



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

---

Number 147

1<sup>st</sup> Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

---

## HANSARD

Wednesday, October 25, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2023 Fall 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
<b>Hon. Ranj Pillai</b>	Porter Creek South	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
<b>Hon. Jeanie McLean</b>	Mountainview	Deputy Premier Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate
<b>Hon. Nils Clarke</b>	Riverdale North	Minister of Environment; Highways and Public Works
<b>Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee</b>	Riverdale South	Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
<b>Hon. Richard Mostyn</b>	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board
<b>Hon. John Streicker</b>	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
<b>Hon. Sandy Silver</b>	Klondike	Minister of Finance; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Wednesday, October 25, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Are there any visitors to be introduced?

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to please help me in welcoming a number of very special guests here today for the anniversary tribute to the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle. First, I would like to acknowledge Adeline Webber, Commissioner of the Yukon and founding member of the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle; Alex Oakley, Deputy Chief of the Teslin Tlingit Council; Natalie Taylor, executive director of the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle; Georgianna Low, the director of the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle; Sharon Shadow, elder director of the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle; Michelle Friesen, youth director of the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle and also a City of Whitehorse council member; Susan Power, admin and project coordinator for the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle; Emersyne Sias, cultural support youth apprentice of the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle; Jess Dorward, project manager for the Yukon Status of Women Council; Jasmin Marie, peer facilitator of the Yukon Status of Women Council; Sigourney Whipple-Grantham, project coordinator of the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle; Aura-Leigh Birss, financial administrative assistant for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate; and Lori Duncan, senior advisor on Indigenous Women's Equality for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate.

Thank you all so much for being here.

*Applause*

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, for the end-of-season *George Black* ferry and Pelly barge tribute, I have a number of people to introduce in the gallery. We have Jim Regimbal, the northern area superintendent; Scott Mueller, the eastern area superintendent; David Hutton, who is a ferry captain; Mike Dunbar, Ross River foreperson; and Heidi Bliedung, who is a Dawson resident and the spouse of Jim Regimbal.

Welcome to the Assembly.

*Applause*

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, joining us today from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Vancouver — and I'll be meeting with them tomorrow — is the director general Angel Liu; director Peter Chiou; and Sam Tsay, who is visiting from Dallas, Texas. Welcome.

We also have some documents that we will be tabling today, so we have with us, from the Yukon Heritage Resources Board, Tim Green and Red Grossinger, board members. We have the CEO of the Yukon Arts Centre, Casey Prescott. We also have Gary Njootli from Tourism and Culture, who is a Yukon — I hope that I say this right — toponymist, which I think is about naming places and is such a cool name — and if we could also welcome Heather Ashthorn, who is the executive director of Raven ReCentre. Welcome to all to the Assembly today.

*Applause*

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming one of my constituents, Peter Wojtowicz, to the gallery here today.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, today, I rise on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle on their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. For several generations, Indigenous women in Canada were left without a voice. The colonial legal system stripped us of our traditional matriarchal roles and social status and, for a long time, denied us fundamental civil and human rights. Indigenous women and girls have inherited a legacy of discrimination and we continue to suffer from the impacts.

Today, we are celebrating an organization started by and for Indigenous women that has been changing these narratives for the last 20 years. The Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, also known as "WAWC", was founded to provide all Indigenous women in Whitehorse, regardless of their origin, with a safe and culturally relevant space, programs, and supports.

The WAWC has been actively involved in advocacy efforts aimed at raising awareness about the unique challenges faced by Indigenous women in Yukon and across Canada. Over the last two decades, this organization has become the centre of an amazing community built on the circle's guiding principles of connection, growth, diversity, compassion, and equality. Their space has become one of healing, empowerment, and cultural revitalization.

Over the years, the programming and workshops have been supported by elders and traditional knowledge-keepers whose contributions must also be acknowledged. They have generously shared their wisdom, skills, and experience — helping Indigenous women reconnect with our roots and our culture.

To highlight a few relatively recent projects, *Finding Our Faces* is a 60-page book of photos, stories, and memories from the Indigenous residential school known as the Whitehorse Baptist Mission school. There are now two volumes of this book and, of course, the monument project, which honours

survivors of the Indian Mission School in Whitehorse. This monument is located at the intersection of Main and Front streets, along the river by the healing totem, which features the work of Tlingit artist Ken Anderson. I would be remiss if I did not speak about their steadfast advocacy for Yukon's missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people, which ultimately led to a whole-of-Yukon strategy that is now leading the nation.

None of this would be possible without the tireless work of many amazing, resilient Indigenous women who have been the backbone of the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle. I am looking forward to watching the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle and its community grow and continue to uplift and empower Indigenous women.

I want to hold my hands up to all of the staff and both the past and present boards of directors. Thank you so much.

*Applause*

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle as they celebrate their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The founding meeting of this incredible organization was marked 21 years ago when 11 individuals came together with a shared interest of making a difference in Whitehorse as aboriginal women.

They incorporated in the next year, in 2003, and this year marks 20 years since the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle was formally established. This organization grew over the years and has become a voice and advocate for women in the community and feet on the ground at community events, campaigns, and summits.

They work alongside other strong, local organizations in our community on different projects and collaborations. The work and direction of the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle is based on priorities identified among women in the community and helps to meet a number of needs and fill identified gaps in support. The organization puts on incredible workshops, providing an atmosphere for Indigenous women to come together to develop and share their traditional skills. These include drum-making, traditional medicine, beading, and other crafting.

Last night, I came by the open house and was so delighted to see women sitting at this big, oval table beading, sewing, sharing stories, and laughing with one another. It reminded me of my culture back in Philippines. Filipino women sit together, relax, and laugh with each other. This is how we update and connect with each other in the community. It was our social media before smartphones. Last night brought me back and I was so happy. I want to give executive director Natalie Taylor and the whole Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle team and all board members a huge shout-out for their hard work and dedication. Thank you to all those who have been a huge part of the organization over the last two decades.

Salamat po.

*Applause*

**Ms. Blake:** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to pay tribute to the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It's amazing to see the growth and direction that this organization has taken in providing support, programming, and a safe place for Indigenous women of the territory. The Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle brings together women from all walks of life to be on their board to coordinate programming, to bring forward new ideas, and to be the voice of aboriginal women throughout the Yukon.

I have taken part in a drum-making workshop that was hosted in their space. It was so inspiring to see the power of cultural programming bringing women together in a safe, trusting, respectful, supportive, and encouraging space. During the workshop, I witnessed new-found friendships being made, old friends reconnecting, and women of all ages making healthy connections with each other. This space was filled with laughter and such good energy throughout the workshop. Each day, the workshop began and ended with a circle, unifying the participants as equal learners who all had a sacred space held for them in our time together.

The Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle is active in doing the emotionally hard work of bringing forward voices on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in the Yukon. They work on collaborating with families and communities in a safe, respectful way to ensure that their services and supports can not only bring forward the lived experience of the families but can also ensure that their programming meets the needs of those who attend.

I found it so powerful to witness how this small organization has the strength and influence to bring together aboriginal women in Whitehorse from all parts of the Yukon and Canada who call Whitehorse "home" — much respect to this incredible organization for creating a safe space for women to gather from all walks of life to share their stories, participate in training and workshops, and be made to feel a part of this growing community.

Incredible things happen when women gather, and this space has shown me the power and possibilities that can flourish when Indigenous women gather to support each other and work together. Congratulations to the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle and the many women who have been and continue to be a part of this beautiful organization.

Mahsi' cho.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Order, please.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Speaker:** I would like to introduce a special guest, Alex Oakley, Deputy Chief of the Teslin Tlingit Council. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly, Alex.

*Applause*

### In recognition of *George Black* ferry and Pelly barge staff

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government of Yukon, I rise today to say thank you to the members of the public service who maintain and operate the *George Black* ferry and the Pelly barge. Thank you to our guests for making the time to be here today and for the work that you do on our ferry crossings. These crossings are essential for Yukoners, industry, and visitors from around the world.

The *George Black* ferry crosses the Yukon River to reach west Dawson and the Top of the World Highway. The Pelly barge crosses the Pelly River at Ross River to access the North Canol Road. It takes a whole crew of workers to make these crossings possible. That includes the captains, first mates, deckhands, labourers, engineers, mechanics, and many others.

In Dawson City during the operational season, the *George Black* ferry crosses the Yukon River 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This ferry is used for so many different reasons. Residents rely on the ferry for things like groceries or visits with family and friends. Miners use it to access their claims, haul goods to their site, and bring heavy equipment across the river. Tourists and travellers use it to access the Top of the World Highway, which allows them to continue into Alaska. I have heard first-hand that our crews and their orange hats are very popular with the tourists. I want to thank them for keeping people safe and sending travellers on their way with a friendly wave.

In Dawson City, the season ended on October 15 this year, one day earlier than last year. In those last days of the season, the crew had to navigate through darkness, snowfall, and icy conditions, but the crews always rise to the challenge and provide the highest quality of service.

The crews of the Pelly barge also deserve recognition. The Pelly barge is an essential link to the North Canol Road. People rely on this area for mining, hunting, tourism, and recreation. To open the North Canol Road in the early spring, our maintenance workers haul equipment using the Pelly barge. Once the North Canol Road is open, our crews maintain and run the barge for people to use all summer.

Mr. Speaker, this year we saw high water levels because of rapid snowmelt in Ross River, which made it difficult to navigate the crossing. I want to give special thanks to the crews, as they did an excellent job of dealing with conditions and ensuring that passengers remained safe.

I hope that all residents and visitors had a good experience this year and enjoyed their travels on the water. To the crews in the orange hats, I tip my metaphorical hat to you and say thank you for your efforts again this year.

*Applause*

**Mr. Hassard:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the operators of the *George Black* ferry in Dawson City and the Pelly barge in Ross River.

Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure again this season to travel on both of those vessels and certainly appreciate the professionalism of the staff on all of my trips. I would like to particularly thank the crew of the Pelly barge for going the extra

mile in August when the Ross River Dena Council was holding their general assembly on the far side of the river and the crew kept the barge running late for several days in a row. I appreciate that and thank them.

I would also like to give a special shout-out to Mike Dunbar for everything that he has done in his time as acting foreman in Ross River as well.

*Applause*

**MLA Tredger:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to all the staff who run the *George Black* ferry and the Pelly barge. These essential pieces of infrastructure don't stay afloat on their own, so thank you to all the people who keep them running — from the captains to the mechanics to the logistics folks back at the office. Your work is very appreciated, and congratulations on a successful season.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I have several returns for tabling today. First of all, tabled pursuant to section 12(3) of the *Arts Centre Act*, I have the Yukon Arts Centre Corporation's annual report for 2022.

Tabled pursuant to section 7(7) of the *Historic Resources Act*, I have the Yukon Heritage Resources Board annual report. I also have the Yukon Geographical Place Names Board annual report, and I have a document for all members of the Assembly listing ministerial statements for the 35<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling here today a document issued by the National Police Federation entitled *Smart Bail Initiatives: A Progressive Approach to Reforming Canada's Bail System*, which was issued in July 2023, as well as the press release that they provided with it entitled "National Police Federation Recommends Progressive, Data-Driven Approach to Bail Reform in Canada".

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

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill No. 29: Reprinted Act to amend the Elections Act (2023)

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the reprinted version of Bill No. 29, entitled *Act to amend the Elections Act (2023)*. The reprinted version incorporates the amendment to clause 2 agreed to by the Members' Services Board on October 20, 2023, as reported by that committee to the House yesterday and concurred in by the House yesterday. The bill also contains what I believe to be true translation into the French of the English text of the amendment to clause 2.

**Speaker:** Are there any further bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Official Opposition and the Third Party to halt efforts to gatekeep free speech by withdrawing their proposal to block the use of ministerial statements in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House wishes Ione Christensen, Yukon female trailblazer — first female Commissioner of Yukon, first female Mayor of Whitehorse, first female named Justice of the Peace for the Government of Yukon, and first female appointed judge of juvenile court, former senator, and member of both the Order of Canada and the Order of Yukon — a happy 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Official Opposition and the Third Party to take the following actions with regard to the use of ministerial statements in the Yukon Legislative Assembly:

(1) halt efforts to gatekeep free speech by the Government of Yukon;

(2) respond to ministerial statements as a way to remain accountable to Yukoners; and

(3) acknowledge that their efforts to date to control what statements the Government of Yukon can and cannot deliver is wrong.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Ministerial statements

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart for the state of our democracy. The Member for Lake Laberge has brought forward a motion that would let the Yukon Party caucus and the Yukon NDP gatekeep speech in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Ministerial statements serve an important purpose. They provide important information to Yukoners that is recorded in Hansard, serving as a historical record for future generations about the most important issues of today.

In April 2022, the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections, and Privileges reaffirmed its support for ministerial statements. Opposition parties requested that they receive a copy of ministerial statements two hours before delivery so that they would have time to write a response. This had been the practice for years, but we are happy to formalize it in the Standing Orders. After all, the opposition plays an important role in our democracy as checks and balances to the government.

Our government has used ministerial statements to provide updates to Yukoners and to the Yukon Legislative Assembly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic about vaccine availability, vaccine uptake, and safety measures. It's too bad

that the Yukon Party and NDP are working together to prevent the government's ability to provide important information to Yukoners during times of crisis.

Our government has used ministerial statements to deliver information about missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and about the search for children who disappeared after being kidnapped and sent to residential schools. It is sad that the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party will limit our ability to provide this information to Yukoners about our efforts to find out what happened to friends, family, and loved ones.

Our government has used ministerial statements to update Yukoners on actions taken to protect the environment, to limit the impacts of climate change, and to protect vulnerable wildlife. Thinking back to some of their previous statements, it is not clear where the Yukon Party stands on protecting the environment, but I expect better from the Yukon NDP.

Legislative assemblies in Alberta, Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Québec, Nunavut, New Brunswick, PEI, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador all allow for ministerial statements in their Standing Orders. In Newfoundland and Labrador, ministerial statements are seen to be so important for communicating with the public that they are posted on separate sections of the House of Assembly's website in addition to Hansard.

Mr. Speaker, I am again running short on time, but I look forward to hearing the rebuttal and how the opposition justifies their gatekeeping.

**Mr. Kent:** So, it has come to this — a ministerial statement on ministerial statements.

Mr. Speaker, this ministerial statement makes me wonder if the Premier even bothered to read the proposed new rules. Thank you to the Premier for completely justifying the position of the opposition parties. It's pretty rich for an MLA who didn't get a single vote to become the leader of his party, nor a single vote in the 2021 election to be Premier of the Yukon, to lecture this House about the state of our democracy.

During the snap election that the Liberals called in 2021, the makeup of the House changed. The Liberals lost their majority, as they were reduced to eight seats in this House, with 11 in the opposition benches — eight Yukon Party and three NDP. They also finished a distant second to the Yukon Party in the popular vote.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals do not own the Yukon Legislative Assembly. They do not get to dictate the House rules. That is the privilege of all members in this Assembly and it is done at the all-party Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. That committee made the decision by majority vote to adopt the new rules surrounding ministerial statements. The Liberals will have every opportunity to provide ministerial statements moving forward but will simply need to cooperate with others to do so.

I can say that this topic, which already has a motion scheduled for debate later this afternoon, would not be one that we, in the Official Opposition, would approve as a good use of valuable House time. The Liberals' gratuitous misuse of

ministerial statements has led us to this point and we look forward to the debate later this afternoon.

**Ms. White:** Today, I ground all of my thoughts around the finite amount of time available to us in this Chamber for the important work that gets done here; however, I am going to use some of that time right now to share my thoughts.

First, let's remember that the government sets the order of the day on all days except for one Wednesday afternoon every two weeks. Time in this Assembly is valuable. We sit in this Chamber for 60 days a year, from 1:00 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. That is 270 hours per year. If we take these hours and put them back to back, this equals 11.25 solid days a year. Honestly, it's not that long. As a comparison, it is far less than the average amount of time that an individual spends scrolling on social media in a year.

Question Period averages just over 30 minutes. The very last question from the opposition needs to start on or before 28 minutes and 30 seconds, and this works out to just about 30 hours a year. I wish this were longer.

Question Period is the only time, except for opposition Wednesdays, when the opposition controls the topic that is being discussed. During the 33<sup>rd</sup> Assembly, the Yukon Party really liked tributes. They liked tributes so much so that on Opposition debate days — which you could really call “Tribute Wednesdays” — it wasn't unusual to have tributes from government nearing double digits. On May 7, 2015, they may have set a new high-water mark with nine tributes, taking up six entire pages in Hansard. For those who didn't sit through this, it was pretty awful.

Fast-forward to the November 2016 election, which saw a change in government and the Liberals come in as a majority. There was recognition that tributes had been abused, and a decision in an all-party committee was made to limit tributes — great. We now have a maximum number of tributes and a maximum amount of time — 20 valuable minutes a day, which is still a heck of a lot of minutes. We spend nearly 20 hours a year on saying nice things about people, places, and days. It's nice, but honestly, I wish it were shorter.

Spring forward to the spring of 2017. That was the first time we saw a new kind of tribute — the ministerial statement — when the government did five ministerial statements covering a handful of topics. They were new to us. The government would send us their statements so that we would know what we were responding to. The minister first speaks for a maximum of four minutes, reading the statement we have seen. Opposition parties respond for up to four minutes, and then we get the closing four minutes from the minister. In the closing, the ministers are supposed to answer the questions that the opposition has highlighted, but we know this is seldom the case. On the contrary, this is typically where the Liberals tell either the Yukon Party or the Yukon NDP or both of us why and how we are both wrong.

Since that first fateful spring, there have been approximately 240 ministerial statements. For anyone who is curious, that's 3,840 minutes of statements — 64 hours of

statements or 2.6 entire days' worth of ministerial statements. Half of that time is used directly by the government.

In a year with 60 sitting days and out of the 270 hours available to all of us, ministerial statements take 16 hours. Keep in mind that the government decides on the topic — and over the years, there have been doozies — and often these statements are just regurgitating press releases.

I know that we have heard why these statements are so important, and at times, we would agree, but the use of ministerial statements has been abused by the Liberal government and this abuse has brought us to this point today, so much so that the very same all-party committee that addressed the issue of tributes has come forward with a recommendation to limit ministerial statements.

