



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Wednesday, March 20, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2024 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, March 20, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper, as the actions requested in the motions have been completed in whole or in part: Motion No. 892, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South, and Motion No. 759, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek North.

In addition, Motion No. 913, notice of which was given on Tuesday, March 19, 2024, by the Member for Lake Laberge was not placed on today's Notice Paper, as it is out of order.

I will remind members that they will have a chance to debate the votes found within the budget during Committee of the Whole.

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 like to ask my colleagues to help me in welcoming a number of special guests who are here today for the tribute to the 44th annual Yukon Native Hockey Tournament.

From the Yukon First Nations Hockey Association Board of Directors, we have President Michelle Dawson-Beattie and we have, from the board of directors, Shirley Dawson and Jackie Callahan. We also have a really special guest here today; we have Elder Doug Jim. He is one of the original founders. I think all of us know him as probably the “godfather” of the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament. We have our coordinator, Karee Vallevand. She is really the lifeblood of this event. She has also her sister, Azalea Milwood, who has travelled here from Campbell River, and Landyn Milwood to participate in the weekend. We also have young Olivia Thompson, who is a long-time supporter and I think she probably grew up at the rink with us.

I really want to take this moment to thank all of you and to welcome you the Legislative Assembly today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We have several guests here today for the tribute — l'hommage à la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

From l'Association franco-yukonnaise, we have Justin Ziegler-Giraud, who is a member of the council. We have Kayl'anne Leclerc, comme représentante du service

communications et relations communautaires de l'AFY. We have Marguerite Tölgyesi, gestionnaire jeunesse de l'AFY. We have, from the *L'Aurore boréale*, Gwendoline Le Bomin, journalist.

We have, from École Émilie Tremblay, Marie-Hélène Gagné, directrice.

We have, from Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, Jean-Sébastien Blais, président.

We have, from the Société d'histoire francophone du Yukon, Yann Herry, président.

We have, from the Direction des services en français, FLSD: André Bourcier, directeur; Marie-Claude Desroches-Maheux, analyste des communications; and Nancy Power, gestionnaire, communications bilingues. Also, from the Cabinet Office, Elisha Sidoun, conseillère ministérielle de Ministre Clarke.

If we could welcome them all, please — bienvenue.

Applause

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon Native Hockey Tournament

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament. The puck drop for the 44th annual Kilrich Yukon Native Hockey Tournament presented by Victoria Gold Corp. is tomorrow morning. The tournament has been held since 1973 and is arguably the largest and most enduring made-in-Yukon event.

Every year, players, friends, and family members from all over the territory and from across Turtle Island look forward to assembling in the Yukon's capital for this weekend of reconnection and competition. Last year, the tournament made its return after being on ice for three years because of the pandemic. This would have been the 47th annual tournament and we are so overjoyed to have it back in all of its glory.

I know that the business community is thrilled to have the tournament return along with its enormous economic gains. The return included the introduction of the first-ever women's division, which will feature again in 2024 and will include six teams. In total, 1,129 hockey players are expected in Whitehorse for the tournament. This equates to 56 teams, including 31 from the Yukon communities, 14 from BC, and 11 from Northwest Territories. Along with the players, we expect thousands of tournament fans. The reach of this tournament is remarkable and we welcome all of the visiting teams and supporters to the territory.

With so many visitors coming, we recognize the tremendous amount of work that goes into this event. Thank you to the Yukon First Nations Hockey Association: Michelle Dawson-Beattie, the president; the vice-president, Michael Tuton; the treasurer/secretary, Jackie Callahan; board directors Shirley Dawson, Cheyenne Bradley, Steve Smyth, Ryan Burse — tournament coordinator extraordinaire, Karee Vallevand; coordinator of the youth and jamboree division, Tanya Hope; major volunteers George Skookum, Jonni-lynn Kushniruk, Davina McLeod, Michelle Taylor, Carissa Waugh, Morris Morrison, plus the many other

volunteers for their dedicated work on making this tournament happen.

