it might be something more contemplative. My experience with Yukoners is that, when you give them that ability to share their creativity about how they see this place and those stories sort of all come together, it's almost always a delightful outcome, that there is strength in our diversity and our range of views. I don't think that it's just one community; I like to think of it as all.

I think that the motion is very timely. The plan around the fund that we have is that the intake will be over the next month and a half or so, so that projects can take place this coming summer into the early fall, I think. We will work to try to support Yukoners in what ways they see best to try to mark the time of the 125th anniversary of the Yukon becoming a territory. There will be other ways that we're looking to try to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the Yukon as a territory. For example, I mentioned the Special Sitting that I hope we debate soon as a motion, which would happen on June 13.

There is the notion of replacing our signs which I heard mentioned, and I thank the member opposite for the ideas about reinvigorating them. I think that there is this whole conversation around our story as Yukoners. I know that there will be other opportunities to commemorate the 125th anniversary, so I wanted to say that I appreciate the motion that has come before us. I am supportive of it, and I look forward to hearing others talk about their relationship to this place and whether or not they support the notion of commemorating the 125th anniversary.

Earlier today, when we were planning to put out this press release, I did come and speak to the member opposite, so there was a heads-up that we were coming out with it. I thank the

Premier for his direction to make sure that our communities are supported as we mark the 125th anniversary.

Again, I appreciate the motion today, and I'm looking forward to further debate.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I thank the Member for Porter Creek North for bringing forward this motion today. I am happy to add to the discussion today and to follow my colleague the Minister of Tourism and Culture. I was very proud to hold that position for a number of years, and, of course, I held that position during the 150th anniversary of Canada. I can say that there was a lot of debate that happened among folks. So, I rise today in support of this motion, but I wanted to go in a bit of a different direction with it.

The Yukon Territory that we all so proudly call home and we all so proudly represent is the traditional territory of Yukon First Nation people. We stand today on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and I thank them for allowing us to do so and to live, play, and work on their territory. It was just a very short time ago when treaties were entered into by our government and Canada. In fact, it was around 17 years ago for the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and about 22 years now for the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. In my mind, that was when the official permission was given for us to share this land.

I myself, of course, am very proud to be a Yukoner, born and raised, and I always thank the Kwanlin Dün and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council for fully embracing me and teaching me, because I have lived on their territory my entire life, other than times when I moved away for short periods of time. Really, it was the Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an people who embraced me.

One of the things that I talked about often when I was the Tourism and Culture minister was just that connection to each other. Yukon First Nation people have ancient ties to the land, and then there are those who are born and raised here, and then there are settlers who come and live and make Yukon their home, but we all have common ties and threads that hold us together and this really deep love of Yukon — one that, of course, I always talk about and am immensely proud to live in the Yukon and to be able to do this work on behalf of Yukoners.

So, with that in mind, I wanted to — again, I am so incredibly proud to be a Yukoner and call this beautiful place home — our territory. The territory's lands are rich in people, history, and culture, but at the same time, the history and the experience of many Indigenous people has been one of conflict at times. While we celebrate Yukon's 125th, the land now known as "the Yukon" has been home to Indigenous people for 15,000 years. When I was thinking about how I would approach this discussion, I definitely had to take out *Together Today for Our Children* tomorrow and read it through again and reflect. I wanted to provide a couple of quotes — the first one from page 13 of the booklet *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, and the title is "Today", so this would have been the history — quote: "In 1973 the picture of the Yukon Indians is not a pretty one. The Yukon Indian people are not a happy people. Both the Whiteman and the Indian are becoming more and more disgusted with each other. The Communications gap,

the Social gap, the Economic gap — all of these are widening. Both Indian and White are getting nervous because of the lack of understanding and tolerance among both groups."

And then, moving forward — it goes on in this booklet to describe, you know, what it was like for non-status Indians: economic inequality, social programs, and communications. Then, on page 17, it goes into "Tomorrow", which is, I think, partly where we are today. "This is a Settlement for tomorrow not for today. We have tried to tell you some of the reasons why we will not be able to solve our problems immediately. The Settlement is for our children, and our children's children, for many generations to come. All our programs and the guarantees we seek in our Settlement are to protect them from a repeat of today's problems in the future. You cannot talk to us about the 'bright new tomorrow', when so many of our people are cold, hungry and unemployed. A 'bright new tomorrow' is what we feel we can build when we get a fair and just Settlement. Such a Settlement must be made between people of peace. There must be a 'will-to-peace' by all the people concerned. We feel we have shown this 'will-to-peace' for the last hundred years. If you feel the same, it should be easy for us to agree on a Settlement that will be considered 'fair and just' to all. If we are successful, then the date of our agreement will be a day for all to celebrate — in the years to come. Public holidays now have little meaning to the Indian. August 17 — Discovery Day (the Yukon's Territorial Holiday) means to the Whiteman the day the gold rush started. It means to the Indian the day his way of life began to disappear."

I wanted to bring that aspect of this to the discussion today. Today, Yukon First Nations are important partners in governing the territory, but it wasn't, as stated, always this way. Because truth is foundational to the process of reconciliation, I would like to acknowledge some of the history. It's really hard to look to the future without really looking at that past, where we came from and where we are today and where we are going. I felt that it was important to speak to this today.

Before the gold rush, Indigenous people had lived off the land in harmony with it; yet in their pursuit of gold, many prospectors ignored the impact their presence and activities had on the region's First Nation people. Lands were ruined, people displaced and marginalized, and culture and language impacted. You know, we had the building of the Alaska Highway, which was significant. It was a significant historical time, and I had the opportunity, as the Minister of Tourism and Culture, to speak to this at the 75th anniversary on the Alaska Highway when we unveiled the new signage in the Kluane area, and it was very emotional for everyone there. It was a celebration, and we know that the Alaska Highway brought the connection that we needed, and it changed the transportation system from the river to highways. But it had tremendous impact, and it really was one of the most significant changes in the territory and one that, you know, profoundly changed the — everything for the original people of the land, and then later came residential schools. Residential schools are part of Canada's shared history, and we acknowledge the impact that this has had on Yukon First Nations and all First Nation peoples in Canada.

The country and the Yukon will continue to respond to the recovery of unmarked graves, for instance, at residential schools and the trauma of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. These were all outcomes of a colonial past. You know, I share Murray Sinclair's view that the path to reconciliation is through education, and all Yukoners benefit from the opportunity to learn about Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being.

Having said that, I would like to take the opportunity to celebrate some of the government's actions to advance reconciliation. This is Yukon's path forward and why the Department of Education is working so hard to establish a more inclusive public education system in Yukon, ensuring schools meet the needs of Yukon First Nation students and offer all students opportunities to learn about Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being.