With glee, I look forward to seeing the use of ministerial statements being limited to important and time-sensitive topics only, and I look forward to representatives of all three parties making the decision as to if a statement comes to the floor, because if a majority of those leaders say yes, we will respond to a ministerial statement.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, again, it is a sad day for democracy. Normally, the Yukon Party criticizes us for working with the Yukon NDP to support the most vulnerable Yukoners, build affordable housing, and protect seniors and students — especially 2SLGBTQIA students. But today, we will see the unholy alliance of the Yukon Party and the NDP working together to limit Yukoners' ability to access information about their government.

The conspirators of the Yukon Party and NDP have used their majority on the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges to try to amend the Standing Orders in this House to limit an important mechanism of this Legislature to provide information to Yukoners. What, one might ask, does the Member for Whitehorse Centre have in common with the Member for Lake Laberge when it comes to perspective on policy debated in this Legislative Assembly? Before today, I would say, “Not much”, but now, we have an unstoppable desire to gatekeep information from Yukoners and cancel free speech in the Legislative Assembly.

We all expect the Yukon Party to operate in the shadows, hoping that Yukoners won't notice as they try to roll back our rights and obfuscate with the media. It is how they governed when they were in office, and today, based on those comments and the personal attacks — different face, same old. Conservatives talk a big game about not limiting free speech, but we all know that, once in power, they have always been there and revert back to their most basic instincts.

What about the NDP? Based on the Yukon NDP's willingness to work with the Yukon Party to limit Yukoners' access to information, one can only assume that they, too, revel in their newfound ability to silence speech, keep Yukoners in the dark, and limit future generations' ability to gain important information from the records of Hansard. Under new rules proposed by this unholy opposition alliance, the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party would have the ability to veto ministerial statements based on the topic alone. They aren't even interested

in hearing the information contained in the ministerial statement before making a decision to gatekeep information from Yukoners.

I hope that tomorrow we will be able to deliver a ministerial statement. We are hoping to deliver an update on the status of vaccines for COVID-19 and flu. I hope that the opposition parties will deem this to be important information for Yukoners and will find it within themselves to allow the government to communicate with Yukoners, but I wouldn't be surprised if they don't.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Whistle Bend development

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, this summer, we warned the Liberal government that the early release of lots in phase 6B of Whistle Bend was going to cause issues. In the lottery package for the lots, there was a specific note that said that while the lots would not be accessible immediately upon purchase, final construction work would be complete in the spring or early summer. Well, unfortunately, that didn't happen. Yukoners who purchased these lots were forced to wait well into the fall before they had access to the lots in phase 6B. This means that they effectively lost the building season.

Why did the government rush these lots out in the spring rather than wait for them to be finished?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The reason that we will always work to try to get lots out as quickly as we can is because we are working to get them in the hands of Yukoners. There is lots of work that those Yukoners can do while the last work is being done to complete the lots — work such as getting development permits in place and doing their planning. That is the reason why we went forward. We deemed that it would be best to get them into the hands of Yukoners.

What I can say is that, once again, all the lots were taken up. We did let Yukoners know that there was this challenge. The last word I had is that the lots have now been released — I think the last ones were happening just in the last couple of weeks — so it is about trying to make sure that we get lots into the hands of Yukoners as quickly as possible.

**Ms. Clarke:** The decision to rush these lots out in the spring before they were even completed has had real implications for Yukoners and the homebuilders who bought them. First of all, they were told that the lots would be ready in the spring or early summer, which proved to be incorrect. Next, these lots have been accruing interest since they were sold, despite the fact that the owners couldn't even access them.

It makes no sense for a home builder to pay interest on a lot that they haven't been able to access for almost half a year. This is a cost that will simply be passed on and will only serve to make the houses built on these lots even more expensive.

Why is the minister making housing more expensive by allowing interest to accrue on inaccessible lots?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, the Land Management branch is working with those lot owners — or the ones who have come through on the lottery — and we are

dedicated to increasing the development of housing for Yukoners. We recently revised our land title transfer process to change the stage at which title can be transferred. You will remember those conversations that we had here in the House this past spring where we worked with the City of Whitehorse on that.

There is an issue around the interest. When I dug into it with the department, it is there in a legislated capacity, so I couldn't just automatically refund the money, but I have talked to the department and have asked them to find a solution for those lot owners. I hope that is being communicated as well to the owners, but the department is working to find a solution to make sure that we are not charging interest for the time in which those lot owners couldn't get on their lot to start developing.

**Ms. Clarke:** Another implication of the Liberals' mishandling of these lots is that the people who bought these lots have effectively lost the building season. They didn't get access to the lots that they purchased and paid for in the spring until this fall when it was too late to get any work done.

Would the government reconsider the three-year building commitment that these lots have imposed on them since they have already lost a building season?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Yes, I have asked the department to look into that as well. By the way, these are not political decisions; these are things that were happening with the department and they were happening because of delays in construction. I will take the responsibility for it, but for the members opposite to suggest that it has to do with us as Liberals is kind of like saying that those folks don't know what they are doing. Honestly, they are doing really good work; we have pressed them to work hard to try to make sure that we get as many lots into Yukoners' hands as quickly as possible and we will do our best to make sure that those lot owners are made whole. We always strive to make sure that they can get to lot development.

### Question re: Parent advisory committee

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, last week, I asked the Minister of Education about the establishment of a permanent parent advisory committee following the Ombudsman's report on sexual abuse at Hidden Valley Elementary School. In response, the minister felt that the question was — quote: "... 'I got you' kind of politics..."

However, I have to remind the minister that she herself announced this on CBC Yukon during a September 8 interview. The minister told the host that she — quote: "... asked the department to make a permanent parent advisory committee..."", later saying that it would be for all schools, not just Hidden Valley.

Last week, the minister indicated that this would be one committee for all of the Yukon. However, many questions remain.

When did she direct the department to establish a permanent parent advisory committee for all schools? Have the terms of reference been developed and are they available publicly?



**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I am happy to rise again to speak about the work that we've done — to begin with, to go back in time a bit to talk about the safer schools action plan, which resulted from the review as a result of incidents that happened at Hidden Valley Elementary School. Part of the recommendations that were given through that review — there were seven — resulted in a 23-action-item plan that we've recently completed.

One of the actions was to establish a parent advisory committee for Hidden Valley. I have worked closely with that committee over the period of time in implementing the action plan and felt it to be very useful. I have had discussions with them about the need to continue as we continue to dig into other safer schools actions. I have advised, of course, our department, through the advisory committee, to begin the work on establishing such a committee that would —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Kent:** My questions were: When did she direct the department to establish the committee for all schools? Have those terms of reference been developed? Are they available publicly? None of these were answered by the minister.

So, a number of school committees have been asking us about this new committee that the minister announced in early September. As far as we can tell, there has been no consultation about it with school councils that we have heard directly from. When can education partners — including school boards and councils — expect to be consulted on the establishment of the permanent parent advisory committee?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I think that it is important to build context around the questions that are being asked and where this advisory committee came from, why it was established, and how it has served Yukoners. I believe that it is a great committee that has certainly provided the Department of Education and myself good guidance as we have worked to implement the safer schools action plan. Under the incidents that happened at Hidden Valley, there were a number of other reports — one of them from the Child and Youth Advocate; another one that we recently received is from the Ombudsman, and we expect to receive a second report with possible recommendations from the Ombudsman's office.

Again, we intend to continue to work with the parent advisory committee. Last week, I had a great meeting with the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees. One of the topics that we discussed was the establishment of a permanent parent advisory committee.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, my questions are about this new distinct committee. The minister made clear in her announcement on CBC Yukon in early September that there would be a new, distinct committee created for all Yukon schools. There has been no public announcement since then. Last week, the minister defiantly said in this House: "... it is completely within my authority to establish such a committee..." Even though she believes she can unilaterally establish this committee, we would have hoped that consultation with education partners would take place beforehand, and obviously, that didn't happen.

So, when will the committee or committees be set up? How many members will be on it, and how will they be chosen to be representative of all of the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, again, this is, I think, a very important group of folks who have come together. These are Yukoners, parents who have come together to advise the Department of Education and myself on matters that have resulted from the safer schools action plan.

This has been a very useful body. I intend to establish a permanent parent advisory committee. The Department of Education is, of course, working with folks to establish terms of reference that will include other members in the Yukon and will continue to work with, as we discussed, the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees last week. We still have time, of course, to work with our partners around any advice that they may have with such a committee.

It is within my authority to establish such a committee to advise on areas that are of concern to Yukoners, and of course, the safer schools action plan is one of those areas.

#### **Question re: Minto mine reclamation**

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the minister gave a ministerial statement on how well this government is doing when it comes to handling the fiasco that is Minto mine. He said — and I quote: "We are actively advancing reclamation and closure planning and execution. Contractors on-site are in regular communication with Energy, Mines and Resources senior staff to inform effective, timely decision-making."

What the minister failed to mention is that, in the short time since the Liberals put JDS Mining in charge of the site, they have already been under investigation for violating their water licence. In August, a Yukon government inspector found that the contractor was dredging the Yukon River without authorization, without notifying the Water Board, and without implementing any monitoring or mitigation. This seems like it might have been worth mentioning in his statement yesterday.

Does the minister believe that water licence violations are consistent with the environmental protections that he promised Yukoners at the Minto site?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, JDS is not working at the Minto site. We did utilize a contract with them right away, and I want to thank them for their work. They came in — they were part of that ability to move in within 24 hours and keep that mine site safe, keep us treating water, making sure that we protected the environment, and I thank them for that work. As I said in the response giving answers to the questions that were given in the ministerial statement yesterday, I talked about Boreal Engineering. They are the group that is doing the work now.

There are companies from time to time throughout the Yukon that do make mistakes, and that's why we have compliance monitoring and inspections. We work to hold all companies to account to make sure that we protect our environment. I will stand up and reiterate that I believe that the work at Minto has been going very well, and I would like to thank the crews who have been doing that work to protect our environment.

**Ms. White:** So, the Liberals talk a lot about how they want to do mining differently. When Minto collapsed, they promised that this time it would be okay, that this time they would protect the environment.

In a May press release, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said — and I quote: “We are working closely with the contractor and the Selkirk First Nation to make sure the environment is protected at all times.” But it wasn’t, and this is getting harder and harder to believe. Instead, this government put a contractor in charge of the site, and within months, the company violated three conditions of their water licence.

So, why should Yukoners trust the Liberals when they have failed over and over again to protect the environment?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very difficult question in the sense that I try to understand — if the NDP were in power, would they hire no companies? Or would they just say, “Let’s pull away from all of this”?

Part of it for me, when I think about copper — we need it, as well, to deal with climate change. This is one of those challenges. Yes, I think we need mining. I said yesterday that mining is critical. It’s critical that we get it right.

Will there be mistakes made? Yes. What I look for is to see how the system corrects those mistakes as quickly as possible. That’s exactly the same work that I used to do as an engineer. You don’t say that you are never going to have mistakes. What you ask is, “How will we deal with them?”

I will go back and look at this file to see exactly how quickly the issues were dealt with.

What I can say is that, overall — and I visited the Minto site just in the last couple of weeks to see how the work was going. It is going well. It is moving in the right direction. I believe strongly that we have taken the right decisions, learning from Wolverine that we should go to reclamation and closure.

**Ms. White:** So, this mistake matters, and it matters even more because it was a salmon-bearing river. The unauthorized dredging happened during the salmon run when it is critically important that sediment isn’t going into the river. The collapse of the salmon run is a devastating tragedy that has deeply damaged cultural practices, ways of life, and ecosystems throughout the Yukon, and here we have a government patting itself on the back for hiring a company that dredged the Yukon River in the middle of the salmon run.

How can the minister claim that the management of Minto mine is successful when protections for salmon have already been violated?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** You know, Mr. Speaker, I hope that I am not patting myself on the back. I will say that this file has caused me a lot of time agonizing about how to make sure to protect the Yukon environment, and to do this in a way where we have learned from past missteps, including Faro and Wolverine. I sat down with experts to talk through what the situation was and how to make it better. I have been in contact with Selkirk First Nation often. I have directed my department to be talking with them all the time around the work that is happening.

Will there be mistakes that are made? Yes. Will we correct them? Yes. What I think the test is, is how quickly we can

correct those mistakes and how quickly we can limit them, but I don’t want to stand up here and suggest that there never will be mistakes. I just don’t believe in that. I know that some politicians will say it, but I won’t.

So, from my perspective, this site is moving in the right direction. I have worked very closely with Selkirk First Nation, and I appreciate their advice, and I have been taking it.

#### Question re: Public Accounts

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Finance issued a statement indicating that he intended to violate section 8 of the *Financial Administration Act* regarding Public Accounts. The Public Accounts of Yukon is one of the most important ways that Yukoners can hold the government accountable for their spending.

So, can the minister confirm that he intends to violate the Yukon’s most important financial accountability law?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** The 2022-23 Public Accounts will include the adoption of five new public sector accounting standards, which will have a significant impact on the presentation of and the values of the government’s financial statements. So, due to those complexities and the magnitude of the impact of these new standards, the preparation and the review of the revised and restated statements will take longer than usual, which may result in the government tabling its financial statements later than its legislated deadline of October 31.

It is not the first time in Yukon history that this has happened. The Department of Finance is working diligently with the Office of the Auditor General of Canada to complete the audit this year with the level of accuracy that our Public Accounts traditionally provide.

**Mr. Hassard:** On October 19, the Auditor General of Canada wrote to the Legislative Assembly to indicate that, as of that time, they still had not received the final consolidated financial statements from the Government of Yukon. They further stated that delays from the Yukon Housing Corporation were also creating issues.

Section 8(2) of the *Financial Administration Act* says that the Minister of Finance shall table the Public Accounts on or before October 31. If this does not happen, who should Yukoners hold accountable for this violation of Yukon’s most important financial accountability and transparency law?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Finance, this is my ultimate responsibility, absolutely. Tabling of the Public Accounts after the legislative deadline does not reflect an issue with financial statements themselves, nor does it imply a problem with the government’s finances.

Should it be necessary to table the Public Accounts after the deadline, it would be the result of these new added complexities. Working with the federal government with 3280, specifically — one of these new requirements — is very difficult for a government — and this has happened right across Canada — to give numbers that we didn’t, decades ago, keep. So, there has been a lot of back-and-forth with the Office of the Auditor General and us to make sure that we get these in as accurately as possible and as quickly as possible.

**Question re: School busing**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear that the shortage of school bus drivers is causing issues for many families. Last week, my colleague asked what the government is doing to help the busing contractor recruit school bus drivers. This week, we learned that the school bus company has recruited some new drivers, but they are facing significant delays in accessing the driver's test from the Department of Highways and Public Works. Apparently, the earliest these new school bus drivers can do their test is in early December.

Why isn't the Yukon government fast-tracking drivers' tests for school bus drivers so that we can limit the disruption for families who have been impacted by the constant disruptions of bus routes?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education provides school busing, city transit passes, and transportation subsidies to families to support students. Transportation is a very big part of a child's education. We thank you for the acknowledgement of the work that has been done. Today, in this question, it points to the good work that is happening between the Department of Education and the contractor, Standard Bus.

We have worked hard to support them in terms of mitigating some of the issues that they have had. I think that I would like to just point out that there are so many complexities, really, with providing services in the City of Whitehorse, for instance. There are 43 routes, and there have been a lot of cancellations and we know that. Much of it has been due to a shortage of bus drivers and we are working hard to assist and mitigate this issue.

**Question re: Bail system reform**

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I asked the Minister of Justice questions about her government's response to recommendations by the union representing RCMP members, the National Police Federation, about reforming the bail system. She didn't answer any of my questions and it sounded like she hadn't read the NPF recommendations issued months ago, even though every single one of them requires action by territorial governments. The current bail system isn't working. Too often, repeat offenders are quickly released back on the streets where they reoffend. We know that RCMP members are frustrated. The president of their union called it a "catch-and-release system."

The National Police Federation said that all levels of government, especially provinces and territories, need to work together to move toward a 21<sup>st</sup> century, evidence-based, intelligence-driven bail system.

Can the Minister of Justice tell us what, if anything, this government is doing in response to the NPF recommendations aimed at fixing the bail system and keeping repeat offenders off the streets?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am happy to speak again to Yukoners about this important issue. Again, to put it in context, the form of the bail system is part of the Canadian *Criminal Code*, which, of course, requires cooperation and collaboration with the Government of Canada. I said yesterday, and I am

happy to say again, that in March 2023, meetings with other federal, provincial, and territorial ministers of justice and public safety occurred to specifically discuss the bail system issues and, in particular, its treatment of repeat violent offenders.

The Government of Canada agreed to take action as soon as possible to strengthen public safety through amendments to the *Criminal Code*. On May 16, 2023, in fact, they tabled Bill C-48, which is currently working its way through Parliament. This continues to be a very important issue. It was spoken about recently at the federal-provincial-territorial ministers meeting.

**Mr. Cathers:** Again, the minister didn't answer my question. Urgent actions by the Trudeau Liberals to fix the problems that they caused with Bill C-75 are needed, but the NPF, which represents RCMP members, in its recommendations entitled *Smart Bail Initiatives*, was very clear that provinces and territories also need to act.

Yesterday, the Minister of Justice seemed completely unaware that the NPF urged every province and territory to take action, and concerningly, she seemed not to have read the recommendations issued months ago. The NPF said that "... all governments, in particular provincial and territorial governments, must be willing to commit to smarter bail reforms that go beyond legislative measures. Simple policy reforms and better resourcing could have a significant impact..."

They issued recommendations for smart bail initiatives, all of which involve provincial and territorial governments. Those include more resources to collection and sharing of data and improving community bail enforcement monitoring. The question is: What, if anything, is the Liberal government doing in response to the NPF's calls for action to fix the catch-and-release bail system?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty sure that the member opposite doesn't have any idea of what I'm aware of, and I would appreciate it if they wouldn't continue to make such statements in the Legislative Assembly. I am responding to the questions asked. I look forward to working with our new federal counterpart, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada Arif Virani, along with other provinces and territories, to explore both legislative and non-legislative tools to better address this issue.