I encourage everyone here to take in one or many hockey games this weekend. Again, the games get underway tomorrow morning and go right through until Sunday evening.

I am personally looking forward to the opening ceremony on Friday evening where the players are drummed into the arena and where the players get to show their nation colours and really hold their colours with pride. The coveted Harry Allen Memorial Leadership Award and most dedicated hockey mom awards will be given out. I look forward to the energy in the arena, and I hope to see all of you there.

Applause

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the 44th annual Kilrich Yukon Native Hockey Tournament presented by Victoria Gold. The tournament takes place between March 21 and March 24 this year in Whitehorse on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. A remarkable number — 56 teams — from Yukon, British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories will compete over the weekend. They will be joined by family, friends, and spectators from across the Yukon and beyond who can't miss some of the best and most exciting hockey in the north.

The Native Hockey Tournament draws the biggest crowds of any sporting event in the Yukon, and I would be remiss if I did not send our thanks and appreciation to all of those who make it possible. It is an incredible economic driver for our territory, and I know that many local businesses will be looking forward to a very busy next few days.

The Yukon native hockey association together with Finning Canada are hosting a meet and greet during the tournament at the Canada Games Centre on Friday at 3:30 p.m. with NHL alumnus Andrew Ference, which I'm sure will be pretty exciting to those Flames and Oilers fans in attendance, perhaps less so for the Canucks fans who remember 2011.

Thank you first and foremost to the Yukon First Nations Hockey Association, which organizes a seamless event with the help of a dedicated group of people who volunteer to ensure the success of this tournament. Thanks to the board, to all of the volunteers, and to the sponsors who step up with the necessary funds, goods, and services required to put on an event of this magnitude. Of course, all the best to the players, many of whom have had this weekend circled on their calendar all year, and I know that they are all looking forward to competing this weekend.

Best of luck to everyone taking part, and have a fun and safe weekend.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, one of the sure signs of spring, aside from the weather, is the annual Yukon Native Hockey Tournament. I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate and pay tribute to the board, the volunteers, the coaches, players of all ages, and the many, many community fans and supporters who will be in the stands cheering on their teams.

This year will see youth, women, men, and old-timers — the Trailbreakers — participating in this tournament, with eight divisions, over 50 teams, and over 1,000 players. Teams from Yukon, BC, and the Northwest Territories will be competing over four days. I can't even imagine how many games in total that will be.

With so many coming in from all communities, it is a great time to visit and reconnect with friends and family after a long winter and to lose your voice from cheering. I want to wish everyone a safe and fun time this weekend, and go North Yukon Eagles. Mahsi' cho.

Applause

In recognition of Journée internationale de la Francophonie

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Monsieur le Président, Je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour rendre hommage à la communauté francophone du Yukon à l'occasion de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Le thème de cette année, « Créer, innover, entreprendre en français », décrit parfaitement le dynamisme et la diversité de la francophonie yukonnaise.

Je suis particulièrement fier de nos créatrices et créateurs locaux qui contribuent à l'excellente réputation de la scène culturelle et artistique du Yukon. Nous avons la chance de compter de nombreux musiciens et musiciennes, artistes visuels, poètes, acteurs et actrices, écrivains et écrivaines de langue française de talent, et même des artistes qui réalisent des performances participatives avec l'utilisation de la nourriture! J'ai appris récemment que le groupe Soir de Semaine a fêté ses vingt ans le 11 mars dernier. Merci de nous divertir depuis deux décennies et d'inspirer d'autres personnes à créer en français.

Je tiens aussi à féliciter Emmanuelle Pierrot pour son roman La version qui n'intéresse personne qui se passe à Dawson. Son livre gagne en reconnaissance et est en nomination pour de nombreux prix, dont le prix littéraire France-Québec. Merci de permettre à notre territoire de rayonner dans la francophonie.