Fifty years ago, as I have said, Elijah Smith and the delegation of Yukon chiefs took *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* to Ottawa and presented it to the Prime Minister at the time, Pierre Elliott Trudeau. I think that a lot of folks think that this is when land claims started. It may have been when that document was presented, but when you look back again and look at the history of the Yukon, Yukon land claims had been put forward in early 1901 and 1902 when then-Chief Jim Boss of the present day Ta'an Kwäch'än and the surrounding area wrote letters to the superintendent general of Indian Affairs in Ottawa and the Commissioner of the Yukon. Jim Boss clearly outlined the concerns being felt by many of his people in terms of the alienation of lands and resources. So, there's such a deep history even within the last 125 years. We want Yukon students to have opportunities to learn about all of that history in our schools. I want to recognize the important and meaningful work that is being done across the territory to infuse these lessons into our curriculum and learning environments.

The establishment of the Yukon First Nation School Board is, of course, a historic step in advancing reconciliation and improving the education outcomes for all students across the territory. The Yukon government is absolutely committed to supporting the success of this board. We will walk together with the First Nation School Board to continue to make meaningful change for the betterment of all students.

This is a very exciting time for education in the territory. We look forward to supporting the First Nation School Board to flourish and thrive. I would like to quote Ta'an Kwäch'än Council chief and now chair of the Chiefs Committee on Education, Amanda Leas — quote: "The CCOE negotiated the First Nation School Board Agreement to begin to put into action some of the visionary calls to action put forth in *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*. Our leaders past and present have long been asking for a new model of public education, whereby Yukon First Nations and settlers to this land build an education partnership where we can equally share our knowledge systems to nurture and prepare students for the modern world. The First Nation School Board is completely unique in Canada — and is a shining example of Reconciliation in Action — that allows the strengths of our Yukon First

Nations ways to rectify the ills of the colonial education system and create a school system that better serves all Yukon students."

So, as we move forward, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to the next 125 years for the Yukon. I am incredibly proud of the work that this government has done to reconcile with Yukon First Nations. I am excited about what this year will bring and the discussions that will happen and the stories that will happen. I echo the Minister of Tourism and Culture's statements about what this year will look like, and I look forward to more discussions and projects that do focus on Yukoners coming together and coming together in even stronger partnership.

The department continues to work on advancing reconciliation with Yukon First Nations overall. This is a path that started 50 years ago. Much of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* — probably two-thirds of it — really focused on education, and so we know that education is what brought us to a lot of the conflicts that we have had and the exercising of policies for Canada within our education system. So, we absolutely know that this is where much of our focus should be.

When I attended the 50th anniversary of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, I really don't think that I could have stood on that stage and done an opening comment without having done the work, and so I am really proud of the work that we have done over the last seven years to breathe life into the self-government agreements and to really hold them up as agreements that have shifted the whole fabric of our territory. That makes me very proud. There were a lot of emotional moments during that week of celebration and moments that I will never forget.

Also, at that time, I reflected on the one year prior to that — on the 49th anniversary — 49 years that it took for us to enter into a meaningful education agreement with Yukon First Nations. It is a huge starting point that started with the former Minister of Education and has continued with the work that I have been blessed to be doing on behalf of Yukoners.

There is a lot of other work that is going on, of course, in education. We are on a government-to-government basis with Yukon First Nations — at the community level on education for their citizens in the traditional territory and collectively at the Yukon-wide level with all Yukon First Nations, the Council of Yukon First Nations, including the work that we're doing at Yukon Forum and, of course, the Yukon Native Language Centre and the chiefs committee — I could go on and on, of course, and I'm happy to be able to speak to this today because I think that this can be a very meaningful year for Yukoners in celebrating.

But celebrating for me in that space is really going back to where we have come from, where we are today, and where we are going. I am incredibly proud of the investments that we've made in early learning and childcare. The investments we have made there will see a huge shift. I am excited to see the cohorts that come from the investments that we're making in early learning and childcare and many other investments under reimagining inclusive and special education.

Again, thank you to the Member for Porter Creek North for bringing forward this motion and for us to be able to speak to it and have these types of conversations about things that are important to us. I look forward to attending many events over the next year that result from this, having meaningful conversations, really exploring Yukon's story, reshaping, and continuing to look forward to the next 125 years.

Mr. Istchenko: I'm excited to have a discussion about the motion that the Member for Porter Creek North, my colleague, put forward urging the Government of Yukon to work with Yukon communities to assist with marking the 125th anniversary celebrations in 2023.

When the discussion first came about us maybe doing something in Dawson for the celebration, the first thing that popped into my head was: What about my riding, or what about me? We love doing things and organizing things out there. I was sure glad to see my fellow colleague put this motion forward and I sure hope everyone supports it.

Going back in my life in my community, I remember the 50th anniversary of the Alaska Highway celebrations and different things like that. I remember, on the 50th anniversary, the community came together.

I think it was the chamber of commerce that had an old army vehicle and they would do talks, and they drove tourists around and talked about where the community came from. I remember Grandma Marge at Klukshu. She had a gift store and she was selling beaded stuff, and it was a reason to do something because there was a celebration.

The 75th anniversary — I was a little bit disappointed, actually, that we didn't do more on the 75th. I remember being at Soldier's Summit on Remembrance Day. I know the Premier of the Yukon loves my cannon, and we fired the cannon off on the 75th anniversary. It was good to listen to the Chief of the Kluane First Nation speak that day. It was invigorating and his comments were great.

So, this year, I am super stoked to see that there is going to be a fund, hopefully, that we can tap into. If you talk about the riding — and I will just speak specifically about the riding of Kluane — it is huge. There is so much to celebrate from the start of the Yukon 125 years ago. It has been a few bad years with COVID, and I think other members mentioned it. So, our business community and our tourism sector are looking for an opportunity to have something to celebrate, like we have heard on the floor of the House, and maybe they will get pins made up and sell them in their business and everyone will buy one. That will be the reason they go there, and then they will purchase gas or maybe spend a little bit more money or stick around the community.

In my riding alone — I will just list a few things and then I am going to tell a little story. When you come into the Yukon through Alaska, if you don't get the chance to see Sid van der Meer's museum, you are missing out on something. It is pretty cool. As you work down the highway, whether it is in Burwash at the museum there with Yukon's largest gold pan — surprised that the largest gold pan is in Kluane country, not in Dawson, but I think that is good. Then

you just work your way down. There is so much. The Da Ku Cultural Centre in Haines Junction — a partnership of three levels of government years ago — so much culture there with opportunities to learn about Kluane National Park. The Yukon visitor reception centres in all of the little communities are really, really good.