We have had participation in every one of the meetings that involved other ministers of justice and ministers of public safety across the country for the purposes of discussing this issue and the recommendations that have been made by several organizations, going forward, and how to best address them.

**Mr. Cathers:** Five questions — no answers from the minister.

The National Police Federation said, "The current 'catch and release' system and lack of data-informed processes, supports and monitoring compromises public safety across Canada" and "Without serious, wholesale reform jurisdictions across Canada are at risk of a bail system that is broken beyond repair."

They specifically call on provinces and territories to take action to implement smart bail initiatives. All seven calls to action require action by this government. The Premier signed a joint letter by premiers to the Prime Minister about what that

government needs to do, but the NPF is clear that provinces and territories also need to take action to fix the system.

The minister seems out of touch again and is clearly not on top of this important file, so I will give her another chance. Will the Minister of Justice commit to acting on all seven NPF recommendations to fix the catch-and-release bail system, and will she provide us with a timeline for when her government will act on those recommendations and implement them?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** What I am hearing from the member opposite is, first of all: What are we doing in the sense of taking this on to make the changes that this country needs and that this territory needs? First, I want to reflect on the fact that the National Police Federation, in the initial meeting that I had with them — it was the first time that we ever had leaders from across the country sit in a meeting and actually meet with them and go through and listen to them. That was the first thing.

The second thing we did was in July of this year — we sat down again with the NPF. In the first meeting, we didn't have representation from the RCMP. We did have other forces from across the country in those meetings. I stood strongly with premiers from across the country, putting together our strategy to ensure that the federal government put the proper legislation on the floor of Parliament as quickly as possible.

We acted, they listened, and we are now urging them to get that through as quickly as possible. So, yes, there has been leadership and action on this file. Our Department of Justice, again, will be working on a number of the interdependencies with that particular work. The member opposite has not given any of the credit due to the premiers, as we have stood up and have had those changes in action. That is the leadership that the country needs and that the territory needs.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**Speaker:** Motions respecting committee reports.

### MOTIONS RESPECTING COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 6

**Clerk:** Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 6, standing in the name of Mr. Cathers.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge:

THAT the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges' eighth report, presented to the House on October 4, 2023, be concurred in; and

THAT Standing Order 11(3.3), regarding requiring House Leader agreement for the delivery of ministerial statements, be added to the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, as recommended by the committee.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, this motion is to concur with a report from an all-party committee, the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. The majority of MLAs on that all-party committee voted in favour of a change to the

Standing Orders that the Liberals disagree with, and they are trying to delay and put up roadblocks to prevent it being enacted.

I believe that this is the first time in the history of the Yukon Legislative Assembly that any government of any political stripe has refused to bring forward a motion of concurrence to accept the recommendation of an all-party committee, so we decided to bring forward the motion asking this House to accept the majority decision made by the all-party committee ourselves.

The change itself is intended to prevent the Liberal government from wasting the House's time with ministerial statements that re-announce press releases or are otherwise empty and lacking in substance. Our motion today would not prevent the government from making ministerial statements; it would simply require them to cooperate just a little and get the agreement of one other House Leader that the statement was indeed a new policy and worthy of the House's time to debate.

Ministerial statements are supposed to be about new and significant policy announcements by government. Instead, this Liberal government repeatedly uses them for re-announcements of press releases and other fluffy statements that, in our view, are an abuse of ministerial statements. Also, as noted by the Leader of the Third Party earlier today, the closing statement is intended to be about the minister answering questions posed by those responding to the ministerial statement, but instead, it is regularly used — almost exclusively used — to take shots at either the Yukon Party, the NDP, or both.

These ministerial statements burn up hours of time, subtracting from the valuable and very limited amount of time we have to ask the government questions about issues that matter to Yukoners and bring forward issues on behalf of our constituents and other Yukoners.

I will give an example of how this Liberal government has abused ministerial statements and the consequences of that. During one Spring Sitting, the Liberals were very reluctant to allow much debate on the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education budgets. In that Sitting, the hours spent on ministerial statements, many of which were pointless re-announcements, added up to wasting over a full day of the 30-day Spring Sitting.

In contrast, Mr. Speaker, during that Sitting, there was less time spent debating the Department of Health and Social Services budget of \$443 million, which was almost 30 percent of that fiscal year's budget for the entire territorial government — but again, there was less time spent debating the Department of Health and Social Services budget than was spent on ministerial statements. More time was also spent on ministerial statements in that Sitting than on debating the Department of Education budget of \$214.5 million. The combined total of the budget for those departments was 45.8 percent of the government's total spending, and those departments touch the lives of thousands of Yukoners every single day.

Asking questions about Health and Social Services and Education is far more important to Yukoners than listening to re-announcements of government press releases. So, this is why

we are proposing a change to the Standing Orders — which, I remind you, the majority of MLAs on an all-party committee have already voted in favour of doing.

The Legislative Assembly sits for a limited number of days, which has not increased in over 20 years. During that time, devolution led to the Yukon government having more responsibility and power. The population has grown, and the budget of the territory has roughly tripled, but the time available for MLAs to debate the budget and ask questions on behalf of Yukoners has not increased.

It is also worth noting that the use of ministerial statements on a daily basis was started by the Liberals. During any month of any Sitting under the Liberal government, they have literally done more ministerial statements than the Yukon Party government did in 14 years in office. We felt ministerial statements weren't a good use of the House's time when we were in government, and that feeling has only grown much, much stronger now. Most people are likely familiar with the saying, "This meeting could have been replaced with an e-mail." Well, just like that, most ministerial statements by the Liberals could have been replaced with a press release and, in most cases, probably already were a press release.

The Liberal Cabinet Office put out an over-the-top statement about this motion recently. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I didn't think that the Liberals could find a way to top that, but today, the Premier's ministerial statement on ministerial statements was a jumping-the-shark moment for his Liberal government. Some of his statements were outlandish and bizarre, and I will resist the temptation to respond in detail, because I suspect that I would give in to the temptation to break Standing Order 19(h). I am also not going to spend much time dignifying those over-the-top statements, or press releases, with a response, other than pointing out that the government has many, many tools at its disposal if they want to share a message with Yukoners.

If the government issues a press release or holds a press conference, media cover it. The government also has social media that it controls and its own website to post any news about any topic whenever they want. They also have a large advertising budget at their disposal, which they can increase at any time if they wish, and of course, if you add up the number of government communications staff, between the Cabinet Communications office and departments, there are more communications staff in government than there are journalists in the territory trying to cover government.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal assertion that the opposition could somehow censor government communication is nonsensical and completely ridiculous.

The Premier has also tried to paint a picture that ministerial statements are somehow vital. The notion that some Yukoners don't listen to the news or read it but somehow depend on hearing ministerial statements as their source of information about government is frankly laughable. I am pretty sure that there is no one in the Yukon sitting at home every day eagerly awaiting the moment when they can turn the dial to 93.5 FM and hear the ministerial statement of the day.

As noted earlier, if the Liberals do come forward with a proposed ministerial statement that has substance and is worthy of debate, we will happily agree to scheduling it for debate. Even if our caucus doesn't agree with scheduling one for debate, all the Liberal minority government needs to do is to get the NDP to agree that the statement is worth the House's time.

At its heart, this is just about the Liberal government giving up their total control of this part of the House's time and actually having to cooperate a little bit with someone else.

The Liberals have already threatened to spend a lot of time arguing against this motion. I urge them to avoid filibustering this motion, allow it to get to a vote in a timely manner, and allow this House to move on to other motions scheduled for today, like the Yukon Party motion about cancelling the government's plan to close rural garbage facilities affecting people, including my constituents in the Braeburn area, as well as two NDP motions which are listed for later today.

In closing, to recap what this is about, if passed, this change to the Standing Orders would simply require the Liberal minority government to get the agreement of one other House Leader that a proposed ministerial statement was indeed a new policy and worthy of the House's time to debate it. All it would require is just a little cooperation by this Liberal minority government.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, we have five standing committees. On each one of those standing committees, we have: two members of the Liberal Party, the government; two members of the Yukon Party, the Official Opposition; and one member of the NDP. On all but one of those committees, the government member chairs, so you effectively have one Liberal member, two Yukon Party members, and one NDP member who are voting. In other words, the opposition has three votes on those committees, and the government has one vote. That's fine; that's how it works.

There is something that I disagree with the member opposite on: It isn't the decision of those committees; those committees make recommendations back to the Assembly. This is the place that is the highest level — I mean, technically, this is the government. What we use the word "government" to mean is often the executive branch; this is the legislative branch and we have the judicial branch, but it is the Legislature that takes the decisions.

We have an example of that from yesterday with the Members' Services Board bringing the motion, doing the Committee work on Bill No. 29, and we worked to bring that back. In fact, I asked the indulgence of this House to get to that debate without one day's notice, and away we went.

The Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges — I am going to start calling it "SCREP" — is the committee where we make up the rules for how we conduct ourselves in this House. It is pretty important, and I think it's a privilege. I happen to be one of the members, and I think it's a very important committee. I thank the committee members for all of the work that has been happening on SCREP. It has been a lot of work lately.

I went back to try to look at how that standing committee, which deals with rules about how we govern ourselves, has done since, say, 2000. Under the Duncan government, that committee met nine times; under Premier Fentie's two successive governments, it met five times — a lot less, no reports; and under the Pasloski government, it met once — no reports, and it had as its members the current Leader of the Yukon Party and the Member for Lake Laberge, who is standing up and putting forward this motion today.

Under us, in the last two Assemblies — under the Liberals — the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges — SCREP — has met 19 times over the past seven years, and we have issued 10 reports. Those reports come here to the Assembly, where we vote on them and where we talk about the rules. I think it is worth noting that, under the confidence and supply agreement, we have had much more movement with SCREP. I think it's pretty impressive, but today is a very different subject, and I am going to talk about today in a bit, but let's talk for a moment about what changes we have brought forward over those 10 reports.

First of all, we limited the overall time of tributes to 20 minutes. We established regular sitting dates that were going to happen in the first week of October and the first week of March every year, taking away this challenge of the Legislative Assembly and the challenge of the public service in trying to plan. We worked to consolidate introductions so that they didn't go on too long, so that time was managed better, and we introduced a new rule that allowed the Speaker to acknowledge the First Nation traditional territory at the beginning of each Sitting.

Since the confidence and supply agreement, we have also added more to our rules. We brought in limiting the length of individual tributes to three and a half minutes; requiring ministerial statements to be shared two hours ahead — we were already doing that as a practice, but we made it a rule that you had to have the ministerial statement in the hands of the opposition parties by 11:00 a.m. or else we would not deliver a ministerial statement; inclusive forms of address; limiting Committee of the Whole speeches to foster more questions and answers — that is one of the biggest ones. We went from 20 minutes per question and/or answer to eight minutes. Now, the opening remarks from the minister and the critic from the opposition parties could take 20 minutes, but it was really about limiting it, because what we saw debate happening in previous Legislative Assemblies — we would see that it was used to take up time rather than to answer the questions, so that was what we did with that. Finally, we also brought in the clause 76, often called the “guillotine clause”, which was only going to be for budget bills, and we shortened the length of bells calling for division to record votes so that we would get that done faster.

Today, we are debating ministerial statements, and this motion that we have in front of us is completely different from all of this other work, and I'll talk about it in a moment, but I would say that, before today, I would categorize the improvements that happened under us, as a Liberal government, in conjunction with the confidence and supply agreement made through SCREP, as being about two things,

really: increasing the efficiency of the House, trying to streamline our time so that we can have more time to debate budgets and legislation; and being about fairness and inclusion — for example, about fixed Sitting dates, about inclusive forms of address, et cetera.

On all of those debates that we brought in, of those 10 reports where we brought in the changes to the rules of this House — how we govern ourselves and how we conduct ourselves — we have had healthy debate, and before today, we have reached agreement across all parties. Today, we do not have that. Why is today so different? What we are debating is whether or not the opposition should be able to “obstruct” ministerial statements. That is not my word; I am borrowing that word from Floyd McCormick.

I listened to the Member for Lake Laberge give his opening address to this motion, and I have heard him, so many times, reference Dr. McCormick in this House — quote him back. In fact, when I look back through the past several years here in the Assembly, I found dozens of times where the member opposite quoted — and not just the Member for Lake Laberge, but the Leader of the Yukon Party, the House Leader of the Yukon Party, the past Leader of the Yukon Party, all quoting Dr. McCormick — and, today, Dr. McCormick put out a social media post and referred to it as “obstruction”. That is how he was talking about it yesterday.

I think that it is important to note this: That, as the opposition appoint themselves as gatekeepers for information being shared with Yukoners — to put it plainly, and — okay, that's fine; the members opposite laugh. I am disheartened by this motion today. They think that it is a laughing matter; I do not. Today's motion is disheartening, and I am concerned for the erosion of our democracy — and again, the members laugh.

Before I get to why, let me give you some background on ministerial statements to build on what the Member for Lake Laberge has said. They were introduced into Canadian Parliament roughly 50 years ago, in 1975. By the time we got to responsible government here, in 1979, they were already part of our Yukon Daily Routine. So, they have been part of the Assembly all along, up until now, when they are about to change.

They are a brief statement from a minister — four minutes is what you are given. Each opposition party gets four minutes to respond; then the minister rises again to sum up and answer the questions. I disagree with the member in what he has said about the purpose of the ministerial statements. This language was put into our Standing Orders in 2001. They are — and I quote now: “... an announcement or statement on government policy or a matter of public interest.”

There is no discussion about what the reply is when the minister gets up. It doesn't say that the minister is required to answer questions. It just says — quoting again: “... Cabinet Commissioner may then give a reply of not more than four minutes.”

So, the Member for Lake Laberge is just adding in his perspectives and suggesting that those are the rules. It's not — and those rules have been in place since 2001. I want to just go there for a moment, too. It was interesting to me, because as a

member of the standing committee, the Clerks provide us with lots of background information. One of the things that they gave us was tables showing ministerial statements and when they have been used. In the late 1990s, under the Penikett and the McDonald governments, ministerial statements averaged more than one a day, and they were longer. That's what led to the debate at the time about limiting them to one a day and limiting them to four minutes per statement. The early 2000s is when that rule came into place.

Under the Duncan government, they were less than one a day. Under the Fentie government, there were a few statements. As the member opposite notes, under the Pasloski government, they only gave one statement over their five years. By the way, that one statement that they gave was on mental wellness, but the day they gave the statement — when I looked it up — the Yukon Party failed to let the opposition MLAs know that they were going to give that statement, so it had to come back the next day. They failed to share the statement with the members opposite, which was the practice. So, what happened that day is the ministerial statement went over two days.

The Member for Lake Laberge seems proud of the fact that his government chose not to do ministerial statements, chose not to talk to Yukoners, chose not to comment on matters of government policy and public interest. That's fine; that is their choice. What is in this motion today is whether the government requires the approval of the opposition party, or parties, in order to bring forward a ministerial statement.

By the way, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, the Leader of the NDP, when she was talking about ministerial statements, she did a lot of math to say how much time it takes up. We were told that, by taking a look at the average, it is not 60 minutes a day. That is what it can be, but what it is, is between 10 and 11 minutes a day. Okay, it still takes time — I acknowledge that — it takes time to share this information with Yukoners. As I have said, we have always had the practice of sharing that statement with the opposition parties at 11 a.m., but we made that a rule that it was a requirement.

After the 2016 election under us, as the Liberals, we went back to using ministerial statements on most days. We let House Leaders know what topic is coming, and we share the statement two hours ahead, which is now a rule of the Standing Orders. So, let's get to the why. Why do the opposition parties want to give themselves the ability to gatekeep the government or to obstruct Cabinet? Yes, that is me, again, quoting Floyd McCormick.

The Member for Lake Laberge said that this is a waste of time, and frankly, it was, for me, the toughest comment he said in his opening remarks. I think of the things that we do in this House as important. I think that the topics that we put in front of people, whether that be the sexual orientation and gender identity conversation that we had last week, whether it is the convention centre from this week, whether it is the Minto mine statement that I gave yesterday — these are all very important topics, and I don't belittle the topics that the members opposite choose to bring up during Question Period. I am surprised that the member opposite calls them a waste of time.

Ministerial statements come in the Daily Routine just ahead of Question Period. Does that make a difference? Absolutely. The Daily Routine is the one hour in this House when the cameras are on. It is the one hour when media are attending in person, so it is the time when we see the most attention on the House, and it also sees the most grandstanding in the House. When I compare Committee of the Whole, I think about the time we are in right now, in the Orders of the Day. Yesterday, we were in Committee of the Whole for Tourism and Culture. Opposition members rose roughly 30 times and asked questions. I rose roughly 30 times and supplied answers.

You know what? I will check with my colleagues, but I thought it was a healthy exchange of information. It certainly was much more respectful than what I experience — or what we all experience — here during the hour of the Daily Routine — not during Tributes, because that is when we have guests here in the Assembly, but when it comes to Question Period and ministerial statements. The Member for Lake Laberge talked about the Premier taking shots at the opposition. Does he really think that the opposition doesn't take shots at the government during those same statements during Question Period? I don't think that our House needs to be less respectful during the Daily Routine; I just think that it is.

By the way, I will say for the record that it is my experience that our Canadian legislative assemblies are more respectful than the legislative assemblies in other countries, and from my experience, the Yukon Legislative Assembly is more respectful than provincial assemblies. And again, from my experience, the 34<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> Assemblies, under which we have been government, have been more respectful than how this House was under the Yukon Party. I hope that the next Assembly is more respectful again, but regardless of the grandstanding during the Daily Routine, it remains the time when members of this Assembly speak most directly to Yukoners — and that makes this motion fundamentally wrong for the opposition to gatekeep the government from speaking to Yukoners.

Take yesterday as an example. I spoke about the Minto reclamation and closure. During that, I heard from my critic that we had given a media briefing recently and that we had briefed the opposition members recently. Well, I know we did that, because I asked the department to do that, and still, I had new information, and I had made a commitment that I would update the House and Yukoners on developments. That is why I brought that statement forward. Would the members opposite have decided: No, not of interest?