Je suis aussi impressionné par les figures francophones de l'entrepreneuriat yukonnais. Je vous invite à visiter la page Web de l'AFY intitulée « Francophone et en affaires ». Qu'il s'agisse de fermes, de restaurants, de guides d'excursion, de thérapeutes ou d'entreprises spécialisées, nous sommes très bien servis en français! J'ai aussi entendu dire que l'activité de réseautage organisée le 2 février par l'AFY pour les chefs d'entreprise a été un grand succès. Je tiens à les remercier d'offrir une occasion aux entrepreneurs francophones d'élargir leurs horizons, d'explorer de nouvelles perspectives et de tisser des liens au sein du milieu des affaires. Cette initiative profite non seulement aux chefs d'entreprise, mais elle contribue aussi au développement économique général du Yukon.

J'invite toute la population à célébrer nos créateurs et créatrices, nos chefs d'entreprise, nos innovateurs et innovatrices, et notre remarquable francophonie en participant aux Rendez-vous de la Francophonie. Un grand merci aux organismes francophones, aux artistes, aux chefs d'entreprise, aux innovatrices et innovateurs, et à l'ensemble de la

population yukonnaise, de favoriser l'essor de la francophonie dans le territoire pour les générations à venir.

Vive la Journée internationale de la Francophonie!

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to our vibrant francophone community on this year's Journée Internationale de la Francophonie. Aujourd'hui, we celebrate our French community, nous célébrer their language, their contribution, their culture, and their heritage.

French immersion education has grown immensely in the last number of years. It is incredible to see just how many families seized the opportunity for their children to learn French as a second or subsequent language. The Yukon has the third highest percentage of the population whose first language is French after Québec and New Brunswick. Of that population, only 15 percent is franco-yukonnaise by birth, meaning most have emigrated to the Yukon from other areas.

I can see the draw to the Yukon as I too emigrated to the Yukon, and cannot imagine living anywhere else. In my community alone, I am so amazed to hear a lot of young Filipino-Canadian children speak and write French fluently on top of speaking four to five languages already.

The Yukon also hosts its very own Francophone Day, which will take place on May 15. This is where the real festivities take place, and I look forward to taking part in celebrations.

Je voudrais remercier l'Association franco-yukonnaise for their incredible dedication not only in establishing francophone culture into the social fabric of the Yukon but for continuing to be such a valuable resource for the entire francophone community and for new Yukoners.

I would also like to recognize et remercier Les Essentielles, who provide critical representation, support, and services to franco-yukonnaise women and to the French Language Services Directorate for the work in providing French language services and furthering investments in strengthening bilingual services within the Yukon government and beyond.

Merci et bonne Journée de la Francophonie!

Applause

Ms. White: Merci, Monsieur le Président. Je suis fière de prendre la parole au nom du NPD du Yukon pour célébrer la Journée internationale de la Francophonie et saluer en avance la célébration de la Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise le 15 mai.

En tant qu'anglophone bilingue, je suis fière de refléter un Yukon et un Canada qui valorisent les contributions culturelles et sociales de la communauté francophone. Mes parents, comme beaucoup d'autres, ont reconnu que la langue française est l'une des deux langues officielles du Canada et qu'elle est une partie importante du tissu culturel, historique et linguistique de notre pays. En 1982, ils ont décidé de m'inscrire à la maternelle en immersion française. Cette décision a changé la direction de ma vie. Un merci tout spécial à mes professeurs, comme monsieur Herry de mon programme d'immersion,

grâce à qui je peux encore m'adresser en français à l'Assemblée législative du Yukon.

La communauté francophone du Yukon est vibrante. Elle continue à croître. Elle est reconnue et visible. Elle est une partie intégrante de nos collectivités. C'est avec fierté qu'on peut dire que le Yukon a le plus fort pourcentage, après le Nouveau-Brunswick, de francophones et de francophiles dans l'ensemble de la francophonie minoritaire canadienne. Au Yukon, on a embrassé l'esprit de créer, innover et entreprendre en français. La communauté francophone du Yukon peut célébrer les multiples opportunités et le dynamisme de l'espace francophone qui encouragent la créativité, l'innovation et l'entrepreneuriat comme des leviers de création d'emplois pour la jeunesse. Le bilinguisme français-anglais est de plus en plus présent au Yukon. Cette croissance constante, tant en nombre qu'en pourcentage, démontre l'attrait de la langue française dans notre territoire.