One of the things that I thought of, first of all, when I was going to come up and offered to speak — I was chatting with an outfitter who has an outfitting concession in my riding. I was at a Wild Sheep Foundation seminar earlier — or late last year, basically. Dave Dickson did a story about his outfitting concession.

His outfitting concession was started — outfitting and trapping are some of the oldest businesses in the Yukon and even before we became a territory. But Dickson Outfitters — Thomas Dickson was in the Northwest Mounted Police, and he came in 1896 to Dawson City during the gold rush — and a few years after, of course, we know that we are celebrating the 125th — in the Northwest Mounted Police. Then years after — I think 12 years later — he and his wife, Louise, who was a beautiful First Nation woman of Tlingit descent, I believe, moved and settled at the north end of Kluane Lake. Today, I believe that it is the fourth generation — Dave and Teena run that business.

A story that was told to me during this — and it was basically a bit of history about outfitting. I will get to my point when it comes to the motion here. In the early years of outfitting when you wanted to come and see the Yukon and go on a big game guided hunt, you would have to work through the mail system, which could take months and months to go back and forth. So, you would book a hunt and then you would show up in Seattle and get on a paddlewheeler. You would come up the coast and it would take two weeks to get you to Skagway. Then you would jump on the train. From Skagway, the train was quite a bit quicker and it would get you to Whitehorse. Then — we didn't have the Alaska Highway back then, by the way, Mr. Speaker — you would be met by your guides in Whitehorse who would have horses for you — the horses that you were going to hunt with — and they would have a wagon with horses that you would put all your gear on. They would head west toward Kluane country from Whitehorse. All your luggage would be on there and you would ride your horse. They would take the Kluane wagon trail, which went to Silver City. When they got to Silver City, the Jacquots, who had another business up in that area, had a ferry system that would go from Silver City across Kluane Lake to Burwash.

So, you have already been on the trail for two weeks and it would take another two weeks for you on the Kluane wagon trail to get to Burwash. You would go across on the boat, as the hunter, with one of the guides and then the other guides would take your horses around. I don't know how they forded the Slims River without losing horses, but there was no bridge and there was no road — it was an old trail — and they would meet up with you and then you would gather your horses in Burwash and head up into that area to a hunt. So, you would have been gone for a month already and you would spend two weeks on your hunt and then reverse. You would be gone most of the summer just to go on a big game guided hunt.

That's the reason we need to celebrate our 125th, because it's interesting stories like those that Canadians and tourists from around the world need to come and they need to learn. That's just one of many stories that you will get.

One of the most interesting things that I think of when it comes to rural Yukon — if you go into a business or you go to maybe the local liquor store or you go to a government office in there, they all know the history of the community they're in, and they are more than willing to tell you all about it. I was in the tourism industry for years and worked alongside many other operators. It's an opportunity.

I really do look forward to being able to be part of some of the celebrations in my riding. I am glad that there is a fund out there. It would be very disappointing if we didn't celebrate. I hope other people have other things to say today, but I totally agree that we need to celebrate everything that Yukon has to offer and learn from some of the stuff that happened during those days. I look forward to having a reason to fire the Haines Junction function cannon this summer.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am very happy to stand and speak to this motion today that urges the government to work with Yukon communities to assist with the marking of Yukon's 125th anniversary with celebrations in 2023. It's extremely important. It has always been very important to me and to our team here to work with each community, especially in such a reflective time that we are in, in our small — but very mighty — territory's history.

I am absolutely thrilled with the potential of our celebrations and conversations on this, our 125th anniversary. As a former educator, I have seen our Klondike kids growing up under the false fronts of our heritage buildings and running through the tailings piles and even dressing in turn-of-the-century costumes on a very regular basis. It was just a regular part of the scenery in an extremely extraordinary and unique community — as they all are. Dawson is not the only unique community, but it's important to recognize the diversity of all of our voices as Yukoners. I am excited to hear the stories of our history and also our concerns about our collective futures as well.

I think a lot about time and history quite a bit. We have a tangible and complicated colonial history here in the Yukon. Coming from Nova Scotia originally and knowing that there were hundreds of years of colonial history, the fact that there are people living in Klondike who can trace their heritage right back to the times of the gold rush — it's extremely palpable and extraordinary. On that, I always like to brag insincerely that I was named after Alexander Macdonald. Not "the" Alexander Macdonald but "a" Alexander Macdonald. Of course, the king of the Klondike was spelled "Mc" and my mom's people are "Mac" Macdonalds, but Alexander McDonald, the king of the Klondike, was a son of Scottish immigrants born in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. The "big moose from Antigonish" was the nickname, and so, it is very interesting that my name, my first name, comes from "Alexander" and that connection of Canadians right across this country and how closely connected all the ties are.

Again, not related directly to Alexander McDonald, but where my parents lived in Antigonish, the farmhouse that is behind their lot is Alexander McDonald, king of the Klondike's, family farm. So, again, it is another interesting little story from our little hamlet that I really appreciate personally about that connection, especially when I am living right now in Dawson, right beside the cemetery where Alexander McDonald is buried.

I think that the main theme of this motion is all communities, all voices, not only matter, but they are also unique, and Dawson is an interesting mix. Our history is vibrant; it is tangible and alive, but we live in such close proximity to it that we sometimes forget how unusual that is, and we shouldn't. We sometimes forget, in Dawson, that we're living and working and going about our daily lives in a historic site, a museum, a living museum. The building that the museum is currently housed in is over 120 years old. It was built in 1901, the same year that Joseph Ladue and James Wilson registered title to Lot 14 and christened it the "Westminster Hotel". Again, these connections, that is how my brain works — I love to make these connections, and right now, at over 34,000 artifacts — from canned goods to machine guns — like the town, the museum is also an eclectic and interesting mix.

But that's every community: From Watson Lake to Beaver Creek to Carcross to Old Crow and all points in between, Yukon communities tie our wonderful territory together. It doesn't happen by chance; it takes a lot of hard work, investment, and cooperation to build these vital communities. In my roles over the years, I have always been so honoured to speak to representatives from all the communities and to learn about their concerns and to help build partnerships and relationships for a united goal.

One of my fondest memories in the first couple of years of being the Premier was doing community tours with the then-Minister of Community Services. We campaigned on all communities mattering and going out and having those conversations about the five-year capital plan and how it's a living, breathing document. As communities' priorities change, or even leadership changes, so will our priorities. That was extremely important. It was a really well-received message from Community Services.

I was also so honoured to see the community liaisons from the public government, how important their role is, how seriously they took their role, and how well they were welcomed in the rural communities. That was extremely important.