Then the Member for Lake Laberge raised this point: Well, we have lots of opportunities where we could make statements. We could talk to Yukoners in different ways. We could use social media; we could use news releases, as he suggested; we could make outward-facing statements, not ministerial statements; we could have community meetings; we could have media scrums; we could have debate in this House, but the House Daily Routine is a formal moment. It is recorded in Hansard. Media are present, and we ask the opposition to respond. They get the opportunity to put their perspectives on the floor and make them formally there. It is a balanced part of

our Daily Routine. So, let me use an analogy to explain how I can so easily understand that this feels wrong.

Do we get questions from the opposition? Yes, all the time. If I bump into members in the hall, we will have a conversation. Will I get questions? Yes. If I happen to be talking with them in their offices or if they are in my office, do I get questions? Yes. They send me notes, passed through pages, with questions. I get texts, e-mails, formal letters, which we casework. We get written questions submitted in the House.

With all of these ways that opposition members can ask questions, do we still need Question Period? My answer is: Of course we do. Still, I think that it should be more respectful, as I was saying earlier, but I absolutely think that Question Period is essential. I would never think to limit Question Period. I would never think to gatekeep it. I would never think to say that opposition members need to vet their questions through us first before we decide whether they are valid questions to be asked and posed in front of the House.

Imagine how egregious it would be — how much of a disservice to Yukoners — if a majority government decided to use their majority to reset the rules of this House to reduce Question Period by 10 minutes or to give the government the power to vet questions ahead of time. Imagine how that would be seen as completely inappropriate. In that analogy, just turn it around now — that is what we're debating today. The opposition, as the majority, is seeking to change the rules of the House to cut ministerial statements, to gatekeep the information being shared with Yukoners, and this is a glaring overstep.

I agree that ministerial statements are hard work. Departments put in a lot of effort distilling critical information down to a brief message. Ministers review them, edit them down, and discuss key elements with their deputy ministers and colleagues. Opposition parties also work hard to pull their criticism and questions together ahead of the House each day. I agree that it's hard work, but, of course, that is the job of MLAs. We should be working hard, not changing the rules to gatekeep government.

The opposition has said that we repeat information and that there are too many ministerial statements. Yesterday, in my statement on Minto, I already mentioned that we had recently provided some technical information, but I had new information. Even with that new information, my main message yesterday was about reclamation and closure. I used those terms in my ministerial statement a dozen times, and it still didn't get picked up in the media as reclamation and closure. It just reminds me that you really need to emphasize your message often to help get those messages clearly out to Yukoners.

One of the ways that I think about it is that I understand that there are seven members of Cabinet — seven ministers. However, there are 18 different departments — ministries, if you like. My guess is that I am in touch with these departments — through briefings, submissions, caseworks, texts, e-mails, bills, calls with deputy ministers, and community events — almost every day, and every day there is something noteworthy that would be important for Yukoners to hear about — and to hear our perspectives as well as the perspectives of the opposition.

I am not suggesting that we do more than one ministerial statement a day, but I am suggesting that we have to make decisions about which things we will share with Yukoners, because there is only one a day. We have 18 departments, and I bet you that every one of them would have something new to say to Yukoners each and every day. There is always more to share, not less.

Earlier today, I tabled a list of the ministerial statements that we have delivered since the 2021 election. That list is impressive in its scope and relevance for the Yukon. I shared a similar list to the members of the standing committee, and I asked them which ones they would take away. They declined to respond.

But I ask members of this House to take the same exercise. I've tabled it here. You can get the list. It's not hard to do if you go through Hansard. Which three out of four statements would the opposition reject? Or which one out of four would they allow Yukoners to hear about? That's what it would take to get it to one ministerial statement a week.

I just want to talk a little bit about time in this House, because the Member for Lake Laberge referred to ministerial statements as a waste of time. First of all, he talked about this as filibustering even before I had begun to talk. I had told him, before I even got here, that I intended to debate this hard and that I intended to raise serious questions and concerns about the motion that he was bringing. I made no qualms about it. I said the same things to the standing committee. I debated against this vigorously. I disagree with it completely.

But let's talk about time in the House for a moment. This takes up roughly 10 minutes a day for every day that there is a ministerial statement. Ten minutes a day is what the average is — 10 to 11 minutes a day. That's what the Clerks gave us as the analysis over time.

We have many things here in this House. I am going to reference one again. This is one that I have often heard about — that we don't have members' statements in this House. The reason I think about this is because instead what happens here is that mostly opposition members but all members of the Assembly put forward motions all the time.

If you look at our Assembly and try to see what's different with it compared to other assemblies, one of the main things is that we have over 700 motions on our Order Paper. No place has that except here. One of the reasons is that we don't have members' statements. This is something that we could discuss at SCREP.

We have already done several things that have reduced the amount of time. We have changed how the bells work in the House so that we can get to votes more quickly. We have changed — in particular, in Committee of the Whole — how we've reduced —

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

#### Point of order

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

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is, for at least the third if not the fourth time, repeating the same list of things done by SCREP. Talking



about the bells of this House is hardly a good use of this House's time. I would urge him to actually follow the Standing Orders.

I can hear the former Premier talking off-mic. It's Standing Order 19(b), which has been part of the Standing Orders all of the time that he has been a member.

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite referred to ministerial statements as a waste of time and my debate is talking about the use of time in the House.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** There is no point of order. It is a dispute among members.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What are the ways in which we are trying? These are changes that we have done through SCREP that have been there in order to improve the time of this House.

One of the things that has not been mentioned at all is the fact that, right now, as a minority government, every second Wednesday is always opposition Wednesday, but what it normally is when there is a majority government is an opportunity for government members who are not members of the Cabinet to bring forward motions. That takes one day every two weeks or one of every eight days. That has gone back into debate of the budget, so we have more time for debating budgets and bills right now, not less. The most critical one that we've done is where we try to answer questions directly in Committee of the Whole and allow for there to be more iteration on questions and answers.

I have done statistical analysis on that, too, to try to see how many times members have risen in this House and opposition members have had the opportunity to rise, and it is well different than under the 33<sup>rd</sup> Assembly when they were in government.

The final point that I'll make about this question about time is that if the Yukon Party really cared about this in principle, why didn't they do it when they were in government? Why didn't they take a look at all of the ways that you could improve time through the Standing Committee of Rules, Elections and Privileges? I know that they didn't use ministerial statements — I am well aware of that — but there is a whole suite of ways. For example, the Leader of the NDP pointed out how members of the opposition just brought in tribute after tribute, especially on opposition Wednesdays. I looked at May 7, 2015. I only saw seven tributes that day; I didn't see nine, but that's fine. What I am trying to say is that the opposition members are talking about time management in the House but not displaying how they would try to improve that time management themselves when they had the opportunity.

I will also talk about when they have been in opposition. We brought forward a motion around whether or not there was a state of emergency during the pandemic in 2020, I think it was — I'll have to look it up to be sure — and the members of the Yukon Party said that it had been undemocratic for us as a

government to declare a state of emergency, so we put a motion to the floor to put their money where their mouth is and they filibustered that motion three times, taking pretty much three full days of debate over five weeks, putting politics ahead of the pandemic. That's their use of time. And then they complained because there wasn't enough time to debate Health and Social Services, but they had filibustered for three days. My perspective is that this is doing Yukoners a disservice.

The last thing that I want to talk about is why we are doing this on a Wednesday. The opposition parties have a majority of the House. I think that it is clear from the ministerial statement — I haven't heard from the NDP yet on this, but I am guessing that their perspective is that there should be the ability to gatekeep the ministerial statements. Let's see — the Premier indicated that tomorrow our intention was to bring a ministerial statement about vaccinations. Let's see — the opposition says: That's no good. Sorry, we don't need to hear about that; you can put that in a press release — no need to talk to Yukoners during the Daily Routine. Let's just see whether they will say: No, we don't want to hear that information.

I wonder how soon it will be before they say: No, we don't want to hear it in a ministerial statement, but then I am still going to give you a question in Question Period. If I was a Yukoner listening, I would want to know what it is that the opposition doesn't want to hear about. I just don't think that there should be the vetting of whether or not this is valid government business.

Also, by the way, the Leader of the NDP talked about how it is government that sets the Orders of the Day. That is true; that is true. We are the ones who put forward the legislation, and then all of us in this House debate this legislation to decide whether or not to pass it, because it is so critical for Yukoners — budgets, bills, and things that change the acts that govern us. However, the lion's share of that is not about whether we are going to debate this bill or that bill; it is just when they all come up. Each time we put up — let's say that it is Committee of the Whole for our budget and we bring in a department. It is not the government that sits there and says that you should ask this question or, no, you can't ask that question.

In fact, one of the things that I said yesterday when I had the Department of Tourism and Culture officials in with me — we were just talking ahead of time and we were sitting down, and the Assistant Deputy Minister of Corporate Services was talking about various budget questions, and I said: "Please, I don't think that they are going to ask budget questions." But they did — I did get one budget question, but it is about questions that the opposition feels are important to understand how the government is making decisions, and that is important to Yukoners.

I believe in this process. I believe that there should be the ability for each party to bring forward the things that they think are important. I just think that this is some way to provide an override so that if the members opposite don't want to do the hard work and respond to a ministerial statement, that they'll just say: No, thanks — and I don't think that's right for Yukoners. The reason that we are doing this debate on opposition Wednesdays is because we do not believe in this

amendment. We think that it's wrong, and we're going to say so.

The member talked about what would be better to do today. I said to them that we're not bringing this motion; we don't think it should be brought. The member opposite felt that it was an important motion to bring and that it was important to pass through this House to change rules that had been standing here for 50 years, more or less, and using these tools about how we talk to Yukoners and starting to whittle them away because they don't like what the government talks about. It feels completely wrong to me.

I am going to take my seat, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate hearing this debate. I disagree with the premise of the motion in front of us, and I am definitely voting against it. I will, of course, respect the will of this House, but I will continue to seek ways to talk to Yukoners and not let opposition parties gatekeep.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to speak to the Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 6, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge. I will also be speaking in opposition to this motion.

Oral ministerial statements are made in the House before the Orders of the Day. Their purpose is to announce new policies or provide specific information about current or urgent political matters, although the actual wording in Standing Order 11(4) is: "On the Ministerial Statement, as listed in Standing Order 11(2), a member who has been designated as a Cabinet Commissioner may make an announcement or statement related to his or her Commission." It just says: "... may make an announcement or statement...", so there isn't much in the way of modifiers, but I certainly heard from the member opposite as to what he believes the modifier ought to be, which could have been some of the work that SCREP could have done but chose not to.

This is a well-established custom in many Canadian legislatures. Through my comments, I will be quoting some portions of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, edited by Mark Bosc and André Gagnon, which provides some valuable guidance.

Parliamentary procedures have been described as a means of reaching decisions on when and how power shall be used. Parliamentary procedures have also been described as a combination of two elements: the traditional and the democratic. Put differently, while parliamentary procedures, based on the Westminster model, stem from an understanding and acceptance of how things have been done in the past, they are also embedded in a culture that evolves along democratic principles.

In Bosc and Gagnon, they quote John George Bourinot, an authority on parliamentary procedure and Clerk of the Canadian House of Commons from 1880 to 1902. In his 1892 book *Parliamentary Procedure and Practice in the Dominion of Canada*, Bourinot is quoted: "The great principles that lie at the basis of English parliamentary law have ... been always kept steadily in view by the Canadian legislatures; these are: To protect the minority and restrain the improvidence and tyranny

of the majority, to secure the transaction of public business in a decent and orderly manner, to enable every member to express his opinions within those limits necessary to preserve decorum and to prevent an unnecessary waste of time, to give full opportunity for the consideration of every measure, and to prevent any legislative action being taken heedlessly and upon sudden impulse."

I would just emphasize again in that quote: "... to protect the minority and restrain the improvidence and tyranny of the majority..."

Also, in Bosc and Gagnon, Erskine May, British constitutional theorist and Clerk of the United Kingdom House of Commons, posits that some of the forms and rules of practice were no doubt invented in Parliament itself but also have been traced to analogies in the medieval courts of law and the councils of the church. Some rule and practices have remained virtually unchanged for the last 400 years. The origins of some of the earliest practices of parliamentary procedure are "lost in history". Once again, that is the overarching theme of restraint and respect for long-standing traditions.

If passed, the motion before the House today will remove an important element of the government's accountability to Yukoners. This motion is a de facto veto over a sitting government with respect to a core component of the Order Paper.

As we have heard from the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, in the last government — and in prior governments, as well — there was a succession of majority governments — the Yukon Liberal Party had a majority and by extension enjoyed a majority on the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, also known as "SCREP". The government and other majority governments in the Yukon before that could have moved to seriously curtail Question Period, Tributes, the conduct in Committee of the Whole, and, at its most extreme, substantially alter all Standing Orders in a manner that would limit the right of speech and would, in fact, be a tyranny of the majority, which is strongly discouraged, hopefully for fairly self-evident reasons.

I would argue that there are elements in the motion today that bely a lack of recognition of how the erosion of democracy occurs. Perhaps many do, but in any event, this is how it can happen — slowly but surely.

The opposition is deciding today to effectively eliminate a critical piece of the democratic discourse in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. Erosion of accountability is a real thing. Erosion of democracy is a real thing. We are, of course, extremely fortunate to have a well-functioning and healthy democracy and for Canada itself to be part of the very few countries — of the 200-plus countries that are in the United Nations — with full-fledged democracy. That number is somewhere, I think, between 25 and 30 or so. We are fortunate to gather here with substantial rights of free speech in order to represent our ridings and our constituents.

The opposition in this motion is basically saying that whatever the Yukon government proposes to communicate to Yukoners, we will let you know if we want to hear about it. This is, of course, not new for the Yukon Party, as

accountability is evidently at times not of value or importance to them. When the Yukon Party was in power, ministerial statements existed as an instrument but were inexplicably basically not used at all. As the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes indicated, the Yukon Party got around, over a two-day period, to deliver one ministerial statement between 2011 and 2016 in the 33<sup>rd</sup> Legislature.

When a government provides a ministerial statement, the ministers are putting themselves out there and are open to full critique and criticism, as the government is highlighting an item of importance to Yukoners, and, of course, the opposition can and does respond. Of course, I will acknowledge that it is work for the government, and it requires, as well, a certain amount of effort for the opposition to respond, yet it is a vital component of political discourse.

This motion today is at least a potential complete veto from the opposition. However, Mr. Speaker, the role of the opposition is to keep the government accountable to Yukoners and to question and oppose, as they deem appropriate, on behalf of Yukoners. The opposition treat the ministerial statement as if it is a superfluous process. However, the UK-based Hansard Society is clear: Question Period and ministerial statements are actually regularly singled out as a procedure that the government should give more time to by curtailing or limiting other less effective procedures, such as other debate.

The Member for Lake Laberge has, of course, been a member of this Legislature for a significant period. In fact, he will soon become the longest serving MLA in the so-called “modern era”, and yet, today, I put forward that he is misguidedly arguing that what he is proposing will improve democratic debate in this House.

Ministerial accountability is a fundamental principle. The government is accountable through its ministers to this Legislative Assembly. I would reinforce the message that the opposition is also accountable to Yukoners. What the members on the other side of the House are suggesting today is also relinquishing their collective accountability for their side of the equation. The opposition is trading their responsibility and accountability toward Yukoners with this intemperate power move. This procedural change, if voted in favour by a majority of members today, will curtail the opportunity for valuable additional scrutiny and transparency on a wide variety of important territorial issues.

Over the last few sessions, I have had the honour of delivering ministerial statements on but not limited to: the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement*; energy-efficient retrofits; the Carmacks bypass; Xplornet; COP27; the Erik Nielsen International Airport work; the Nisutlin Bay bridge; work on the north Klondike Highway; the *Yukon Parks Strategy*; solar energy at remote highway camps; the COVID-19 verification app; the Dempster fibre project; a ban on single-use shopping bags and eventually paper bags; and others.

Even if I could credibly characterize most of these items as good news stories, ministers still metaphorically stick their necks out and are vulnerable, as they should be, to the scrutiny of the opposition members. Importantly, many of the responses that I have received from the opposition on ministerial

statements were appropriately targeted and challenging, and that is part of ministerial accountability. The opposition can try to assure us and all Yukoners that all they want is: Trust us; if it is important, we will allow the ministerial statement. The opposition will claim that: We are wise, prudent, and appropriate gatekeepers. However, with this motion, the opposition is eroding parliamentary discourse in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

The political landscape in the Yukon has changed and is not static. It will, of course, continue to change to reflect the changes in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, I will quote once more from the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, as it relates to Standing Orders: “Although the means by which the House reviews the *Standing Orders* may vary, the *Standing Orders* may be amended only by a decision of the House. Such a decision is arrived at either as a result of a broad consensus leading to a unanimous or near-unanimous vote, or by a simple majority vote on a motion moved by any Member of the House ... Since 1867, there have been occasions when controversial proposals...” — perhaps such as this one — “... have led to lengthy debates in which the government has used its majority to amend the *Standing Orders*. On many occasions, however, procedural changes have been the result of a broad consensus among Members of all parties and have been readily adopted without debate.”

“Broad consensus” and “adopted without debate” — this is not what is occurring today, but it arguably should be the norm.

We all know that when the Yukon Party was on this side of the House, they were often remiss and lacking on measures of accountability. As indicated, between 2011 and 2016 — one ministerial statement, no media scrums, virtually no legislative returns, and lacking accountability and transparency.

Again, a veto for the opposition over a sitting rule in government with ministerial accountabilities to all Yukoners, in my view, is a mistake.

Once again, I will refer to an excerpt from Bosc and Gagnon that refers to an ancient document, *De Republica Anglorum: The Manner of Government or Policy of the Realm of England, 1583* was compiled by the honourable man Thomas Smith, Doctor of Civil Laws, knight and principal secretary unto the two most worthy princes: King Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth. This book came out in 1583 and it contains an impressive list of procedural rules and practices that, today, after more than 450 years, have barely changed — but apparently, the Member for Lake Laberge knows best.