C'est un plaisir encore une fois de souhaiter à toutes et à tous une excellente Journée internationale de la Francophonie et de vous remercier pour votre contribution au Yukon.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I have two documents for tabling. The first is a statement from the Premier's office on January 20, 2023. The second is a letter from the Office of the Premier to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Government Affairs concerning a firearms officer, and this is from January 18, 2024.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling an economists' statement on carbon pricing signed by over 1,700 economists issued by the European Association of Environmental and Resource Economists.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I have the following documents for tabling: a study entitled *How Is the US Pricing Carbon? How Could We Price Carbon?*, which was completed by researchers from Harvard, Berkley, the World Bank, and others; a paper entitled *The creation of a global carbon market: A taxonomy of carbon pricing under Article 6* from the University of Oxford; I have an article from MIT entitled "Toward a just energy transition: A distributional analysis of low-carbon policies in the US"; and I have a study from the University of Leeds and the London School of Economics and Political Science, among others, entitled *Carbon pricing with regressive co-benefits: evidence from British Columbia's carbon tax*; and finally, Mr. Speaker, I have the Yukon Party's 2021 platform commitment to bring a carbon-pricing system to the Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today the 2022-23 report on French language services.

I also have for tabling an article entitled “Climate Change, the Global Effects”.

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House looks forward to the Yukon Party revealing later today the details of their 2021 platform carbon-pricing plan.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports visitors wearing cultural or religious regalia, including hats or headdresses, in the gallery.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Yukon firearms legislation

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, firearms ownership and responsible use are an important part of many Yukoners’ lifestyles. Across the country, statistics consistently prove that the vast majority of gun crime involves illegal weapons obtained on the black market and/or smuggled from the US, mostly in connection with organized crime. Despite this, the Trudeau Liberal government has chosen to divide Canadians by playing politics to appeal to uninformed southern voters and attacking the rights of innocent people who have lawfully acquired firearms. Two provinces have taken action to defend property rights of their citizens from federal overreach.

Will this Liberal government join us in supporting the development of a Yukon firearms act to protect the rights of hunters and other innocent firearms owners, and will the Premier agree to begin this work by consulting with Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I did have an opportunity today just to table the public position that we took around Bill C-21 after the then-Minister of Public Safety from the federal government sat down with Yukoners and also heard very clearly as well from First Nation leaders about their concerns with Bill C-21. Of course, early on in my mandate in this job, I echoed those concerns.

I think that today we are going to have an opportunity to debate later on what we are seeing a couple of other provinces do. I will have an opportunity at that point to talk about how we are engaging and how we have already engaged and really taking a look at what has happened in the country going back to the 2000 Supreme Court case and then, of course, this legislation that has been tabled now.

I don’t see that there is a definitive pathway forward. I do see that two jurisdictions have moved toward drawing up legislation. At this particular time, I think that it is also

important for us to continue to dialogue with Canada about the uniqueness of the north and specifically the Yukon, whether it’s having a firearm in place because it’s for safety on the job or for recreational or traditional hunting purposes.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government consistently puts its relationship with the Ottawa Liberals under Justin Trudeau above their duty to work for Yukoners. In the Yukon, many people depend on hunting, including subsistence hunting, to feed their families. Hunting rifles purchased as unrestricted or handed down from a parent to their child are on the long list of rifles that the Trudeau Liberals want to confiscate.

Both Alberta and Saskatchewan have passed legislation to impede any gun confiscation move by the federal government, including empowering a regulatory and licensing framework aimed at preventing gun confiscation agents from ever being able to seize lawfully acquired firearms from innocent people.