In this reflective time, I was thinking about some of the meetings that we had with First Nation leadership and having my own perspectives about where I think the territory should move forward and also my own perspectives on how we need to lend and borrow and share. I have been having this really fascinating conversation in my mind during one of those times at the Yukon Forum, talking about — in my mind, I had a title. You know, traditional knowledge versus scientific knowledge, and boy, did I ever get an education from the chiefs and from the elders. It was just an excellent moment that I had the honour of being a part of. With me, the way that I think about scientific

knowledge, that's something you can own — scientific knowledge, null hypothesis, the whole process. I mean, this is a tangible process that governments can rely upon, they can store in a file and look at again and again and compare. Of course, as science moves on, so does our knowledge. I was expecting to have a dialogue from the chiefs that was similar to that, and I learned very quickly the colonial difference of how we form policy and the conversation from I believe, at that time, it was Naa Shaáde Háni who said: You're talking about ownership of something as if my First Nation could give you traditional knowledge, and that's just not how it works. There's no comparison between these two.

I just thought that was really fascinating, because with all earnestness, trying to share from the perspective of a head of a colonial government how we can work together and just how wrong I was in my understanding of these processes or of how we could actually work together and just being able to sit there and go: "I think I better listen more" as opposed to trying to put some titles on some conversations.

This motion is reflective: It's reflective of my experience as Premier, my experience as the MLA for Klondike, and also as minister. Our government always speaks about our commitment to our communities, being key partners in shaping the future of our territory, whether it's advancing the chapters of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* or recognizing milestones, like the one in the debate today. We strive to work collaboratively with all governments, municipalities, First Nations from all corners of this territory to build those sustainable, diverse economies and support local solutions for local problems or just improving the collective way of life or just engaging in the communication to make our leadership collectively more sophisticated at every turn. It's extremely important.

In working in the role of Premier with our northern premiers, as well, it's such a fascinating experience how many times people confuse Yellowknife and Whitehorse when you go and have conversations down in the provinces and then being able to work — starting with Peter Taptuna, the Premier of Nunavut, and then Paul Quassa after that and Joe Savikataaq and now P.J. Akeagok — and just listening to the voices of the other side of our territories and how vastly different we are and, at the same time, how collective our issues and concerns are, especially when we turn our eyes to the Arctic and sovereignty and discussions about infrastructure and federal governments that have changed their perspective from a "use it or lose it" mentality to "no decision about us without us", trying to develop that perspective in a united way with the Northwest Territories premiers — well, all three of the premiers together — taking that voice and explaining something as vast as the three territories in very simple terms to provincial leaders and to our federal partners as well. I think that is an extremely important conversation — now more than ever — as we reflect on 125 years and where we need to be focusing our attention moving forward.

Having the opportunity to go international and talk to other governments of other countries about the circumpolar perspective, about near-Arctic countries, like China — it really

is a reflective time and also a time to celebrate how we have worked together to get to where we are today — all of the things that we are very, very proud of. You know, the self-governing agreements that we have — you know, leading Canada. The number "125" probably doesn't mean as much to the chiefs as it does to other folks, but it is a time to be reflective; it is a milestone; it is something that we will celebrate together, and it is extremely important. All of these conversations of leadership are extremely important.

I am very proud of the work that we did to get the Yukon Forum up and running again. I am very proud of the work of having Yukon Days where government to government to government conversations are happening in Ottawa for our collective vision, because in a choir of voices, you are not going to hear the same tone all of the time; you are going to hear different perspectives and different points of view. We don't always agree. We don't always agree as a political party, for goodness' sake, let alone all of the chiefs of all of the different regions — those who are still on the *Indian Act*, those who are transboundary, those who are under the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and drawing down self-government agreements, municipalities struggling in the wake of a pandemic — the territory itself, you know, reviving itself after a pandemic. Conversations with leadership in all of these different capacities is extremely difficult and an extremely worthwhile endeavour. Celebrating together is as important.

I do love that you — you really can't draw a Yukoner. We are vast in our uniqueness — just look at a bar stool at minus 40 in the Klondike and you will see that there are all different walks of life who are all coming together with all different types of opinions and our vision collectively of where the Yukon is and where it needs to be — again, that is a choir of opinions and voices, and it always has been.

It's interesting to do a little bit of research for this motion today, looking back at some of the conversations that were being had back in the late 1970s. As one author of an article in the *New York Times* penned or described by penning that the "... Yukon Territory took another step this week toward becoming the country's newest province", I think that's quite interesting knowing, decades later, where we are right now. I think that, at that time, some academics were assuming that, by mid-1983, Canada would have its eleventh province.

That is pretty interesting to see again the perspective from the Epp letter to our commissioner at that time, Ione Christensen, about how quickly that process should happen and the different voices at that time. The conversation ended with Ione Christensen saying that she was going to go home to paint her kitchen, as opposed to being involved in these conversations anymore. Of course, I am paraphrasing a whole bunch of different conversations and stories, but the point is that, whether it be a federal minister from a province in Mr. Epp or Ione Christensen, a local leader in a seat that is federal, everybody brings to the table a conversation about what the Yukon is and what the Yukon needs to be in every single decade of our collective experience.

In my role as Premier, aboriginal relations was an extremely important responsibility. I took it very seriously.

Again, those conversations have really matured me and have shaped my world view — not only my local view, but my world view. I am so grateful for those conversations, especially with Grand Chief Peter Johnston — small beginnings leading to extraordinary efforts together. It didn't hurt that we were both fans of Iron Maiden. That really is the start of a lot of great conversations, but low-hanging fruit starting and then turning into amazing initiatives with a talented group of ministers, all working together with the chiefs, with the First Nation governments, and with municipalities. Again, it's revitalizing tables, sitting and listening to leaders — all very extremely important.

The reason why I am focusing in on the consultation piece here, or the conversation piece, is because that's exactly what this motion is all about. It is about working with the communities to assist in marking our anniversary in celebrations. I think that it is important, if we are talking about the leadership of the Yukon, co-managing our extreme wealth and our extreme concerns together, the hard conversations that we have had with all levels of government — every once in a while, a milestone is extremely important because, with those voices together, to be able to celebrate in the communities with leadership, with individuals, and with people working the private sector, it is extremely important to pause and have those conversations reaching out past what you believe and what your world view is, because you would be very surprised what you are going to hear if you just allow yourself to listen to other perspectives and other points of view. In a 125th anniversary, I can't think of a better time for us to work with those communities to plan for these events and to put up some more flags, because they are already getting pretty tattered around there, and paint together on that canvas what we all think the next 125 years should look like.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I've heard this afternoon that, after years of global illness, people are ready for a shindig, a hoedown, a party. We get this. Like many, we like a chance to let our hair down. And, by chance, the Yukon Territory is having a birthday this year. By one measure, this place is 125 years old, so we are marking this anniversary. We have been planning, and we look forward to communities across the territory marking this year's anniversary. It's here because the *Yukon Act* was passed in 1898 creating the jurisdiction we live in today. That seems kind of boring, but it happened.