We all well know Dr. Floyd McCormick, who is the retired Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, and he has provided opinions that I will provide some quotes from. Dr. McCormick has clearly indicated on his social media account that this motion is just a bad idea. He takes a trip down memory lane. I’ll start with: “... during the 29<sup>th</sup> Assembly (1996-2000) that these issues resulted in recurring points of order ...” — with respect to ministerial statements. “There were no time limits on [ministerial statements] and there might be two or three

[ministerial statements] on a sitting day. There were disputes over whether the content of a statement was within the rules.

“At the time the Standing Orders said a [ministerial statement] was to be ‘a short factual statement of government policy.’ The Assembly had also concurred in the 2<sup>nd</sup> report of the SCREP of the 24<sup>th</sup> Assembly which said a [ministerial statement] was to ‘to be made only on subjects of significance and primarily for the purposes of announcing new government policies.’ These disputes gave rise to numerous points of order over the years. In ruling on these points of order Speakers explained the dilemma they had been placed in due to the vague wording of the rules. They could only rule on the orderliness of a [ministerial statement] once the minister had delivered the entire statement. If the [ministerial statement] was disorderly the damage would already have been done.” Further: “Speakers urged members to revise the rules to make them clear and less likely to need an intervention from the Chair. These disputes continued into the 30<sup>th</sup> Legislature Assembly ... On October 25, 2001, the Assembly...” — in his words, “finally” — “... changed Standing Order 11(3). The rule change broadened the definition of a [ministerial statement] to ‘an announcement of statement on government policy or a matter of public interest.’ It also set time limits (four minutes) on the [ministerial statements], opposition responses, and the govt reply, and limited the govt to one [ministerial statement] per sitting day.”

Dr. McCormick continues: “That is the situation that has prevailed. As the historical review shows the Assembly has already addressed [ministerial statement] issues dealing with content and time consumption. Over time it reached a workable, if imperfect, solution. [Ministerial statements] aren’t broken and don’t need to be fixed.” Further and importantly, the quote is: “There is a difference between holding the govt accountable and obstructing govt. Responding to a [ministerial statement] is accountability. Preventing the govt from giving a [ministerial statement] is obstruction. Members are rightly concerned about using the Assembly’s limited sitting time more efficiently. But giving the opposition some control over what statements the govt can and cannot deliver is the wrong way to do this. [Ministerial statements] are a way of getting govt statements (and opposition responses) on the House record, even if they have previously been made public.”

The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes provided that guidance as well: “If members believe that it is not a good use of the House’s time, they can reduce the time limits or get rid of members’ statements entirely...”

I will conclude my remarks with a wise and prescient quote from 2007 by Peter Milliken, who was the Speaker of the Canadian House of Commons for a decade, a significant portion of which he presided over a minority federal Parliament. He was very clear: “... neither the political realities of the moment nor the sheer force of numbers should force us to set aside the values inherent in the parliamentary conventions and procedures by which we govern our deliberations.”

Once again and to conclude, it is about restraint and respect for long-held values and parliamentary traditions.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** This is an interesting motion to be speaking to this afternoon and I appreciate the comments from all colleagues on both sides of the Legislative Assembly.

My experience with ministerial statements generally falls into two different categories: my experience as an opposition member, about which colleagues know. I was the only current Yukon Liberal member to have been a member of the opposition, head of the government, and Premier and leader of the party.

I will start with the former, the opposition days. That was a shorter experience, as my colleague from beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes spoke to. It is shorter because the former Yukon Party government used ministerial statements extremely sparingly. In fact, the one time when I was sitting in opposition was basically the only time in a five-year period, from 2011 to 2016, that the Yukon Party used that mechanism.

On that day, the only day, it was curious, for sure. On May 5, 2016, the Minister of Health and Social Services of the day, Mike Nixon, rose to give a ministerial statement on their government’s newly released mental wellness strategy, entitled *Forward Together*. This was an interesting topic to be bringing forth as a ministerial statement, given that it took the Yukon Party over a year to produce a wellness strategy, yet the report didn’t seem to point to anything tangible. As an opposition MLA, I had tabled a motion calling on the government to produce a mental health strategy, which every MLA supported when it came to a vote, so I was disappointed when the Yukon Party’s mental wellness report turned out to be a far cry from the expectations that all members of the Assembly had by unanimously supporting the call for action.

The reason why I bring up the ministerial statement, however, is not because of the missed opportunity as a policy item, but rather, given its uniqueness — and I’m not even referencing the fact that it was the first ministerial statement from the Yukon Party that they gave or the first time that they bothered to update Yukoners with a tool that they had at their disposal as a government — I bring it up because the one time that it was used, it was awkward at best and failed procedurally to be open and transparent. Yukoners who look through Hansard would notice that this ministerial statement spanned two days. It took two days because, after Minister Nixon gave his initial statement, our former NDP colleague Jan Stick rose on a point of order to address that the opposition parties — as is very much the custom and very much the approach of all House Leaders in the Yukon Legislative Assembly — were not informed by the government that a ministerial statement was to be even given that day.

As I was the then-Leader of the Third Party, I supported then-MLA Jan Stick in the instance that the Yukon Party at the time had an obligation to inform opposition parties that a ministerial statement was being given. This is a general expectation of opposition parties and is important for them so that they can appropriately prepare for their informed responses to the government ministerial statements. Because of the confusion in real time around whether the opposition had been appropriately informed about ministerial statements of the day, the Speaker postponed the statement and gave a ruling at the

end of the day that the government had disregarded the general approach on how ministerial statements are organized and that they would give it another try the following day. So, the next day, on May 9, the New Democratic Party and I, as the Third Party, gave our responses to the Yukon Party's long-awaited mental wellness strategy ministerial statement, and once the government gave their final interjection, the whole clumsy and bumpy situation kind of came to an end.

Unsurprisingly, the Yukon Party didn't bring forth any more ministerial statements in the 33<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Assembly. That was the first and only in their roughly five years of that 33<sup>rd</sup> Assembly. It was the last one that they ever gave. In fact, if you look at Hansard, there are more references of ministerial statements by opposition members during the entire 33<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Assembly because we put forth notices of motions calling on the government to do a ministerial statement on one or several different types of issues than there were actual ministerial statements — so, more requests from the opposition for ministerial statements in that incarnation of the Legislative Assembly than actual statements.

When we had the opportunity to form government in 2016, we changed that. We changed a lot of things that I am very proud of as far as openness and transparency in the Legislative Assembly — one of which was the overpoliticization of tributes. That was the way that the Yukon Party basically did the equivalent of a ministerial statement. They would talk about the money that they would assess to certain things in their statements. We have had members in the Legislative Assembly today talk about their strategy of using up time in the Legislative Assembly with tributes based upon the day of the week — I won't get into that — but that was changed. We changed that so that the tributes were no longer politically motivated. We committed to open and transparent government. We demonstrated that by regularly having scrums after Question Period. Some folks might not remember that, but to this day, after Question Period, whoever the media wants, whichever minister they want to respond to questions, they get. This was not the approach of the Yukon Party.

So, again, no ministerial statements to inform, no regularly scheduled ministers available to the fourth estate, no Yukon Forum — another place where there should be dialogue and where you are going to be forced, I guess, or directed toward conversations that you might not readily like to have, but we believe that it is extremely important for all parties to be able to answer all questions.

Making our ministers' briefing notes accessible to the opposition and to the media — another thing that we did. Our colleagues in the opposition sometimes quip that they have obtained confidential briefing notes, although we made the changes to ATIPP, the rules, to make sure that these notes are accessible to the members opposite. That was our point; that was our intention. I would have loved to have had the same luxury when I was in opposition; I didn't.

I would very often give my Question Period questions to the ministers. Very often, I would give my questions for Question Period to the ministers before Question Period. To me, I thought that if I did, then I would have a better opportunity

to actually get to those briefing notes, because we didn't have the ATIPP act so that I could access those briefing notes. If they were ready and they could thumb to those pages in time, then at least I would get an account of what the departments' and the ministers' official responses were at the time.

Part of being open and transparent government is about letting Members of the Legislative Assembly keep the government to account. In these examples that I'm talking about, you can't just look at one thing, like the fact that Leader of the Third Party said that they don't like how the Liberals use these ministerial statements. It shouldn't be about how we use them; it should be the process that allows debate and transparency.

So, again, to go from an opposition time where there was no debate in the Yukon Forum, no debate with the ministers and the media, and there were no ministerial statements, we believe that this an opportunity for all of us to have a conversation about something that maybe some political parties might not want to talk about.

It was interesting listening in the news lately about Alberta's attempt to start down the road of taking what they consider from a particular report to be their fair share of the CPP. It was an opportunity for the federal Prime Minister to write a letter, which was very interesting. I can't recall any other time when I saw a Prime Minister writing an open letter like that to a premier. It was also interesting because lacking any comment on that tough topic was the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, Pierre Poilievre. Again, to his credit, he did finally come out and make a statement on that and said he doesn't agree as well. Again, this is an example of — you're in Question Period, you're in the regular debate, and there will be topics that opposition don't want to talk about, just like there are going to be issues that the government does not want to talk about. Why limit either side of those? Imagine a Members' Services Board coming together to talk about how a government should have access to all questions before Question Period and deciding whether or not these questions are worthy of the floor of the Legislative Assembly — that's utterly ridiculous, as I think we could all agree.

As a former opposition MLA, I know the importance of ministerial statements. My colleagues here on the government side know that time in opposition was very important to me. I lived it, being in the very difficult spot in the House of being the Third Party of one. So, opposition having the tools to keep government to account is important to me, and I don't just mean in this iteration of the Legislative Assembly. We shouldn't make decisions in the Legislative Assembly based on the personalities of the people in the seats. We heard today in the ministerial statement: We don't like how the Liberals use these ministerial statements. It should be more about what this House represents as far as openness and transparency moving forward.

Think about a situation where you have political parties in the opposition who may want to block the party of the day from saying something extremely important to Yukoners. We have heard the opposition talk about how that is what press releases are for. I completely disagree with that statement. The Hansard is the ultimate conversation, the ultimate record of public

opinion, long past newspapers — all due respect to the media, all due respect to our communications departments of all three parties. It is the Hansard — it is the debate in here that is extremely important.

This is why we, when we formed the government, took the ministerial statement so seriously, because it's an opportunity not just to hear from the government but also the opposition on maybe topics that are being avoided by opposition.

As a minister, a former Premier, an MLA, and frankly as a Yukoner, I think it is extremely important that we ensure that there is an opportunity to hear from the Yukon Party, the New Democrats, and the Liberals on all issues. We may not all agree with our opposition colleagues on issues; that is kind of why we are in different parties. I may have concerns about their responses; they might have concerns about ours. We will talk about how we all use our time. I would urge people to look back over debate and see how many dollars were debated in our five years compared to theirs and how we use our time accordingly. I would stand by our record in that particular case compared to the Yukon Party, but again, this is just my opinion — a statistically relevant opinion, but at the same time, this is my opinion.

Again, getting our opinions into the record on all topics — that is what this is all about — and that is what makes democracy, as imperfect as it is, an incredibly desirable system. So, when the opposition gets these opportunities to respond to ministerial statements and tell Yukoners where they feel the government has missed the mark or what ideas they would pursue instead, I think that is an extremely interesting opportunity, one that is given to them through other avenues — these ministerial statements.

I know that, as an opposition MLA, I would have very much appreciated the opportunity for more ministerial statements. That is why we urged, through motions, for the members opposite to give these statements, because we wanted to hear their opinions on particular topics. It's a shame — I think it was a missed opportunity for the members opposite in the House and for Yukoners in general.

Now, this is unfortunately shortsighted by our current opposition to get rid of these ministerial statements, again, because: We don't like the cut of the jib of the party that is in; we don't like the way they use it.

Again, that is very troubling, because this is a decision not just for us, but this will move forward — well, unless a majority government of another ilk comes in and decides that: Well, now that we are a majority government, we will change that rule.

That's the part that kind of stuck in my craw a bit: We don't like how you use them; therefore, we are going to use our majority on the Members' Services Board to stop you from using them.

That's really interesting. I think about some of the first ministerial statements that I gave as the Premier, and I wonder whether opposition parties would have deemed them to be acceptable. I think back to the time when we were in the midst of a pandemic, and I think: Wow, imagine if we had — or just imagine if there was, in the future, another pandemic where you have two opposition parties that are completely against the

health and safety measures that a chief medical officer of health is giving, and they have decided to not ask any questions in Question Period about it, but you need to, in the official record of the Legislative Assembly, have a conversation and talk about the importance of lifesaving vaccines, for example. Imagine that type of fictitious scenario where both opposition parties are extremely against that. They could just block by using their majority in a Members' Services Board connotation.

I must have struck a nerve, because now the opposition is speaking off-mic quite a bit. To my point, we shouldn't be making decisions based upon whether we like each other or each others' approaches to things here in the Legislative Assembly. We should be making it based upon what it means to Yukoners, what it means to debate, and what it means to the future of the Yukon. That's more important, I think, than: Well, you kind of annoyed us, so we're not into this.

I will say that, as well, I know how valuable time is in the morning, as an opposition member. I know how difficult it is to be given something and say that you need to talk on this now — especially when you're in the Third Party and you are only one person and your staff is very, very limited. I didn't have CASA support; I just had my budgetary allotment at that time. That would be difficult, but even in that scenario, I wouldn't want to block the government's ability to have a ministerial statement. I wouldn't even have thought of blocking that.

I think back to the updates on the financial advisory panel that we put in, which were extremely important and extremely well-debated by the opposition, from their political perspectives — upgrades on the territorial government's performance plans and progress reports, economic prosperity, the future of the Yukon, the sustainability of our future. There is just so much to it — updates on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which is a critically important issue to this current government. All three parties all agree in this particular representation of the Legislative Assembly, but what would happen if two opposition parties didn't? They would mute the minority government of the day's ability to talk about something as important as the protection of our caribou.

Again, I wonder which of these ministerial statements that we did in the past wouldn't have been up to snuff, according to the opposition. I find myself agreeing with former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly Floyd McCormick, that it's "obstructing the government" and "responding to a [ministerial statement] is accountability". I completely agree with that. It's a shame that the opposition doesn't and that they don't want to pursue that accountability the way that our Standing Orders have reasonably allowed for decades.

I'm going to wrap up here, Mr. Speaker, as I do want to hear the opinions of everybody in the Legislative Assembly, but again, I go back to the days of COVID-19 and how important those ministerial statements were, and I urge the opposition to think past the annoyance of having to prepare a ministerial statement response and look to the importance of all topics at all points, being able, as a political party, to represent the government when they have the honour of being in government, whether they are in a minority situation or a majority situation. We hear the Yukon Party, for the first time,

talking about the popular vote, which is always great. We hear what you're saying. It's by a thin margin that you're even in here, but we are. This is the government — minority or majority — this is the government — the Yukon Liberal Party — and our ability to continue to have the debate I don't think should be doctored by the opposition, because they don't like the way we do these statements.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for having the time here. I will not be supporting this motion, and I hope that our colleagues in the opposition do not vote to remove an important opportunity for clear, researched information-sharing that allows Yukoners to hear from all parties on all sides in a time when information is being more and more precarious and far less balanced and fact-checked around the world and that institutions and the avenues that they provide should be valued and safeguarded, not thrown away.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to join my colleagues in response to the Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 6 on ministerial statements. I, of course, strongly disagree with the Member for Lake Laberge that statements by ministers are a waste of this House's time. I think that we all worked hard to gain these important roles in the territory, and it's not something that I take lightly on any day in this House.

How we share valuable information — such as what our schools are doing to increase safety or how Yukoners can be better informed for the well-being of themselves or their families — truly matters. We are fortunate to be able to share information with Yukoners through ministerial statements, where we hear from all three parties on the record on topics that are important to Yukoners.

As stated in the Yukon Legislative Assembly Standing Order 11(3), "... a Minister may make an announcement or statement on government policy or a matter of public interest." As several of my colleagues have noted, these statements are crucial for keeping the public informed, encouraging healthy debate in this democratic institution, and will serve as a valuable resource for future generations, providing insights into the current economic, social, and political landscapes. I am sure that folks will go back. There is a debate going on right now about the sexual orientation and gender identity policy throughout this nation. If they go to our Hansard, they are going to be able to clearly find out what folks were thinking at the time, because some of those thoughts and questions are now part of public record.

In a recent issue of the *Yukon News*, I noted that the Member for Lake Laberge and the Member for Whitehorse Centre essentially said that these statements were a waste of time. I truly hope that members don't think highlighting the importance of inclusivity in schools is a waste of the electorate's time or that announcing important funding streams to address gender-based violence isn't important to Yukoners.

This Liberal government certainly doesn't see highlighting and informing Yukoners of important information and debating important social and economic issues as a waste of time.

My colleague earlier raised a very good point in the House about — when the House is sitting, there is a great focus, of

course, on the Legislative Assembly. We have media specifically assigned to cover the Legislative Assembly, and the first hour and a bit is probably the most important time to really capture what is happening. There is very little following Committee of the Whole and other debates that happen later in the day. This time in the House is incredibly important. These ministerial statements are often reported on. It is such a great opportunity to bring noteworthy news to Yukoners. I mean, that is the point of a ministerial statement on a policy or on an announcement.

In April 2017, I was honoured to deliver the first ministerial statement from this Liberal government. It was an opportunity to be vulnerable, I guess, with Yukoners and show empathy for a grieving community. Through this statement, I highlighted that the government was working with our partners and Yukon First Nations to provide support to a grieving community. Both opposition parties thanked me for bringing the statement forward and took time to acknowledge the recent deaths in the community. In reflecting back to that time, I really recognize the value of bringing forward such a statement and there was a great appreciation, as well, from the community — that it was important enough for legislators to speak about it in the House and give a response. I think that, to me, is crucial in that this is Yukon's House of Assembly, and we have an opportunity every day to represent Yukoners — and through ministerial statements, instead of looking at them as an annoyance, or something that is not valuable, or a waste of time, as noted by the Member for Lake Laberge, they should look at it as an opportunity to inform Yukoners and to add your voice.

This Liberal government has delivered hundreds of ministerial statements on a wide range of topics, including health care services, economic funding opportunities, vaccine rollouts, music festivals, partnerships with Yukon First Nations, and the list goes on. I am proud of all of the ministerial statements that our government has delivered, and they were all completely aligned with Orders of this House — in making an announcement or a statement on government policy or a matter of public interest.