Will the Premier agree to develop a Yukon firearms act that includes similar measures to protect innocent people from any attempt by the federal government to forcibly confiscate their lawfully acquired private property?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, first, I think it will be important today — the member opposite, who formerly had responsibility as the Minister of Justice, getting up today and asking the Yukon government to move forward and to engage with Yukoners on a made-in-Yukon legislation — maybe for the third question, just to verify: Can the member opposite let us know if that will be held up and seen in the court of law in Canada, and has that work been done? I’m not aware that the work has been done. The member opposite might have a better sense and have due diligence. So, just again, will that provincial legislation stand up in a court of law, based on reflecting on the 2000 Supreme Court case that spoke to a jurisdiction?

Beyond that, look, I think what we have to continue to understand is that things are unique in the north. We’re in a position where, in rural Canada — not just in the north — we need to make sure that individuals have their rights upheld and that they have the right to go out and use the appropriate firearms to hunt with.

I think we have been very loud collectively in the Yukon, even in this House — all members have spoken out. But we’re getting into a very specific question about jurisdiction and, maybe to shed some light for us, I would like to hear from the member opposite on his work — to tell us if this will stand up in a court of law.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Speaker, like the legislative assemblies and governments in Alberta and Saskatchewan, we do believe that the Yukon can and should take action in this area, but we have seen this territorial Liberal government be very reluctant to stand up to the Trudeau government to defend the interests of Yukoners, including waffling on this issue of property rights.

When the House passed a motion opposing the use of policing resources to assist in the federal government’s gun confiscation program, the Liberals voted against protecting Yukon hunters from the politically motivated federal Liberal attack on their property rights, despite the union representing

RCMP members saying that the federal gun confiscation program will divert police resources from where they are needed most.

Another measure we have pushed for is the establishment of a territorially appointed chief firearms officer position for the Yukon. One of the few positive changes made to the monstrosity that was Bill C-21 allows for the creation of such a position. Will the Premier agree to act now to establish a chief firearms officer who answers to Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I have just asked the member opposite — thank you for clarifying that you do not have the knowledge if this would stand up in a court of law. I think that is very clear. It makes for great fodder during Question Period, but is it legally binding? That's a lot of work that has to be done from a justice perspective.

The members opposite can laugh if they will, but if you go back to the Supreme Court case of 2000, I think that is probably the starting point in looking at what this legislation will be.

Secondly, the letter I tabled today is a letter concerning a chief firearms officer and the perspective that there should be the support for a Yukon-based chief firearms officer. That would also reflect on the first part of the question where we talk about making sure there is not excessive pressure on the RCMP and understanding, within that process, who would be the officer dealing with those interactions with the public.

Again, take an opportunity to look at the letter. I look forward to the debate this afternoon. One of the first things I spoke to nationally was Bill C-21 in standing up for Yukoners. As a person who spends downtime, whether it is hunting or using firearms and understanding and doing that from probably the age of eight to here I am at 50 — I have always been around firearms in rural Canada and here in the north. I will continue to stand up, as I have from the start.

Question re: Shakwak project funding

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, many Yukoners who drove to and from the Arctic Winter Games in Alaska recently had the chance to experience something my constituents face every day, and that is the sorry state of the north Alaska Highway.

Over the past years, the Yukon government has jointly applied to the US federal government for infrastructure funding that was launched by President Biden, but in February 2023, the Yukon jointly applied for \$25 million US with the State of Alaska under the RAISE program. Then, in August 2023, the Yukon applied for \$31.25 million US, jointly with the State of Alaska, under the MPDG program.

Can the minister tell us if any of our funding applications have been successful?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that question. The Government of Yukon continues to work with US and Alaskan officials with respect to the 2021 *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*. While the act does not commit any specific dollar amount to the reconstruction project, it allows the Yukon and Alaska to apply for US funding for this project on the highway.

In December 2022, the US Department of Transportation announced a \$1.5-billion fund through the rebuilding American infrastructure and sustainability equity grant program, also referred to as the RAISE discretionary grant program. The State of Alaska, in collaboration with the Government of Yukon, applied to the RAISE program on February 27, 2023 seeking approximately \$25 million US for the north Alaska Highway. Unfortunately, in that year, the application was not successful.