The impetus for the creation of this geographical and political jurisdiction by the Government of Canada was the Klondike Gold Rush. That rush began three years earlier, in 1896, when news that George Carmack, Skookum Jim, and Dawson Charlie discovered gold on Bonanza Creek reached Seattle, Washington and San Francisco, California.

Why did thousands of people leave those states for the promise of gold in the Yukon? Well, our territory's birthday was born out of hardship, poverty, and depression, born out of people who probably longed for a party but had no reason, means, or inclination given their hardscrabble lives.

Back then, the US was in the grips of the so-called "Long Depression", which had begun in 1873. People in the US were

impoverished and desperate. They wanted a better life and they were willing to drop what little they owned for the promise of gold — indeed, of wealth beyond measure — in a land beyond the ocean, beyond the mountains, in the cold, remote north.

Those seeking wealth and a better life travelled up the coast to Dyea and Skagway, crossed the White Pass or Chilkoot Pass with a ton of goods and journeyed down the Yukon River to the boom town of Dawson City.

Now, this story has been chronicled, romanticized, and, in fact, immortalized by Jack London, Robert Service, Pierre Berton and many, many others. The story has been told on screen. Heck, there are computer games about it. There is at least one board game about it. Klondike gold and the search for wealth and adventure in the Yukon occupies a special place in the minds of citizens of the world.

Carmack, Jim, and Charlie's find was extraordinary. It came during a bad time and gave folks hope. It ended America's Long Depression and literally put Yukon on the map with the passage of the *Yukon Act* in 1898. And here we are, 125 years later, because we live here, marking this date. We are marking this anniversary which admittedly has historical significance. It has historical significance. But, at the same time, it marks a very small moment in time — a single chapter in a much, much longer narrative, a short chapter in a much richer, deeper, and more beautiful story — a story hidden because it lacked advocates in the papers, books, poems, and films of western society. It behooves us to remember that. It behooves us to recognize that, because events that don't have dates set by Parliament in law or in publications shouldn't be rendered irrelevant or forgotten. That shouldn't strike them from public consciousness or memory. The longer narrative of the territory is one that has been long-ignored by broader society throughout the world, and it's time this changed. Perhaps it's time to change it this year.

The Yukon Territory is a land of rugged mountains, vast plateaus, and winding rivers, with rich and diverse cultures, languages, and art created by unique people. Which is to say, ours is a land with a rich and diverse history shaped by the people who have lived here for thousands of years, some of which crossed the Beringia land bridge from Asia to North America approximately 20,000 years ago. Those first were followed by various groups of Indigenous peoples, including the Nahanni, Teslin, Tutchone, Tagish, Gwich'in, and Inuit, who adapted to the challenging environments and climates of the region. They too developed vibrant cultures and languages as they hunted, fished, and traded in this beautiful, challenging land. It makes me heartsick, actually, Mr. Speaker, to think that the fishing in some rivers of our territory is no more.

The first contact between Indigenous people and Europeans occurred in the 18th century when Russian explorers and traders began to visit the Alaskan coast and established trade networks with coastal First Nations. The Russians also introduced diseases that decimated some of the Indigenous populations. In the early 19th century, British and American fur traders from the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company also entered the region and competed for furs and trade alliances with the First Nations. The fur trade also had a

profound impact on the social, economic, and political relations among the Indigenous people and between them and the newcomers.

Then came, as we noted earlier, the Klondike Gold Rush which transformed the Yukon from a remote wilderness into a bustling frontier society with boomtowns, saloons, gambling halls, newspapers, banks, and telegraph lines. The gold rush also brought environmental degradation, crime, and disease.

The gold rush also prompted the Canadian government to assert its sovereignty over the region. In 1895, the Yukon District was carved out of the Northwest Territories. In 1898, as I said earlier, it became the Yukon Territory with the passing of the *Yukon Act*, which we are celebrating this year.

Then the Second World War brought new, world-altering changes to the Yukon. The construction of the Alaska Highway in 1942 connected the territory to British Columbia and Alaska by road for the first time. The highway brought military personnel, workers, and settlers to the region. It remained as a vital link for transportation and communication. It also brought hardship, terror, and nation-altering impacts to the people of the territory.

I mention the highway this afternoon for a reason. It has been a mixed blessing for the territory. As I said, it connected us to the rest of the world, but it also seriously damaged independent nations and cultures. It was profound damage that we are still contending with today.

For me, it has special significance. I drove up the highway in 1989 and I have fond memories of that journey, coming to the territory for the first time, bringing my wife who had been born here, driving a road that my father-in-law maintained. In this role here, I have actually been Minister of Highways and Public Works, which has had a profound impact. It's connected to me in a very profound way. In 1992, I participated in a celebration of the Alaska Highway hosted by the Yukon government and the State of Alaska. It was the 50th anniversary of the highway. It was also the year that my good friend the Minister of Justice came up the highway. It was the 50th anniversary and I was invited to travel the highway with a group of journalists to visit all the attractions along it. We spoke with people at the highway rest stops, hotels, businesses, and communities all the way to Fairbanks, Alaska. You know, Mr. Speaker, something that I am really sad to say is that I don't recall any First Nation representation in that celebration — none that I can recall.

Today, I can't imagine a celebration that doesn't include our First Nations — our First Nation people and culture, music and dance. Not one. I think about those two events today, back then, a lot. Today, I think about the fact that there were — the lack, the loss, the negligence of that. I think about that as I reflect on where the territory was back then and where it is today.

As my colleague the Minister of Education said today, reconciliation is part of this latest chapter of the Yukon's history. It has been echoed by my colleagues this afternoon. And it should be. We should all ask: What are we celebrating this year? What in totality are we celebrating this year? Today's motion is focused on the 125th anniversary, but that's not all

that is significant this year. This is the 50th anniversary of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* — an amazing, amazing document, an amazing movement, an amazing accomplishment that deserves to be recognized, reflected on, and celebrated. It certainly deserves it, as does the 125th anniversary of the *Yukon Act* which created our territory as we see it today. We should reflect on that — the good and the bad. There is lots of both, which makes it a worthy subject to explore, a worthy chapter, one that we should really reflect on.