Opposition members now want to change the Standing Orders because they feel these statements and the information contained are not in the best interests of Yukoners — I'm not sure. We are only hearing from the Member for Lake Laberge from the opposition so far, so I guess he is the voice of the Yukon Party.

I ask: Do opposition members feel the statements I delivered on this government's commitments to the Yukon First Nation School Board to be irrelevant or not important to Yukoners? It was important for our government to inform Yukoners how we were progressing toward a school system where Yukon First Nations had more authority over the delivery of the school curriculum. From that statement — and I quote: "Our Yukon Liberal government is committed to the sustainability and success of the First Nation School Board. Together with our partners, we are writing a new chapter on education in the Yukon and building a brighter future for the territory. We are committed to ensuring that all Yukon school authorities have the resources that they need to deliver high

quality and culturally appropriate education. We are pleased to have reached an agreement with the board of trustees on a new 15-month funding agreement for the First Nation School Board to receive more than \$35 million. This funding will support the First Nation School Board to implement their vision for education in the schools that they operate and their unique needs as an Indigenous school authority.”

For the record and in reply to my statement, the Yukon Party Official Opposition and Member for Copperbelt South brought forward questions about the finances of the agreement and how this funding compared to the students not in the First Nation School Board schools — and I quote: “How does this funding model compare to funding for the Yukon Francophone School Board and its schools?” “When it comes to operation and maintenance, can the minister tell us if an equitable amount of per student funding will be provided to those schools that have decided to continue under the existing school governance model?” This is a great example of how elected members of this House use the ministerial statements to inform Yukoners and state their position for the public record.

In the case of our Liberal government, we spoke to reconciliation and empowerment of Yukon First Nations in delivering the school curriculum, in contrast to the Yukon Party, which brought forward their conservative policy questions about the cost of reconciliation and how this reconciliation was going to impact students not attending First Nation School Board schools. These are very important statements for Yukoners to hear. I can assure you that it was very interesting for the trustees and those who have been involved in the establishment of the First Nation School Board to hear this directly. They were very interested in hearing that.

Another ministerial statement that I recently made was on the sexual orientation and gender identity policy recently enacted by this Liberal government. I won’t go into the quotes within this statement because it was last week, and I hope that folks truly remember the very conservative questions that were brought forward. As part of the opposition, the Yukon Party again brought forward their conservative positions through the Member for Copperbelt South and brought forward several questions. In my statement, I focused on the rights of children, their safety, and the importance of a complete community supporting students. I feel that, in their reply, the Yukon Party really focused on the appropriateness of parents being informed of their child’s choice. These are important defining statements and questions from both this Liberal government and the opposition Yukon Party that Yukoners need to hear and appreciate.

Opposition parties bring forward questions that they feel are important to their constituents, and we, as government, bring forward ministerial statements that we feel are important to all Yukoners. Opposition parties now want to pre-approve and decide whether ministerial statements are brought forward by the government or even maybe eliminate them altogether. This type of opposition gatekeeping is a very scary concept.

Are opposition members now preparing to bring forward their questions to government members in advance of Question Period? This currently happens with ministerial statements

where opposition members receive the ministerial statement by 11:00 a.m. on the day that the statement is to be delivered in order to provide opposition members with an opportunity to deliver an informed response.

It’s not lost on Yukoners that opposition members are in favour of eliminating the amount of information that the government can share with Yukoners.

This Liberal government believes in the freedom to inform Yukoners with information that is important to them and in support of their well-being and quality of life. We believe that sharing information with citizens fosters transparency in government operations. Yukoners have a right to know how their government functions, how decisions are made, and how taxpayers’ funds are allocated. Transparency builds trust and confidence in our institutions.

I find it very rude that the Member for Lake Laberge is whistling right now while I am talking. This may be a joke to folks in the Legislative Assembly. It certainly is not to me. Again, as I started, we all worked very hard to gain these seats to represent Yukoners. It is our job to be in this Legislative Assembly. I have listened to many, many hours of debate — I guess you can call it — from the Member for Lake Laberge where it was just clearly wasting time so that we wouldn’t get to certain business in the day.

My 20 minutes that I have to speak to this is important to me as an elected member of this Legislative Assembly and it is my right to be heard here, so I am going to continue on.

Transparency builds trust and confidence in our institutions. We accept our responsibility of being accountable to Yukon citizens, ensuring that they have as much access to government information as possible. This allows Yukoners to hold elected officials and public servants to account for their actions. This accountability ensures that those of us in power act in the best interest, and we are serving Yukoners today. We know that sharing information about government policies, programs, and services can lead to more efficient and effective governance. Yukoners are then in a position to provide feedback and suggestions, leading to improvements in government operations. Informed Yukoners can make better decisions, and when we share information, it allows Yukoners to make educated decisions about their health, safety, finances, and more.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the ability for any government to share information with citizens is a fundamental aspect of a healthy and functioning democracy. It promotes transparency, accountability, informed decision-making, and citizen participation — all of which contribute to the well-being of society and the effectiveness of government.

My colleagues and I are, of course, as I started out with, opposed to this motion and will not be voting in support of it.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I have some remarks this afternoon and I am going to be as brief as possible because, frankly, we want to get to a vote this afternoon. We are not running out the clock this afternoon; this isn’t a filibuster. This is a bunch of government ministers — MLAs — who are seeing a back-door assault on our ability to talk to our constituents,



and we take it very seriously, unlike — judging by the body language and remarks of the members opposite — our colleagues across the way.

That's not a surprise to me, because I have been there as a member of the public, as a journalist, trying to get information from the members on the other side of the House. It wasn't easy, and I want to put that marker down right out of the gate for the public and the media who have been dealing with this government and not that government, because it was a totally different experience. I was there.

I am going to talk a little bit about that this afternoon. I am going to talk about ministerial statements, because I have been listening to them since 1989 when I moved to the territory as a journalist and covered this House. I listened to the ministerial statements as far back as then, and I actually thought they were useful, as a journalist at that time covering the Legislature. So, when I got into government as a minister and saw that the — I also covered the many former governments — and saw that they hadn't been used for a long time, I thought it was a good idea to resurrect them, because they were useful to me — as a member of the public and as a journalist — to actually have government ministers address me directly through this Chamber. I will talk a little bit about that, too.

There is a very good reason why the opposition is bringing this motion to the floor and not our government. They want it more than we do. We didn't want it. We didn't think it was broken. It's not broken, and I will get to that in a little while, too. It's broken for the members opposite, because they don't like hearing what we have to say, and they are seeking to control that. That, fundamentally, is a marker that we should all pay attention to, and we should be worried about that. We should definitely be worried about that.

I am not surprised by the Yukon Party. As I said, I worked as a journalist trying to get information from that government. It was like pulling teeth — worse than pulling teeth. There was no access. There were no scrums. Documents were withheld. We had to use the ATIPP act for virtually everything. It was terrible.

I am surprised about the NDP a little bit this afternoon. As I have said, their governments have been relatively progressive on this front. They used ministerial statements more than we have. They used them well. So, to see them aligning themselves with the government that didn't provide any information is a dark, dark turn and surprising to me. It is certainly turning their back on a good legacy, and I am really surprised that they are doing that.

We didn't bring this motion to the floor. I am the chair of that committee — I don't support what the committee has come up with — the machination to get this before the House today. I wasn't going to bring the motion to the floor, and neither was my good colleague, because we don't believe in it. We think that it is fundamentally wrong, and so, we are leaving it to the opposition to do it, but we do not fundamentally agree with it. I fundamentally do not agree with it. In fact, I am vehemently opposed to it.

Ministerial statements serve an important purpose in our democracy and in governments across the country, as my good

colleague noted earlier in his remarks. They provide important information to Yukoners that is recorded in Hansard, serving as a historical record for future generations about the most important issues of the day.

The members opposite have no idea how these work as a minister, because they didn't do them. They know what it is like to be in opposition and handle it from that side; they don't know what it is like to be a minister and be subjecting yourself to a ministerial statement, to be putting forward a ministerial statement. Let me provide a little bit of insight because of their lack of experience in that process — also to the media and the public who hopefully will pay some attention to this.

Ministerial statements are not easy for any of us to put forward in this House. You put your statement out — you prepare it; you put it out there on whatever issue or policy or initiative or whatever we believe is important for Yukoners and for the opposition and the media to hear that day. Then you prepare for a whole battery of questions challenging you on that issue on the fly. Again, it is improv. You have no idea what is coming back, and you have to prepare yourself for that. You don't know what it is like; it is uncomfortable.

This isn't fun, but it is important, and it is a mini-debate restricted to 16 minutes, coming in at about 11, according to the Clerk's office stats — 11 minutes is the average per day when the ministerial statement is brought forward. In that time, you have a mini-debate, and the public can then hear the government's point of view, then the Yukon Party's point of view, and then the NDP's point of view, and they see it all wrapped up in a neat little package. They can determine who has come out on top. It's not a waste of time. I take offence at that. As a civilian, I relied on them so heavily; as a reporter, I relied on them. They brought important issues to light that otherwise would not have been.

That mini-debate makes you better. It's uncomfortable, but it makes you better. It makes you self-assess if what you are doing is on the right track or not because you are hearing other perspectives. It's important to our institution here, our democracy, for that very reason.

So, they are important to me, to this government, to this House, and to the Yukon public as a whole. Giving up that opportunity to present issues to the public, to give the opposition the ability to veto that, to be a gatekeeper, is wrong, just as it would be wrong for them to have to give us their questions before they present them to us in the House and allow us to prepare answers. We haven't asked for that; we didn't ask for that when we were in our majority government. We didn't restructure the running of the House as a majority, but we have met with the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges many times, as my good colleague said in his early remarks. I'm not going to repeat them here because, as I said, I want to get to a vote.

As a journalist, I hold the right to free speech and freedom of expression dear. I fought for it. Trying to pry information from the Yukon Party when I was working in the media was not easy. The Yukon Party was very conservative in their approach to providing information to the public. Public documents on freedom of information were withheld from the

public — I'm not kidding. In fact, one of the very first documents that I released in my role as a government minister was just such a report, because it had been withheld. The civil service came to me and said: Do you want to release this document? They were nervous. I said: What are you talking about? It's a report on providing information to the public. Of course, I want to make it public.

That wasn't the practice before, Mr. Speaker. They kept everything as tight as possible. Nothing got out — no daylight. The former government did not hold scrums with the media. The former government did not return the calls of the media. They prevented the release of briefing notes — notes that were meant to be read by ministers to inform the Yukon public. We changed that as well. Our briefing notes are now publicly available. Changing that culture of control, of restricting access to the information that the Yukon public holds — it's their information, Mr. Speaker. This government is their government, and it's their information. Changing that culture from one of restriction and holding everything tight, not letting anything out, to one in which we try to foster open communication with the public — make more available and fewer restrictions on what's available is a difficult cultural change for a government to undergo. We're seven years into that experiment. Is it perfect? Gosh, no. Is it better? Absolutely. And yet, today, here we see going back to worse than it was before at the hands of both opposition parties.

As I said, it's important to remember how contemptuous the Yukon Party was at providing information to the public when in office, how controlling they were and apparently are. It's also important, though, to record for the record in Hansard that the former New Democratic parties that I dealt with wanted open information, and apparently this latest iteration does not.

I will now provide more context. The Penikett New Democrats used ministerial statements a lot, as I said, back in 1989 to 1992. I used them as a journalist; I listened to them here in this House. They were used all the time. They were important and useful, and it was the New Democrats under Piers McDonald who used ministerial statements more than perhaps even our government.

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

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** They used them sometimes several times a day, Mr. Speaker. I hear the Leader of the Third Party over there talking off-mic. She is upset about this or something — I don't know — but the fact is that the Piers McDonald New Democrats used ministerial statements a lot.

It was useful to me as a journalist, to me as a citizen, and now we have this new New Democratic Party working with the Yukon Party to restrict that access, to treat media and the public — to restrict that debate in the House. That's even more troubling. I expect it from the Yukon Party; I do not expect it from the New Democrats. It's turning their back on their illustrious past.

What we're seeing today is an effort to obstruct the information flow in this House. That, as noted by others today, is coming from none other than Floyd McCormick, the former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. He has written that: "As the historical review shows the Assembly has already addressed

[ministerial statement] issues dealing with content and time consumption. Over time it reached a workable, if imperfect, solution." "[Ministerial statements] aren't broken and don't need to be fixed."

He also wrote: "There is a difference between holding the govt accountable and obstructing the govt. Responding to a [ministerial statement] —

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

### Point of order

**Speaker:** Third Party House Leader, on a point of order.

**MLA Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, this exact text has already been read into the record by a previous speaker, which is, I believe, a violation of Standing Order 19(c), which refers to repetition.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** This is a dispute among members. Minister of Community Services, please continue.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is clear that the New Democrats don't want to hear this again, but I'm just going to carry on a little bit more, please.

"There is a difference between holding the govt accountable and obstructing the govt. Responding to a [ministerial statement] is accountability. Preventing the govt from giving a [ministerial statement] is obstruction", says Mr. McCormick. "Members are rightly concerned about using the Assembly's limited sitting time more efficiently. But giving the opposition some control over what statements the govt can and cannot deliver is the wrong way to do this." It is the wrong way to do this, Mr. Speaker.

"[Ministerial statements] are a way of getting govt statements (and opposition responses) on the House record (Hansard) even if they have been previously made public." This is an important distinction and one that I talked about earlier. It is a mini-debate. We can hear both sides in a nice little package. If members believe that this is not a good use of the House's time, they can reduce the time limits or get rid of ministerial statements entirely...

"If they are truly interested in using time more efficiently, there are other, better options reduce the amount of time devoted to tributes, permit the tabling of only those documents that are required by law or an order of the House, get rid of oral notices of motions and stop inundating the Order Paper with hundreds of motions that will never be debated; shorten the length of speeches during debates, etc."

Some of these actions we have actually taken. Our government has worked with the opposition, in concert, to do this — collaboratively. This was not that. This is an imposition by the opposition parties to not work by consensus or collaboratively. It is to force a change in the Order Paper on the sitting government. The opposition is setting themselves up as gatekeepers. In the case of the Yukon Party, as I said, that is not surprising, but the New Democratic Party — something outside of their norm, outside of their history — moving from a champion of information to something darker and less open.

I was elected to represent —

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

### Point of order

**Speaker:** Leader of the Third Party, on a point of order.

**Ms. White:** Pardon me, Mr. Speaker. Let me get my Standing Order.

That is — yes, 19(i): “uses abusive or insulting language”. That was too much; that was a bit personal there.

**Speaker:** Member for Lake Laberge, on the point of order.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I happen to agree with the Leader of the Third Party on this and would note that the minister, throughout his speech, has actually been either over the line or very close to over the line on 19(i) in directing it both to the Yukon Party and the NDP and has certainly used a lot of abusive and insulting language.

**Speaker:** Minister of Environment, on the point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I’m curious on this one. I don’t think I have ever seen two opposition members — well, this is a point of how things operate. I don’t think I have ever seen two members of the opposition provide their contributions to the Speaker on a point of order consecutively. I don’t think I have ever seen that.

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

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** There is no consecutiveness; there is just me right now.

### Speaker’s ruling

**Speaker:** On the point of order, the Speaker can choose who stands on a point of order and recognize them.

On the point of order from the Leader of the Third Party, tempers are kind of getting high here. Please civilize the comments. It is a dispute among members.

Minister of Community Services, please continue.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I just achieved a double-double.

I am going to shift my remarks a little bit now. As I said, the opposition is setting themselves up as gatekeepers. I was elected to represent the citizens of Whitehorse West. The motion on the floor today will put the Yukon Party and NDP between me and my constituents really is what we are talking about, and I don’t support that. I really can’t. As I said, I am a champion of free speech. I always will be, and I think this really does fetter members on this side of the House from being able to talk to Yukoners and their constituents.

I am just going to focus on one last aspect of this motion, and then I will take my leave.

Both the Yukon Party and the New Democrats have, in the past, complained about having to hear about new developments in the media rather than in this House. Now they want to limit the amount of information we provide to the House. That seems to stand in stark opposition. They are conflicting approaches. Surely, anyone listening understands that. So, we have to — we’re just left speculating on the purpose of this motion, which

makes the opposition — as I have said a few times and others have — gatekeepers.

They don’t want this government to give the Yukon public more information. That is clear. They would rather accuse our government of not being transparent, even as they limit our means to speak to them and Yukoners. This will be something that I’m sure we will be revisiting time and again now in this iteration of the Legislative Assembly.

All right. So, I want to finish on a caution to the public and the media who may be listening this afternoon. I have worked covering this Chamber for 20 years. I’ve been in the Chamber now for seven or so, and I know what it’s like to not be able to get information that the public owns from a government, and I don’t want to go back there.

Today, what we’re seeing is a move toward those days, and I think the media and the public should take that under advisement.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I will not be repeating, at the risk of having a point of order — but I certainly won’t be repeating what has been said by my colleagues today. They have all spoken brilliantly, heartfelt, from their experience, not just in the last seven years from their experience but from their experiences with respect to previous careers as well.

I will start by saying that — addressing a couple of the things that have been said by the member of the opposition with respect to this. I appreciate that this has been said today, and that’s what I’ll respond to, but it has also been said on many occasions by members — actually many members of the opposition, either in responding to ministerial statements or in responding to other parts of their debates.

That is — in particular with this sort of misconception — that ministerial statements are supposed to be about new programs, or they are supposed to be about some new announcements, or they can’t be something that has also been announced in media releases, or that somehow — I heard today for the first time — the minister in the response is supposed to be responding to the questions that are asked. Those are all very interesting ideas, but they are not the Standing Order. They are not what is required or permitted, may I say, in the Standing Order, and they are absolutely interpretations being made by the members opposite.