However, in December 2023, the US Department of Transportation announced a second \$1.5 billion in funding for the RAISE grant program for 2024. Highways and Public Works worked closely with our Alaskan counterparts to prepare for the 2024 RAISE application, strengthened by the learnings from the 2023 RAISE application was submitted by February 28, 2024 with letters of support from the federal Minister of Transport, Pablo Rodriguez, and Yukon's Member of Parliament, Brendan Hanley.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, according to the public information from the department, the Yukon government has submitted another proposal to the RAISE program earlier this year. Since the Yukon government's previous submissions have been unsuccessful, can the minister tell us what changes have been made in the most recent application to hopefully make it successful?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet via Zoom with the Commissioner and Transportation Secretary from Alaska, Minister Anderson, following up with an in-person meeting with Governor Dunleavy and Commissioner Anderson on February 8, 2024. We have been in frequent dialogue with them. They have provided guidance as to how one could have a stronger application. An independent review of our application was complimentary, and they said it was a strong application that was clearly written by a transportation expert.

As I indicated, the governor and Commissioner Anderson dedicated time to visit the Yukon on February 8, 2024 to discuss highway funding for the Shakwak corridor. A memorandum of understanding between Alaska and Government of Yukon was signed to create an official partnership with Alaska's Department of Transportation in order to develop a project description that may be included in a state-wide transportation improvement program. Allocations under this program, Mr. Speaker, will require votes in the state legislature and ultimately come from the US federal funding application.

As the member opposite correctly identified, this is a separate funding program than the raised discretionary grant program. This is another alternative funding program and more to come.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, anyone who has driven that section of the highway recently will know how bad it has become. I just want to give total credit to the crews up there who do the best that they can. I think that we can all agree that additional funding from the American government would be welcome and would help address the state of disrepair that this section of highway is currently in, but regardless of whether or not we are successful in attracting American federal

infrastructure funding, my constituents still want to see improvements to the highway.

So, will the minister of highways agree to make improvements to the north Alaska Highway to address the sorry state of one of Yukon's major highways?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, now I do have the opportunity to highlight the fantastic work that the Department of Highways and Public Works actually did on this portion of highway, notwithstanding the incredibly challenging conditions that exist in the non-permanent permafrost between Burwash Landing and Beaver Creek.

While we attempt to secure funding from the US, the Department of Highways and Public Works continues to inspect and maintain segments of the north Alaska Highway. In 2023, the department rehabilitated 45 kilometres of BST, 27 kilometres of gravel road, and completed more than seven kilometres of gravel patching work on the north Alaska Highway. Highways and Public Works' Transportation Maintenance branch operates two camps that service the north Alaska Highway exclusively: one in Destruction Bay and one in Beaver Creek.

Operation and maintenance expenses for the portion of the highway vary from year to year; however, the capital expenditures for the north Alaska Highway are estimated to be nearly \$3.4 million for the 2023-24 fiscal year, expressed on a per-kilometre basis that is above average.

Thanks, and kudos to the hard-working staff at Highways and Public Works.

Question re: Downtown school replacement

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, recently, the Yukon government announced that the site at 5th and Rogers had been sold to a development company to build several hundred units in the downtown area. I am glad to see this government, after decades of delays, finally getting this lot turned into housing.

However, it does raise some questions about the long-term vision for the downtown core. We need to take a good, hard look at what we want our neighbourhood to look like in the next 10 years, in the next 20 years. If we want a vibrant and liveable neighbourhood, we must prioritize the resources and infrastructure that support the quality of life for downtown residents, and that means an elementary school.

Can this government provide an update on plans for a downtown elementary school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I'm really proud to stand today and talk about some of the great work that our government is committed to doing, which is really investing in infrastructure, ensuring that we are planning for the short-, medium-, and long-term facilities that are needed in the Yukon. The Yukon's five-year capital plan includes school replacement and renovation projects to ensure that all buildings are safe and suitable for many years to come.