The act established a territorial government with a Commissioner appointed by Ottawa and an elected legislative council. By the time most prospectors arrived in Dawson City in 1898, most of the gold-bearing creeks had been staked and claimed by earlier arrivals. Only a few became wealthy, while many others worked as miners, merchants, saloon keepers, gamblers, or entertainers. Dawson City grew from a population of 500 in 1896 to more than 30,000 in 1898, but it was a chaotic and unsanitary place that suffered from fires, epidemics, crime, and high prices.

The Klondike Gold Rush had a significant impact on the continent. It helped the United States out of the depression and stimulated trade and transportation networks that we still have today. It also inspired a body of literature and art that romanticized the Yukon and its rugged inhabitants. I mentioned those earlier in my remarks today. But it also damaged the Yukon's Indigenous people, almost irradicably, and it almost erased their cultures and languages. Moreover, it displaced and decimated the Indigenous Hän people who were forced to move. They faced diseases and starvation.

The Klondike Gold Rush ended in 1899 when gold was discovered in Nome, Alaska, which attracted many prospectors away from the Klondike. However, the end of the gold rush marked the beginning of a long period of decline and stagnation in the Yukon. Many people left the territory in search of new opportunities elsewhere. The population dropped to less than 5,000 in 1921. The economy relied mainly on mining, trapping, and tourism. Back then, the territorial government had almost no power. But all of this is what we are celebrating today, this year — that and other things like *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow*. They are worthy subjects. We have had a tough go over the last few years. People deserve to let their hair down, as I said earlier. But I think we should do it in a way that mixes the fun with some reflection and thought, really considering what makes this territory the great place that it is for us all.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: My colleague the former scribe to my right has covered a lot of territory. I have some relatively brief words in favour of this motion this afternoon.

In my remarks responding to the motion today, I would like to build upon call to action 79 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada to reflect upon Yukon's history. Call to action 79 is under "Commemoration", and it reads: "We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal organizations, and the arts community, to develop a reconciliation framework for

Canadian heritage and commemoration. This would include, but not be limited to:

“i. Amending the Historic Sites and Monuments Act to include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis representation on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and its Secretariat.

“ii. Revising the policies, criteria, and practices of the National Program of Historical Commemoration to integrate Indigenous history, heritage values, and memory practices into Canada’s national heritage and history.

“iii. Developing and implementing a national heritage plan and strategy for commemorating residential school sites, the history and legacy of residential schools, and the contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canada’s history.”

Mr. Speaker, reconciliation requires forming a new common outlook on the past. Once there is a shared and acknowledged perception of the past, all parties have taken a significant step forward in reconciliation.

Reconciliation might even consist of restoration and healing that allows the emergence of a common frame of reference that permits and encourages our society to acknowledge the past.

As we have heard this afternoon, we will be marking the 125th anniversary of the establishment of Yukon as a separate entity following the split from the Northwest Territories. We tend to romanticize this period, but it is also our duty to remember that this was the start of a period of intense and often violent change for First Nation people who were inhabiting this area since time immemorial.

The gold rush cast a shadow over the Yukon at the beginning of the last century. After the gold rush, Dawson atrophied and the territory’s population shrunk significantly. In fact, even as late as 1941, the Yukon’s population stood at 4,900 persons. Then, of course, there was the beginning of the Second World War and, in less than 10 weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack, the United States approved a pathway to Alaska that would be first known as the “Alcan” and now known as the “Alaska Highway”. This formal agreement between the USA and Canada was entered into on March 17, 1942. There was unstoppable momentum, and the American military industrial machines swung into intense action. Deadlines were tight as the US Army had been ordered to have a pioneer road, a pathway through extreme wilderness, suitable for slow travel of heavy trucks completed by the fall of 1942.

Along with the troops and civilian workers came an extraordinary amount of heavy equipment — approximately 11,000 pieces of heavy equipment, 904 tractors, 2,790 dump trucks, 2,374 other trucks, 89 crushers, 374 blade graders, 370 scrapers, 174 steam shovels, and 4,032 — these numbers are very precise — other pieces such as bulldozers, automobiles, snowplows, booms, boilers, cranes, derricks, compressors, draglines, and generators. The story is well known.

Logistical challenges were enormous as everything was done simultaneously, from route locations, surveying, bridge construction, and right-of-way clearing. Bulldozers advanced so quickly that they often outran deliveries of oil, fuel, and replacement rigs. Huge bottlenecks were created near Dawson

Creek, Skagway, and Whitehorse. Mosquitoes and blackflies were ever present, particularly near the water, and the workers were pushed to complete this project relentlessly.

Despite all the challenges during construction, on November 20, 1942, Canada and the US officials gathered near Kluane Lake at Soldier’s Summit to celebrate the completion of the road.

Julie Cruikshank, who was appointed an officer to the Order of Canada, spoke with legendary First Nation elders Angela Sidney, Annie Ned, and Kitty Smith. One of her most acclaimed books is *Life Lived Like a Story*. Julie Cruikshank wrote about some of the social impacts of the Alaska Highway project on Yukon First Nations. From the stories of elders, we learn about the patterns of migration across the land to obtain food, clothing, and shelter. From their stories, we are taught about the social organization, the matrilineal descent groups, moieties, the division of labour, political leadership, and, of course, a rich tradition for the need for harmony with all beings in the natural world.

The most immediate and devastating results of the coming of the highway were the often unknown, or heretofore unknown, viral epidemics brought to settlements along the road.

The army did maintain relatively tight control over its personnel, but there were nevertheless many documented abuses committed against Yukon First Nation persons. Wrongful conduct occurred against First Nation people without serious consequences. There were major challenges involved in policing civilian camps as the troublemakers were usually given a free ride home under an international agreement.

Reflecting on Yukon’s history and looking toward the future, it is evident that the first rush of 1896 to 1898 brought immense change to this land. The second rush of 1941 once again altered the reality for First Nation persons who were living here, in many ways.

For me — and I hope for many here today — as we have heard this afternoon, *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* and the signing of the Yukon final and self-government agreements provide hope for all of us living here, moving forward.

Yukon and Canada still have a long way to go to close the socio-economic gap and to mend the injustices of the past, but today I am proud to be part of a government that is actively working toward this goal on a daily basis. Our government is working toward reconciliation and it is a never-ending process. It is a path that requires daily, ongoing effort.

Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up my comments here shortly.

All members here certainly have gratitude for our current Yukon, which is an enviable place to live, to work, to raise families, to explore, and to enjoy our world-class outdoors. I certainly urge members of this Legislature to incorporate and learn about the stories of the past — some of which are difficult to hear but are also part of Yukon’s past 125 years.