So, if we are going to start talking — and go down the road — about how the members opposite will be the deciders of who is able to give a ministerial statement to the public of the Yukon and will determine who will be able to present a ministerial statement or what topics will be presented on a daily basis, I think that we should question their ability to make interpretations about that, because they clearly have not read the Standing Order on the face of it. The truth is that the ministerial statements, as listed in Standing Order 11(2), permit a minister to make an announcement or a statement on government policy or — quote: “... a matter of public interest”. “A matter of public interest” has been defined by the courts on many occasions as quite broad, and a broad interpretation of public interest is what is intended here. You will note, Mr. Speaker, that it doesn’t say anything about whether or not

it should be a new program — I am not sure where that came from. I think that it is a hold-over from the changes that were made, I believe, by the Yukon Party in the past.

We are operating under Standing Order 11(2) right now, which is a Yukon Party creation — or certainly this evolution of it is. Now they don't want us to be able to use it. They don't want the government to be able to make those kinds of announcements or statements. If we call them "ministerial announcements" — are we having a different debate here today? I don't know, but ministerial announcements and statements are permitted by the Standing Order. We have complied with the rules on every occasion on which we have given ministerial statements.

You have all heard that we have given many ministerial statements. We have used this opportunity in the Standing Orders to speak to Yukoners and to speak to the members of the opposition and to hear from the members of the opposition about things that they believe are good or don't believe are good with respect to the topics in the ministerial statements. Yukoners deserve to hear all of those points of view.

The last points that I will make with respect to ministerial statements — the Standing Order also indicates: "A member of each of the parties in opposition to the government may comment thereon for not more than four minutes..." And it goes on. They don't need to respond if they are not interested in responding; if they're not interested in speaking to the public about these topics, they don't need to. It says they "may"; it does not say they "must".

I have been extremely proud of the opportunity that we have taken with respect to ministerial statements and the importance of using ministerial statements and speaking to Yukoners through this medium. I would like to say that the topics are carefully chosen. We are not running around searching for things to say in a ministerial statement. In fact, there are often more topics that we would like to speak to Yukoners about and would like to hear from the opposition about. We choose them extremely carefully and decisions are made so that they will be topical and so that they will be of interest to Yukoners so they can be informed. Sometimes they are about new programs — sometimes not.

The most recent ministerial statement that I had the privilege to make was on October 16, which was the coming into force of the *Missing Persons Act* and regulation. I think that was an extremely important opportunity to speak to Yukoners. I have spoken about Car 867. I have spoken about gender-affirming health care. I have spoken about the Yukon dental program. I have spoken about Opportunities Yukon and their Cornerstone project. I have spoken about aging in place.

Back in the fall of 2021, I spoke, on more than one occasion, about the importance of issues around COVID-19 — the vaccination requirements, the vaccination booster shots, and the vaccine and safety measures. All of these were incredibly important — not only to speak to Yukoners but to put on the record. One of the complaints made today about this use of ministerial statements is, in fact, that we can use other means by which to respond to Yukoners or to provide them with information.

The member opposite says that we can use other means. We can use news releases; we can advertise — I don't think that's an appropriate use, frankly, of anybody's advertising dollars with respect to these kinds of topics. We can use social media; we can use other things — absolutely we can, and we use all of those because we take transparency extremely seriously. We think that every day we have an opportunity and a responsibility to speak to Yukoners about programs, about issues, about things that are affecting their daily lives, and about what their government is doing to be responsive to them. So, we use all of those and we will continue to use all of those, and ministerial statements are an extremely important version of that communication.

I will note that a press conference is not the same, frankly, as a ministerial statement. It's not on the record in the same way that the members in this Legislative Assembly should respect the way in which the public record is taken into account. Having a communication in a different way and not having it put on the record in the Legislative Assembly is not, in fact, the same thing. Yukoners deserve to be able to search Hansard time after time. The members opposite should also respect that this is to put into history — to put into the history of the Yukon Legislative Assembly and into the history of the Yukon — the things that were important topics of the day and how their government and their opposition responded to those topics.

We've heard that the Yukon Party only did one statement in five years, and they didn't even abide by the rules in doing so. We've heard that there should be other ways in which we can pursue communicating with Yukoners. We've heard that it takes up too much time. The Yukon Party doesn't care about time or they would not have abused tributes that we have heard spoken about today — seven or nine or whatever the number was.

Those rules had to be changed as a result of those actions. They don't care about time or they wouldn't have taken an entire Wednesday to debate a motion and speak — or "filibuster", as some used the term — about a Queen's Jubilee and the importance of that. It's simply — that wasn't a good use of time. That is not for me to say. It is their opportunity; it is their use of time —

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

#### Point of order

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

**Mr. Cathers:** The language that the Minister of Health and Social Services just used regarding the motion that my colleague brought forward regarding the Queen's Jubilee is, I believe, in contravention of Standing Order 19(j): "speaks disrespectfully of Her Majesty or of any of the Royal Family..." I would urge you to have the minister retract her comments and to apologize to this House and to the Royal Family.

**Speaker:** Government House Leader, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** My colleague was not speaking disrespectfully about the Queen or the Royal Family. My colleague was commenting on the use of time in this House.

**Speaker's ruling**

**Speaker:** On the point of order, it is a dispute among members.

Minister of Health and Social Services, please continue.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just have a few more comments, and they all concern me, as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, which is clearly the way I am addressing you today. I think we should call this what it is. In my opinion, we should call a spade a spade, as they say. In my opinion, this is an opportunity being taken by the opposition to block government's opportunity to use the Standing Order in a proper way — that is as an opportunity for government and the opposition to speak to Yukoners, an opportunity to reduce the amount of work that they have to do.

I wish that I could trust that if ministerial statements were to be removed as a Standing Order or this opportunity was to be removed or drastically amended or irreparably changed in a way as a result of this motion today, that the members of the opposition would say, every Monday morning or every day that we are in this Sitting: Oh, that sounds like good topic; you should have a ministerial statement on that today and then we should be able to respond if we choose to, because that's what the current Standing Order says. I wish that were the case, but I don't trust.

We have heard that they believe that perhaps some of the 20 ministerial statements that I have had the honour of giving since April 2021 — most of them are time wasters or have been called not important enough to address with/to? Yukoners. I just simply, as many of my colleagues have said today, do not agree that this is the truth. I appreciate that they may have a different point of view about this, but taking the opportunity through this motion to try to irreparably change this Standing Order and silence or block the government of the day from speaking to Yukoners about important topics — not frivolous topics but important, timely topics — and them having the opportunity to respond to those in the Legislative Assembly is simply wrong, in my view. It's not to be supported.

I am drastically disappointed in not hearing more from the NDP today. We have heard a response to the ministerial statement that was given earlier today. Thank goodness that was given, because it may be the only time that we hear from them today about their point of view on ministerial statements. I hope with all hope that they do not support this motion, going forward.

We have had Yukoners approach us and show us appreciation for the ability to look up topics and hear from the three parties on those topics. Almost always, ministerial statements are responded to by the opposition and the Third Party. The ability to do that and look those up in Hansard has been appreciated by Yukoners.

More information is better. More points of view are better. Restricting or blocking these is not a positive move for this Legislative Assembly.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, well, if jumping the shark was an Olympic sport, the Liberals would have won the gold today in synchronized shark jumping. The Premier's grandstanding and calling it "a dark day for democracy" as my colleague the Leader of the Official Opposition noted earlier today — he is either going over the top with his rhetoric, or if he truly believes it and believes that the opposition parties are conspiring together to bring about a dark day for democracy, then call an election. This Premier is serving in power even though not one single Yukoner voted for him to be Premier. No one voted for him to be Leader of the Liberal Party. He has no mandate from the Yukon and yet purports to claim that it is a dark day for democracy. Well, either withdraw his over-the-top rhetoric and admit that it was over the top, or if he actually believes it, drop the writ.

We know that is not going to happen, because we know that the Liberals here today all believe that if an election was held right now, the Yukon Party would win, and they know that they have lost the confidence of the public.

I am just going to summarize here; I could go on at great length after listening to a very long afternoon from the Liberal Party members amply demonstrating why this is often referred to as "wasted Wednesday", but I will touch on a few things. The Minister of Health and Social Services, in her argument against this, surprisingly admitted that their ministerial statements aren't new policies or information a lot of the time and insisted that they don't have to answer questions that the members of the opposition ask them when we rise in response to ministerial statements and suggested that we just didn't understand the Standing Orders.

That is the point of how this Liberal government has abused ministerial statements with re-announcements and re-announcements and re-announcements. For example, the Premier, in his rather over-the-top rhetoric, gave the example of wanting to call a ministerial statement tomorrow that he said related to COVID and flu vaccinations. Well, that is a great example of exactly what we are talking about, because the government issued a press release about that October 10. We can read the press release. Any Yukoner interested in it can read the press release.

This proposal — again, I do have to remind members — was agreed to by a majority of MLAs on an all-party committee who voted in favour of a change to the Standing Order that the Liberals disagree with and are trying to delay and put up roadblocks to prevent it being enacted. The change itself is intended to prevent the Liberal government wasting the House's time with ministerial statements that re-announce press releases or are otherwise empty and lacking in substance.

Our motion, if passed, would not at all prevent the government from making ministerial statements; it would simply require them to cooperate just a little with other parties and get the agreement of one other House Leader that the statement was indeed a new policy and worth the House's time to debate.

I would also note that the government has suggested that this is about preventing communication and preventing speech, but I have to remind them — as they know very well — that the House's time is very limited and valuable. The government doesn't want to increase the number of sitting days per year, but when we spend hour after hour after hour on ministerial statements, it takes away from the time we have to ask questions about important departments, like Health and Social Services. I know that is why the Minister of Health and Social Services so passionately defended ministerial statements. She doesn't want to have to answer questions about the Department of Health and Social Services. No wonder, considering how the government is failing thousands of Yukoners who don't have a family doctor. We have nursing shortages in rural Yukon which reached as high as 50 percent before the government took action. We have the closure of health centres. We have an unprecedented series of gaps in emergency medical services coverage in rural Yukon and an education system in crisis. No wonder the government would rather use ministerial statements prepared by department staff to avoid having to answer the tough questions.

I would note that the Government House Leader, who led off at great length for the Liberals — there are areas that the minister is neglecting within his own department, including the ongoing firewood shortage that is affecting Yukoners for yet another year. Yukoners have trouble getting access to firewood, which for decades and under previous ministers — who were not Liberal ministers — no one would have dreamed that this would have been an issue, yet the minister continues to neglect his job, spending his time on research projects and taking shots at opposition members.

In the interest of time, I will wrap up. I would just note, as I mentioned in introducing this, that —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

Member for Lake Laberge, please carry on.

**Mr. Cathers:** I will wrap up, since we are eager to get this to a vote and move on to other matters, such as the next motions on the agenda, and again, as I noted, this — contrary to the repeated assertions of Liberal members — would not prevent them speaking. It would not prevent MLAs being able to speak to constituents or on behalf of them. This would simply be taking away the power of the Liberal Cabinet to unilaterally control this amount of time in the Legislative Assembly each and every day, and it would require them to get the agreement on scheduling ministerial statements of just one other House Leader that the matter was new, that the matter was worthy of the House's time, and this is intended to be in the best interest of the House's time.

I would also note, just in closing, Mr. Speaker, that this specific proposal is the result of suggestions that we made and that we reached agreement with a majority of other members on SCREP regarding. It is a compromise where we had suggested several other approaches to dealing with this, including the possibility of eliminating ministerial statements altogether. But ultimately, we worked together to try to come

up with an option that would be mutually agreeable to the majority of members, and SCREP ultimately recommended it to this House by a majority of members, and we hope that it will pass today.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

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

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Disagree.

**Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Blake:** Agree.

**MLA Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 11 yeas, seven nays.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 6 agreed to*

## MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

### Motion No. 793

**Clerk:** Motion No. 793, standing in the name of Mr. Hassard.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to cancel its plans to close the Silver Trail, Braeburn, Keno, and Johnsons Crossing solid-waste transfer stations and work with the residents of each area to ensure that there are appropriate solid-waste disposal solutions that meet the needs of these communities.

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Motion No. 793, which, of course, is regarding the solid-waste transfer stations in Johnsons Crossing, Braeburn, Silver City, and Keno. I would like to start by thanking all of the people over the past few years who have worked on improving the way in which solid waste is dealt with

throughout our territory. From government staff, municipal staff — numerous folks across the territory have taken part in sitting on various committees or have just participated in community meetings. All of their input is certainly appreciated.

We know that solid waste poses issues, and we know it isn't cheap to deal with, but most of my comments today will be around consultation and respect. We know, as well, that one of the agreements under the CASA arrangement is for the government to consult with these four affected communities, and I would like to thank the NDP for this; however, I am not sure whose definition of "consult" will be used with regard to this issue.

Just the other day during Community Services debate, we heard the minister say that the communities had been consulted with many times, but the Leader of the NDP rightfully reminded him — and I will quote: "... the outcome ... is not consultation." This has been the case since day one. From the very first meeting I attended in Johnsons Crossing with the previous Minister of Community Services, it was a statement. It was not consultation. The minister came down and essentially told community members that: Your transfer station is closing; freeze your garbage and haul it to town. That was the message.

It was a message that was not well-received, and unfortunately, since that time, not much has changed. The only thing that has changed is the frustration felt by the residents in these communities, as it continues to grow. Now, many letters have been written, but apparently, all have fallen on deaf ears. Now, the most recent letter — and I believe it was signed by roughly 130 people — was addressed to the Premier. That was from residents around Silver City, and if I could, I would like to read that letter into the record. The letter reads as follows — and I will quote:

"We, the residents of Silver City and the surrounding area, are writing to you today in the hope that you may find time to personally consider our situation here and move towards a reconsideration of your government's ill advised determination to shut down our deeply needed transfer station, and thereby avoid doing grievous damage to our community.

"It's painful to recount, but the Minister of Community Services has stubbornly and consistently refused to engage with us on this issue. At the one meeting he attended, in Destruction Bay, he opened the meeting by announcing that he was NOT there to discuss that issue, so vital to us all, but was there merely as part of 'a previous planned tour of the communities'. It was a very well attended gathering and everyone who was there can testify to the fact that he responded to our concerns in an arrogant and condescending manner with a demeanor wholly inappropriate for a public servant. Sad to say, he was dismissive and disrespectful towards the assembled community members.

"Your desk, as the saying goes, is 'where the buck stops', and bears the ultimate responsibility for the impact of government decisions on the people of the Yukon. Thus, it is directly to you that we now appeal.

"We have heard a lot of nebulous justifications wrapped around phrases such as 'global warming concerns' and 'modernization', issues which carry no rational, direct bearing on our predicament here. For a decision that will do no less than

devastate our community, we deserve to be provided with some concrete and practical reasoning. What we have not heard is even one good, intelligible reason for the govt. to harm us in this way. If you are aware of such a reason, please convey it to us.

"We are a growing community, with new residents coming in and new businesses taking shape. Year by year, tourism is constantly on the increase. Please tell us ... How can our government aggressively promote tourism on the one hand, while, on the other hand, dismantling the infrastructure which rural residents desperately need in order to cope with expanding tourism??"

"It should be self evident that the Govt. of Yukon should not be in the business of pulling the rug out from under such places and thus strangling fledgling communities in their infancy. Astonishingly, this policy is redolent of a callous disdain towards rural residents. Is our govt. simply unaware of what is like outside of the city limits of Whitehorse? To us, it comes as outright hostility towards our way of life.

"Government handouts we've received begin by saying that the closing of rural transfer stations will 'save taxpayers money and reduce emissions. Both assertions are demonstrably untrue. It is inarguable that requiring our residents to drive hundreds of km. several times a week will both greatly increase overall emissions and incur thousands of dollars in additional expenses for taxpayers here. It is inarguable that requiring our residents to drive hundreds of km. several times a week will both greatly increase overall emissions and incur thousands of dollars in additional expenses for taxpayers here.

"At this time, we will not go into listing all the reasons why this policy is a disastrously counterproductive mistake. Suffice it to say, the reasons are there, and they are good, sensible reasons. They have been communicated over and over, to government representatives and in the media. Constantly having to reiterate our case is tiresome; we would rather be focussing our attentions elsewhere. The thing is; We love this community and will not give up defending its viability.

"Of course, government is not expected to be infallible. Mistakes are made. However, one hallmark of good government is that when mistakes are made they can be recognized, retracted and reworked, in order to better serve the public interest."

This leads to my earlier comment about respect. These individuals, just like the individuals in Keno and Johnsons Crossing — they are individuals — they are Yukoners who deserve to be respectfully listened to. They are the ones who elect us all, and they are the ones who pay their taxes, and those tax dollars pay our salaries here in the Legislature.

On Monday, the minister stood in this House and said — and I quote: "... it is financially impossible to put the type of controls for a community, say, of 10 people or less that are needed to secure a site so that travellers from the highway or nearby communities don't decide to dump their propane tanks, their engine blocks, their construction waste, and their waste oils and other deleterious substances out of the sight of prying eyes..."

So, I have trouble with many parts of this quote. For starters, I like to believe that there are very few people who are actually going to do such a thing in this day and age and that if we properly post signs saying what is and isn't allowed in a particular site, that people will obey the rules. And for those few who may chose to disregard the rules, I am curious what's stopping them from dumping these items in one of the many side roads or gravel pits along the way?

Another issue that I have is the number of references the minister continues to reference. For instance, in the quote that I just referred to, he states that there are "10 people or less". Now, we know that, when speaking to media, the Minister of Community Services has said that there were less than 10 people when referring to Johnsons Crossing. Yet the community has continued to argue and provide numbers to the department, to the government, showing that this is certainly not the case. I know the latest numbers from Johnsons Crossing showed that there are approximately 54 permanent residents, with over 100 part-time residents, and I know that this number is much more accurate.

"Financially impossible" — another thing that was said by the minister, and it's certainly a bizarre statement to say about a system that is already in place and for a government that has spent millions on overruns, such as we are seeing on the Nisutlin Bay bridge, because of this government's poor planning and not having permits in place, despite calls from many people — or talking about spending \$44 million on a port in a different country that may not even suit the needs of Yukon companies.

So, it's pretty rich to hear this minister talk about the spending. We are talking about Yukoners who have invested, in some cases, their life savings into homes and businesses with the understanding that certain government infrastructure is in place for them to use, but then to have that infrastructure removed with no consultation whatsoever — it's not right. Again, being told the outcome is not consultation. That is the crux of this motion.