We are pleased that work is underway and on track for new schools in Whistle Bend and Burwash Landing. Planning has started for the replacement of the École Whitehorse Elementary School. Again, I'm very proud of the commitments that we are making. We are also — work that is underway for this year,

2023-24: experiential learning spaces that are being constructed in several Yukon schools. I would be happy to talk a little bit more about that.

We did engage and took a broad view and look at the Whitehorse community infrastructure needs. We worked with community partners in the spring of 2023. We have released a "what we heard" around that report, and I'll be happy to continue to add more to this discussion.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, the government is encouraging densification through housing developments but has yet to describe what they are doing to support the families who live in the downtown core. Schools are an essential aspect of a healthy community, and closing École Whitehorse Elementary School with no plans to replace it downtown says to families that downtown is not a place for them, that it's not a place for their children.

Downtown residents have made it very clear that they want an elementary school in their neighbourhood, but the minister has been non-committal. However, just last week, the Premier told the press that it was unfortunate that there were no plans for a school and — quote: "... as thousands of people move into the downtown core, we will have to contemplate about a site for an educational structure..."

With all of those mixed messages, people need clarity. Can the Premier give downtown residents some clarity about the future of a downtown elementary school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, infrastructure investment in our schools — short, medium, and long term — are really important to our government. It's important to Yukoners; it's important to us — absolutely. We did a broad engagement looking at Whitehorse-based schools just last spring. We have released that document.

I have definitely had the opportunity to personally meet with downtown residents. We have received a lot of feedback from folks. We certainly take all of that into consideration, as well as new developments that are underway in our downtown core. I have never said no to a school in the downtown area. Right now, we are focusing on planning for École Whitehorse Elementary School. We will continue to assess the growth needs and pressures that we have within all of our schools to make good, well-informed decisions that, again, align with what is important to Yukoners. We know that schools are an essential part of our community and we will continue to work with all of our partners around determining future capital investment.

Speaker: Order, please.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, this government keeps saying that they are going to work to determine where schools are needed in the future. Well, Whistle Bend is getting a new school, Riverdale is jam-packed with schools, and Takhini is getting another one whether they want it or not. With thousands of people moving into the downtown core, the solution is obvious.

The Premier needs to own up to the fact that his government isn't thinking big picture when it comes to densifying the city. Study after study shows that schools are an essential part of a healthy, vibrant neighbourhood. Something

that I keep coming back to is a letter I received that said that if you take out the neighbourhood school now, in 20 years, you will need a revitalization project.

We can avoid that damage by planning today for a new downtown elementary school. Why won't this government listen to downtown residents and commit to building a new elementary school downtown?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, to the comment from the member across the way about not looking forward, I think that, first of all, we have talked for the last number of years about making sure that we have put infrastructure investments into every corner of the Yukon and making sure that we fill the gaps and future-proof our communities for the growth that we're seeing.

Secondly, I want to commend the previous minister and the current minister on the work that has been done on this. There have been tremendous conversations and there is a planning process that does have to happen — of course there is. You saw this government build more schools over the last number of years. We are getting ready, of course, for Whistle Bend, and that's the first one in decades — that there has been a school. The member opposite rafted off schools, but those were built 30 or 40 years ago for the most part. What we are seeing now is the completion of at least one high school, dealing with some of the challenges and flaws of the previous project done under the last government, and now an elementary school and planning for another school.

Again, we are going to continue to work with the downtown residents. It's important to note that 5th and Rogers, after decades of previous governments making commitments on it — yes, it is moving toward development. We're going to have to see what kind of development that is and what the demographic is.

We also have to take into consideration that we have the grader station, which can have even three times as many people. So, all those things will be taken into consideration as we see where populations are going downtown, and we'll continue to do the good work we're doing right now —

Speaker: Order.

Question re: Extended health benefit insurance for Government of Yukon employees

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, on Monday, I asked the Minister of the Public Service Commission about the government's plan to increase health benefits for employees' and retirees' extended health care premiums by an incredible 52.8 percent. When asked about how the decision was made, the minister replied that it was a decision of the joint action committee and — quote: "... it's not up to the minister responsible to negotiate."