One final comment I would make is that I had the honour and privilege of travelling to Dawson City in my legal practice over the course of approximately 25 years pretty much every two months, so I’m very familiar with the Old Territorial

Administration Building. In 1998, the 33rd Legislature — and I'm being equal opportunity here with respect to not all the MLAs — but there was a clock that was provided to the Old Territorial Administration Building, to the museum, and MLAs Duncan, Edelman, Cable, McDonald, Sloan, Moorcroft, Jenkins, Ostashek, and Phillips and Speaker Bruce, as they met there on June 13, 1998 — I know that it is proposed that the 35th Legislature attend there and we will debate that motion shortly, perhaps as soon as tomorrow.

In any event, I had a different job at the time, but I certainly knew a number of these MLAs at that time. It will certainly be very interesting that my professional paths will cross at that time if we end up attending on June 13, 2023, as I listened to that clock that was donated by the 33rd Legislature going “tick-tock” while we were transacting our business at Territorial Court in Dawson. It is now a number of years ago.

So, the Yukon is absolutely worth celebrating. I have nothing but gratitude for this territory, but certainly, we are all cognizant of the sometimes complex history of this territory. Respectfully, I believe that we are on the right path going forward for the next 125 years.

MLA Tredger: We are talking about history today and celebrating history, so I want to start my remarks by locating myself in relation to the land we're on and the history of it. My great-grandparents and my great-great-grandparents emigrated to Canada from Wales, England, and Germany. They were settlers on this land.

I was born in Alberta, in nehiyawaskiy territory, in İyāhē Nakón makóce territory, and in the territory of Métis and Cree people. I moved to the Yukon when I was one year old. I lived on Selkirk First Nation territory until I was eight, when I moved to Whitehorse, where I was on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council, which is where I have lived for a lot of my life since.

So, that is who I am — that is who I am as we discuss the complicated thing that is history and how to celebrate it, acknowledge it, recognize it, and appreciate it. I really appreciated the comments from the Minister of Education about the complicated past of the place that we call “the Yukon”. I just want to acknowledge that I have a really complicated position as a settler to discuss the history of the Yukon. I want to be really clear that I think there is lots to celebrate about where we live. I love where we live; I am grateful to be where we live. I also know that there are a lot of really hard things when we look at our history.

I have always defined myself by being from the Yukon, albeit in somewhat of a complicated way. I remember when I was at university, and suddenly that was the thing that people knew about me — I was from the Yukon — because there was really only me who was from the Yukon. I remember doing an icebreaker once and I was supposed to say what the most interesting thing was about me. I thought about it a bit, and I said, “I think the most interesting thing about me is that I am from the Yukon.” People said, “Really?” I was like, “No, you don't understand how interesting that is.” That is really cool, and I have always felt that. I have always loved that.

I used to say, “Oh, I am from the Yukon”, and people would say “the north”, and I would be: “Well, I am from southern Yukon.” I didn't know if I really counted as being from the north before I learned that this was just obnoxious and I should just say, “Yes, I am from the north.”

So, I think it's pretty exciting to get to celebrate the Yukon. It is full of incredible people doing incredible things and who lead in Canada, who lead in the world. I am really, really proud to be here, but it does have a complicated history.

So, I grew up here; I went to school here. So, I want to talk about what I learned about history as a child in the Yukon, and I say this with the acknowledgement that education has changed a lot in the last — how long has it been? — 20 years. It has changed a lot. Kids are learning really different things now. But I want to talk about what I learned because that is what a lot of Yukoners learned.

I remember that in grade 4, I learned about the coastal Haida. I made bentwood boxes. That was our First Nation unit. I learned a lot about the gold rush. I learned about cancan dancers, Soapy Smith, and the Chilkoot Trail — not, mind you, its history prior to the gold rush. I never learned that it was a traditional trading route for the Tlingit. But I did learn a lot about the Chilkoot Trail and how people had to pack, I think — what was it? — 2,000 pounds across and make boats at Bennett Lake.

I learned a lot about that. I went to Rendezvous celebrations; I went to the MacBride Museum and learned about how sluice boxes for gold work. I remember dressing up as cancan dancers and celebrating for Rendezvous to celebrate. I learned a lot about the gold rush. It was really held up as, “This was our foundation; this is where we started; this is the thing that we can all be proud we came from.” It wasn't until a lot later that I learned about many different ways to think about the gold rush. There was a podcast called *Canadaland*. They put out an episode about the Klondike Gold Rush last year, I think. It was a very interesting episode. I will say that it was made without any input, I think, from any of the First Nations in the Yukon, so that is a pretty big caveat. But here is how they described the Klondike Gold Rush; they said — quote: “The Klondike Gold Rush was many things: a media conspiracy, a ponzi scheme, a land grab. But above all, it was a humanitarian disaster that stretched over much of the Pacific Northwest.” They talked in that podcast about the thousands of would-be gold miners who died on the way to the gold rush in really unthinkable conditions — from typhoid, from starvation, from violence.

I also, in school, did not learn about the Yukon First Nations who were here before the gold rush and what impact that had on them — what the creation of the Yukon Territory had on them. I did not learn about residential schools. I think in high school at some point they touched on residential schools, and there was one time when I did get to learn about them and I will talk about that in a minute. But certainly not in elementary school and not very often later did I learn about residential schools. I did not learn about the creation of the Alaska Highway and how that fundamentally changed the Yukon.

I said that there was an exception, a time that I did get to learn about residential schools. It was a really powerful time. I was in a class. I can't remember the exact situation, but basically, most of the class was gone. There were only about three of us left. There was a student teacher who was asked to teach us a unit on something that she wanted to teach us about. I wish so much that I could remember this teacher's name — and I can't — because she had an impact on me for really the rest of my life. She taught us about racism and she taught us about residential schools.

She was a Yukon First Nation woman. Again, I wish I could remember her name, but she was the first person who ever talked to me about racism — not just racism in the overt ways, but systemic racism. We talked about the differences between racism and racial discrimination. We talked about the history of the Yukon and what it meant for the present of the Yukon. It was challenging stuff. I didn't really understand lots of it until years later. I am sure there are ways that I still don't fully understand it, but I came back to what that teacher taught me. I still come back to it. Years later, I would learn something and think: Oh, that's what she was saying; that's what she meant; I get it now. I think back to the way some of the students didn't appreciate what she said, and I think now: Oh yes, that's a pattern. Those are ways that people often feel threatened when we start talking about racism. I am really grateful for that teacher, because I think she taught me more about Yukon history, really. She was the foundation of what I know about Yukon history.