Now, I understand the financial implications of putting the liabilities on the government books regarding the closure costs of these transfer stations, but the government must also consider the citizens of these communities.

I could go on for hours and hours debating things like how many greenhouse gas emissions there are from travelling or YESAB submissions and who said what and the responsibilities of everyone under the sun, but honestly, I would just really like to hear from other members of this Assembly, and I would love to see this motion come to a vote.

In closing, I would again just say thank you to all of those whom I mentioned earlier for all the work they have done to date, but understanding that this motion is about real consultation to find solutions — real solutions — that work for these residents, for these citizens of the Yukon. I don't mean just saying, hey, here's a new bear-proof can, and we put up a sign. We are talking about real solutions.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Before I begin this afternoon in earnest, I really want to thank the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin for

bringing this motion forward this afternoon. Thank you. I am glad for the chance to speak about garbage this afternoon. Weird, I know. I am like that.

In fact, in one of our recent engagements, the member opposite asked what world I live on. It's still Earth — a unique, tiny blue marble that shines ever so brightly in the vastness of this cosmos. Earth's uniqueness is at the heart of my remarks today. This is it. This is all we have. This is our home — our only home.

For a millennium now, humanity has lived a rich life on a hospitable planet with a generally benign climate. Now that is changing: Our climate is less pleasant and our world a little bit less rich and hospitable. That is happening because of us. Mr. Speaker, this matters to me. The environment is central to this motion, and it has been a passion throughout my life.

Now I have a smidgeon of time to talk about it this afternoon in this House, which, as I mentioned earlier today, has also been a focal point of most of my professional life in the Yukon.

I want to thank the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin for the opportunity this afternoon to discuss this. Next, before I crack on, I have a few other people I would like to thank. I want to get this out of the way, because once I begin in earnest, this would get lost and it's important.

It takes a community to raise a child, and here is proof. The incredible team at the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society: Gill Cracknell, Joti Overduin, Lisa Taylor, the late Mike Dehn, Juri Peepre, Malkolm Boothroyd, Bob Jickling — environmental stewards who had a profound impact on my understanding of the Yukon and the natural world. I want to thank them.

Similarly, Mike Walton, Stu Clark, Karen Baltgailis, Skeeter Wright, Lewis Rifkind — who wrote "Waste not, want not", a recycling and environmental column for me — Bob Van Dijken and the team at Yukon Conservation Society, current and past, for all of their guidance to me and hard work in protecting the territory that we all love — I thank them as well.

I add to that list my good friends Matthew Lien and Ken Madsen, environmental champions and disrupters whose good-natured mischief had a profound influence on a much younger me and that persists to this day. We shared many rich adventures, gentlemen, and you had a great influence on my understanding of the planet and frankly greatly improved my life in innumerable ways. I want to thank them as well.

I had a few mentors, as well: Peter Lesniak, Erling Friis-Baastad, and Ken Bolton. I was lucky enough to have a few grains of their incredible talent penetrate my thick skull and work their way into my soul. I thank those gentlemen as well.

The team at Community Services, specifically for today's discussion — all of the people involved there. I could name them, but in fear of leaving somebody out, I'm just going to say thank you so much to all of them who work selflessly day in and day out to improve life for Yukoners, handling many, many minute details on these very, very challenging files — in this case, to improve the Yukon's landfills and to make sure that our beautiful territory is looked after generally. They are all true



public servants and have, in some cases, unnecessarily put up with a ton of garbage on this file, literally and figuratively.

I had hoped to spare them some of that, and I apparently failed, and for that, I apologize. They certainly didn't deserve some of the treatment they have received. I am indebted to them all and I thank them.

I also want to give note to Brandon Kassbaum, my friend and advisor. His guidance has laid the foundation of this talk this afternoon and I thank him. Finally, Genesee Keevil, my friend — one of the most grounded and courageous people I have ever had the pleasure to work alongside. Our walks are few but cherished, and I look forward to the next time when I might glean some new insight from your keen mind.

Enough said, Mr. Speaker. Let's dance.

First, I want to note that the services to rural Yukon are being expanded. Let me repeat that: Services to rural Yukon are going to be expanded. We are investing in regional landfills in Destruction Bay, Mayo, Pelly Crossing, Carmacks, Teslin, Haines Junction, Watson Lake, Dawson City, Faro, Marsh Lake, Tagish, Carcross, and Deep Creek. Not only are these landfills getting or have received capital upgrades, scales, fences, electricity, buildings, et cetera, they are also going to have staff to supervise their operations — more staff in rural Yukon. This is a good thing. It's going to put more income into rural Yukon as a result of this plan.

These landfills will also handle organics and recycling better, and this is critical for our environment and to meet our greenhouse gas emissions. There will be more services in rural Yukon.

The plan came from municipalities. They wanted regionalization of landfills and there is good reason for that. The Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste that my good colleague shepherded in the early days was struck in October 2017 with representatives from rural communities, four Yukon government officials from the departments of Community Services and Environment, and one from the City of Whitehorse. The group was co-chaired by the Association of Yukon Communities and the Department of Community Services. It was to provide recommendations for actions related to solid-waste management in the Yukon, which we have talked about quite a bit in the House. It was brought about because municipalities wanted the landfills to be better used.

They came with recommendations in April 2018. The theme was "Regionalization". They wanted to review waste management costs and service levels for unincorporated areas, develop and implement a solid-waste regionalization strategy and framework, which was done, and develop a strategy for managing landfill liability responsibilities, including legacy liabilities.

Specifically, the committee had a vision centered on the efficient use of resources and supports for enhanced municipal solid-waste operations and directing existing and new resources toward enhancing regional solid-waste sites that would help the Yukon government ensure that there is an appropriate level of service for the entire population, as well as strategically prepare for the eventual closure of some solid-waste facilities without

significantly reducing service — without significantly reducing service.

There is also a theme for user-pay. The committee's vision was to explore and implement designated materials regulations or extended producer responsibility as soon as possible. That work is being done as we speak.

We just passed legislation, as a matter of fact, in this session. We wanted to implement a solid-waste user-fee pilot in the Whitehorse periphery and explore user fees at all sites. We have done that.

We wanted clear standards — implement the best practices and explore the role of social enterprise, entrepreneurship, and local innovation in waste management across the Yukon.

These recommendations were fully endorsed by the Government of Yukon and are underway now — in phase 2 of that plan.

A business person in Destruction Bay has a problem with the closure of transfer stations and they have been very clear about this. I have heard them and I acknowledge their concerns. They have been the vanguard of opposition, and they have done a good job representing their position and rallying like-minded folks to their cause, especially the closure of the unsupervised, uncontrolled, and tipping-fee-free transfer station located at Silver City. It is about 46 kilometres from Destruction Bay. It is important to note that there is a landfill in Destruction Bay roughly four kilometres from the centre of town, and that landfill — four kilometres away — takes all garbage, recyclables, brush, and clean wood. It is open and will remain so, and it will be improved like the other regional landfills.

I have heard that there are issues with tourism garbage in Destruction Bay. I understand this. This is an issue, for tourism-facing businesses across the territory. For example, businesses in Carcross see incredible tourism traffic and handle waste from visitors every single summer. A colossal number of visitors go through that community. In Carcross, tourism businesses build that cost into their business models, charging customers for the service — for the removal of garbage. That is an acceptable avenue for businesses. If they aren't doing so yet, businesses and not-for-profits should build that cost into their activities. It is a legitimate cost of operation.

It is different for residents. They can't raise that money. It is harder for them and I certainly understand that. That is why the transfer stations that we're talking about this afternoon are meant to be used by residents and not by businesses. Unfortunately, they are not supervised. As the member opposite noted just a few moments ago, we have no eyes on who is using the service, but we do see the effects of those who are abusing that privilege, and the environmental and economic cost of that abuse is clear. Even in the last few weeks, we have seen transmissions, engine blocks, and waste oil dumped on the ground. We have seen construction waste dumped on these sites. We have seen propane tanks, old barbecues, waste metals, and other matériel that should not be placed there dumped all over the place. The cost of fixing this and cleaning it up is extraordinary, and it's simply because there are no controls on the sites. That is what we are seeking to end here. That is really what we are talking about this afternoon with this motion.

In any case, it takes an awful lot of work to champion an issue. I want to thank the individual and individuals in Destruction Bay for their ferocious advocacy in their region. I understand how hard this can be for people living in rural Yukon. We are talking about a way of life and a way of doing things that has been established for decades. A change of this kind is hard — very hard — and I have heard that and I understand that. We saw this earlier when we moved away from burning garbage in our dumps. I remember covering that in the media and it was a tough transition as well.

Today, we understand how that's really not acceptable. But like that earlier change — burning garbage — and given our current circumstances in the Yukon, in the country, and in the world, improving the way we handle garbage, recyclables, and compostable material is absolutely necessary. On that front, we all have to do our part. We produce an awful lot of garbage as a society. We all have to consider that and assess that. Making polluters pay for that garbage is one way of doing that.

All right, I will say that, on this issue — and here we are again this afternoon — never has so much ink been spilled for garbage collected from so few people. Believe me, I know about spilled ink and I know about garbage now — on that, I am fast becoming an expert or at least an apprentice. Make no mistake — I don't want to be misinterpreted. The statement I made about how much ink is being spilled is not intended to belittle the issue in any way, shape, or form. For the few dozen people we are asking to adopt new ways of disposing of garbage, the weight of the garbage they produce — this is difficult, and I understand that. Garbage, the detritus, of our far too wasteful society is, in fact, a very, very serious issue. Waste poses a significant risk to our environment. Poorly controlled waste from our homes and businesses threatens to sully our forests, our fields, our rivers, and our lakes. Poorly controlled waste from our homes and businesses threatens to pollute our soil and groundwater — and not to remind members this afternoon that Whitehorse aquifers have started to show early signs of contamination from surface water that could possibly, in the future, require extensive treatment facilities. So, yes, how we handle our waste in our society is a serious issue. Waste is also a serious producer of greenhouse gas, so it's important to our efforts on climate change. Poorly run landfills represent the third largest source of methane production in North America. I know that the member opposite who wants to remove our price on carbon also doesn't want to put a price on garbage, apparently — but it's important.

As I said, this is our home. It's the only one we have. Time and time again, we are proving excessively efficient at wrecking it. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas. It's 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide, according to a federal discussion paper on the subject. Thoughtlessly landfilling biodegradable waste is the primary cause of this methane production. Improving our landfills, making them more secure and better managed through gates and staff, will help us mitigate methane production — this according to a federal discussion paper that urges regions to do so. As a matter of fact, the discussion paper says that the only approach to reducing

future emissions of this voracious methane and greenhouse gas is to manage emissions at our landfill sites better.

The only way to do that is by managing our landfills. We have to do better. We have to better manage our landfills, and we have to better manage the people who use our landfills. We have to supervise them. We have to have eyes on what they are dumping, how they dispose of it, and where it goes. We have to control our waste better, and we have to reduce it.

I am going to put the first very fine point on the discussion this afternoon. The Yukon declared a climate emergency. We declared an emergency because we face a dangerous situation that requires immediate action. That is basically the definition of an "emergency". Climate change is exactly such an emergency. Dealing with an emergency takes precedence over everything. If we don't, then it's clearly not an emergency. So, here we are, again, while in a state of a climate emergency, discussing perpetuating uncontrolled, unsupervised garbage disposal that will inconvenience people but that federal research has shown is essential to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

In *Our Clean Future*, we have now set a target through the confidence and supply agreement to reduce our territorial emissions by 45 percent. It's going to be very, very difficult to get there. One of the ways to do that is by better managing our landfills, making sure that we capture everything we can and handling it in a way that reduces and separates the compostables and organics from the rest of the garbage.

Here we are discussing ways to weaken that, so how can we have a 45-percent target and not do everything we can to make the target? This is where I am conflicted. I want to do everything I can to hit the target, and I'm having my hands tied by not having the ability to do everything I can to hit the target.

We don't want to leave our small communities behind, and we have no interest in simply closing doors and walking away. We want to find solutions that are realistic, affordable, and workable. We are working on this. We have a workshop happening up the north highway in the next few weeks to do exactly that. We want to find solutions that are realistic, affordable, and workable. As much as it is not a viable solution to hire staff to manage and monitor a small transfer station that serves a very small number of households, it is also not a solution to simply keep operating as we have. We are committed to finding solid-waste solutions with these communities, but our team needs to be given space and opportunity to work with the communities on what that could be.

We have had some successes already. We are moving toward regional facilities that will serve a broad regional area and ultimately reduce the amount of trucking needed to move waste to Whitehorse. We have worked with municipalities and the AYC in a positive way. We have found a path to help gate and staff municipal sites to implement a consistent system, based on user-pay, managed, and monitored sites. That is a step in the right direction. We appreciate the willingness of residents of Keno, for example, and local businesses to have the conversation that we're trying to have in Silver City, Johnsons

Crossing, and Braeburn. Out of that came a reasonable solid-waste solution.

In this case, rhetoric is a distraction. It's preventing constructive conversations about sustainable solid-waste options and solutions. It is a disservice to suggest that the only solution is to keep the transfer stations open and operating exactly as they are today. Sites that are expensive to clean up like that are not monitored or managed, and it does nothing to encourage diversion. We need to find reasonable ways forward that still serve the needs of residents and fit into an entire system of change that we're going through for solid-waste management in the territory.

I really want to give the staff, who I talked about earlier, the time and the ability to continue to engage community members on local solutions and ultimately find ways to serve our communities.

Like me, the staff understands that any change we make to transfer stations will have real impacts on the residents who live there. We want healthy and sustainable Yukon communities, and we need to find ways to support local solutions to these challenges. The ongoing engagement should yield some results that will make sense for each community in the context of the entire system.

We have to hit higher targets. We have to find ways to do that. We have to work with residents to do that.

I am going to let my colleague have a few words, and I am going to take my seat. This is an important issue for us. This is our home; it's the only one we have, and we have to look after it.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Before I came to this Assembly, I was on Whitehorse City Council. I worked with the Association of Yukon Communities. We often went to meetings around the communities. In particular, I used to watch how some of our non-Whitehorse communities worked in that space, because I had a home out in Marsh Lake.

One issue that just kept coming back was solid waste. Municipalities and the local advisory councils were all very nervous about liabilities around the landfills, about the amount of solid waste, and about what was happening across the territory. I stepped away from that work for about a year, and then I ran in the 2016 territorial election for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes and was lucky enough to be elected to represent the folks. Then I was put into the role of Minister of Community Services.

My first conversation was with the past Mayor of Whitehorse and then executive director of the Association of Yukon Communities, Ms. Bev Buckway. Bev and I had worked together, and she was excited that I had taken on the role of Minister of Community Services, and the first words out of her mouth were: "You have to do something about solid waste." So, I sat down and talked with AYC. They had written a paper talking about the systemic nature — the systemic problems — with solid waste across the territory, and they asked us to commit to solutions. I remember talking it over with the Department of Community Services and saying that we were going to make a real effort on this file. I knew that it was not an

easy file. I also knew that there would be some deep, difficult challenges, including within my own riding.

I remember going to the AGM in Faro, I think it was, and I remember lots of the members from here were at that AGM, and the president of the Association of Yukon Communities was from Faro at that time. We went there to talk about solid waste, and we gave our commitment, as a government, that we would work with the Association of Yukon Communities to re-do solid waste across the territory with the notion of making it more sustainable, with the notion of dealing with risks and liabilities for municipalities, and it was to re-envision it broadly. I physically made the move to call up the then-Minister of Highways and Public Works and return my garbage can — we are not allowed to use props, but I am just going to point to the garbage can that is here — we had one in our office, and I said that I am going to work to reduce my garbage so that I don't need one of these, and I gave it back. It was a symbolic gesture, but it was to say to the Association of Yukon Communities that I was onboard with them and deeply committed to re-doing solid waste across the territory.

They said that they had been concerned that we had been down this path several times and that it was going to take some while to build trust in them and that we really were committed as a government.

It is my recollection that, when I spoke to the Association of Yukon Communities' annual general meeting in my capacity as Minister of Community Services, it was very well-received. Had we done all of the work yet to have the conversations with all of the communities? No, we had not, but we went about starting to do that.

Now, one of the fundamental principles that was there under that whole vision for what we should do across the Yukon was that we needed to make sure that our landfills weren't just drop off. We needed to get them to become gated and staffed, and that was across the board. That is not necessarily an easy thing to do, but when I listened to the Minister of Community Services talk about investment in communities, I knew that every job, in every one of our communities, was important for those communities. It is good to have those government jobs in communities, or government contracts, and here were examples that we were going to start to provide.

Again, municipalities agreed that they, too, would make sure that their landfills were gated and staffed — and I agree with the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin that 99 percent of Yukoners don't abuse the system, but the challenge is that one percent. When they dump something in your landfill or your waste facilities, it goes through the roof — those costs — so, you really do need to staff — that was clear.

The next thing we agreed to was that we needed to put a small, nominal charge on all landfills, and the place we were going to start was in my own backyard — in Marsh Lake, Mount Lorne, Carcross, Tagish, and Deep Creek. That charge was going to be very small, but it was never going to cover the costs; it was just going to be at the same level as it was for Whitehorse so we would stop this leakage. People were driving

from town to our smaller communities to drop off their garbage, and we needed to stop that.

I will just pause for a second there, Mr. Speaker, because I sense you are heading for time. So, let me just see if you wish to call for time.

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will keep going — thank you.

So, if you think that's — let me just — for all of the colleagues in this House —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

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

*Debate on Motion No. 793 accordingly adjourned*

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*

**The following sessional papers were tabled October 25, 2023:**

35-1-118

*Yukon Arts Centre Annual Report 2022/23 (Streicker)*

35-1-119

*Yukon Heritage Resources Board Annual Report April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023 (Streicker)*

35-1-120

Bill No. 29, *Act to amend the Elections Act (2023)*, reprinted with amendment in English and French (Pillai)

**The following document was filed October 25, 2023:**

35-1-158

*Yukon Geographical Place Names Board 2022-2023 Annual Report (Streicker)*