So, like I said, the Yukon has a complicated history, and it's one that I think we need to think really carefully about. That doesn't mean that we can't celebrate the things that the Yukon is, but I think we need to think really carefully about which events we are celebrating and how we are celebrating them. Sometimes when we mark occasions, they might be hard occasions, and then we're coming together to acknowledge what happened, to mourn what happened, and to learn about what happened. Other times, we come together in celebration, because we are really proud of the thing we're marking. Sometimes we come together to plan and build for the future, because the point of history is that we can move to the future. The point of history is that we learn, that we think about what has happened, how we are, and where we want to go.

I am excited about the idea of communities celebrating Yukon history, culture, and present — all the things that we have accomplished together. I think about the celebrations that we just had for the 50th anniversary of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*. Those were really special. Those were something that I will treasure. It was a wonderful week. I remember being at one event, which I think was the presentation of the youth Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship action plan on climate change. I was waiting outside to get in, because I got there early, and the hallway started to fill up. More people came, then more people came, and more people came. I thought: "Wow, we are not going to fit in here", but somehow, we did. Somehow, I think through willpower — there was standing room only for most people — but we fit in that room. It felt so exciting to be part of this community that

was celebrating — celebrating something that we are really proud of.

There were smaller scale celebrations across the Yukon. I was thinking about the Dena Cho Trail, which is a trail that connects Faro and Ross River. Maybe the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin could probably remind me. I am pretty sure that trail was constructed to celebrate an anniversary, and I don't remember what it was of, but that is a phenomenal trail.

I had the absolute joy of hiking it maybe three or four years ago. It was a little hard to find information about where to go. I called the visitor centre in Faro, and they said, "We're not actually sure where the start of the trail is, but if you go to Ross River, go to the gas station. They will tell you where to go." I was, "Am I just going to do that?" So, I did. I packed my backpack. I got in my car, and I drove to Ross River. Of course, the people at the gas station were so delightful and gave me really detailed instructions on how to find the start of the trail. I took the ferry across and got to hike through this incredible part of the Yukon. It's really underrated. It has cabins all along it that are available for anyone to use, but I think I was the first person who had been on that trail in two or three weeks, judging from the logbooks in the cabins. It was just me hiking all the way to Faro.

The really exciting part of the trip — I had a friend shuttling my car for me, and it was not actually where I thought it was going to be. We miscommunicated on that, so I got to the end of the trail, and my car wasn't there, which was a shock at 1:00 in the morning, because I had been hiking late to make it. Anyway, I could reminisce about that for a while.

That trail came about because of a celebration — a celebration between two communities. I think that is really special.

I think the Chilkoot Trail is a really special trail. I talked before about how I only had learned in school about the gold rush history piece of it, but in fact, it goes much, much further back. I was in Skagway recently. I was wandering on one of the streets, and I found a plaque talking about the history of that trail as a Tlingit trade route. It feels really special to be on that trail that people have been on for a long, long time.

There are lots of wonderful ways to celebrate communities. My personal ones, of course, are hiking trails, but there are many, many other wonderful celebrations, and I think what excites me most about this motion is seeing what communities come up with, because each community has its own relationship to the history of the Yukon, whether it's a museum and a cultural centre getting a new exhibit or whether it is a community barbecue or whether it's a piece of art or whether it's a community gathering. I think there are so many possibilities about what could be done to celebrate Yukon history.

But I just need to look back. That history is complicated — when we choose which events we celebrate, we need to think about them carefully — the consequences that are good, the consequences of those events that were really damaging, and the difficult legacy they leave. So, I hope as we choose celebrations, we can think about that history and make choices to celebrate all of Yukon's history, to acknowledge all of

Yukon's history and find ways forward for the future that we all are really proud to be part of and really proud to celebrate.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to everyone for all your comments today on this motion. I do hope that the application for half of the funds for NGOs and other groups will be seamless and not too complicated. So, let us celebrate our unique special home — Yukon.

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 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: I think the yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 664 agreed to

Motion No. 683

Clerk: Motion No. 683, standing in the name of Ms. White.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Third Party:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to review and expand the chronic disease and disability benefits program to include more chronic conditions.

Ms. White: I was hopeful, actually — the fact we had voted in favour of two motions ahead of this one today — that we would make it a trifecta and this would be number three.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. White: Good advice from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin; maybe I should give it a try.

The real reason why I brought forward a motion about extending or reviewing the chronic conditions and disability program is that it doesn't really work for Yukoners. I know this because I get letters or e-mails or phone calls from people who aren't captured by what this program covers. The interesting thing is that writing letters on a case-by-case basis is one thing, but when you see it happen multiple times over time, you realize that it's a bigger systemic issue.

So, because it's a bigger systemic issue, my hope was that we would have a conversation here in this Assembly and then vote on the motion, which is asking that the program be reviewed so that if it was found to need expansion, we would have that ability to expand the program.

Maybe I will actually take the advice from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin today and hope that the goodwill extends from the other side. If the members of the Liberal caucus are in favour of this motion which is allowing the review of the program to see about an expansion, then I would be delighted.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am certainly not opposed to getting to a vote on this motion, but I don't think it will happen today. But it could, except that this is an important issue — an important issue that Yukoners should have full understanding of, and it's an important opportunity to make sure that some of the details with respect to this particular program are provided to Yukoners.

The driving goal of our work is to improve health care for all Yukoners. That's why we have been dedicated to the implementation of *Putting People First*, which is, of course, our road map to do better, to transition our care for Yukoners to a better place. Our government continues to explore ways to improve insured health coverage to best meet the needs of all Yukoners.

During the 2022-23 fiscal year, insured health programs supported people who were enrolled in one of our three benefit programs. There were 55 people who received benefits through the children's drug and optical program —

Speaker: Order, please.

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

Debate on Motion No. 683 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following documents were filed April 12, 2023:

35-1-145

High Country Inn Renovations, letter re (dated November 26, 2021) from Norman R. Lux, LCVM Consultants Inc., to Michael Hale, President and Chief Operating Officer, Northern Vision Development LP (Pillai)

35-1-146

Safe At Home Society Program and Implementation Plan for 4051 4th Avenue (Pillai)

35-1-147

Funding agreement between Safe at Home Society and Yukon Housing Corporation for November 1, 2021 to April 15, 2022 (Pillai)

35-1-148

Transfer payment agreement between Yukon Housing Corporation and Safe at Home Society, Housing Initiatives Fund, dated January 11, 2022 (Pillai)

35-1-149

National Housing Co-investment Fund Viability Assessment Calculator and Scoring Grid — New Construction, dated June 14, 2021 (Pillai)