However, the *Whitehorse Star* reported that the president of the Yukon Employees' Union disagreed with the minister on this. The *Whitehorse Star* reported that the YEU president said that the *Public Service Group Insurance Benefit Plan Act* does, in fact, give the Finance minister decision-making power.

Now that the YEU president has confirmed that the minister has the authority to intervene, will he revisit the

decision to increase the cost of these benefits by a massive 52.8 percent?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the JMC has employee representatives who are included from the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, one from the confidential exclusion, one from the Yukon Employees' Union, and one from management.

The employer — Yukon government — has three representatives on this joint management committee — two from the Public Service Commission and one from the Department of Finance.

The member opposite is partially correct from the comments from the media, which is that the only way the minister would have the ability to change these recommendations would be if I was instructed to do so from the JMC itself.

Ms. Clarke: When I first asked the minister about the 52.8-percent increase to health benefits for employees' and retirees' extended health care premiums, he indicated that the joint action committee decision is made up of both employee and employer representatives. However, in the *Whitehorse Star* story, the union president shared that the YEU representative on the committee was not at the February 29 meeting that approved the change, so the decision was made without any input from the union. In fact, the union president said that the YEU was — quote: "... surprised by the PSC's announcement..."

Since the minister has the authority to intervene and the decision was made without a representative from the union, will he go back to the union and review the decision to increase the cost of these benefits by a massive 52.8 percent?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite should listen to the answers before they go back to their speaking notes. Again, when it comes to my ability as minister to intervene on the good work being done by a joint committee — I am only able to do that if I get a recommendation from the JMC to do so. I am clarifying that because I did answer that in the beginning.

Also, this committee does meet on consensus. They have quorum at the meetings. I believe that they did wait some extra time and informed all of the different organizations and unions of the time of this meeting. They weren't told that nobody was going to show up at that time — but at the same time had a meeting. Unions were there with representation. A consensus decision was made from the committee.

We also have talked on the floor of the Legislative Assembly that the rate increase also came with last year's no increases/decreases. There has been a whole bunch of reasons as to why the joint management committee does the exceptional good work that they do — the tough work that they do — to make sure that our public servants have the benefits that they need to have during some very trying times and have to make those decisions with the evidence that they have in front of them. I commend the work that the joint management committee does for Yukoners and their benefits.

Question re: Skagway marine services

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Premier told the Legislature that, despite the fact that the government was removing funding for the Skagway port from the budget, it was still a priority. He said that there was \$44.65 million in future years allocated for this project, so can the Premier explain why this \$44.65 million does not appear in the five-year capital plan?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, while the Skagway marine services platform is not specifically highlighted in the 2024-25 five-year capital plan highlight document, \$44.7 million in funding is included in the fiscal plan in 2025-26 through fiscal 2027-28.

The funding for this project is included within the real property and asset management category in the table titled “Total planned capital spending by investment category” on page 8 of the 2024-25 five-year capital plan.

The project’s funding is being reprofiled into future years and was also highlighted in this year’s Budget Address on the final page, which I believe was page 18.

We continue to work with the Municipality of Skagway to progress the project and negotiate an export cooperation agreement. We will continue to provide updates as milestones are reached, including highlighting this project in the five-year capital plan once an agreement is in place.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, that begs the question: What other \$44-million projects are in this secret five-year capital plan that the minister is alluding to?

So, many in the mining industry were surprised at the Premier’s announcement that the money that he voted to include in the budget back in November was removed in the supplementary budget that is before this House today.

So, can the Premier tell us whether or not he consulted or informed anyone in the mining industry prior to removing the money for the port from the budget?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, first, there has been a dialogue happening with industry throughout the last number of years around this project. We have informed and spoken to the private sector around the fact that the contract, through the last public tendering process held by the borough of Skagway — they did not sign off on the contract and they wanted greater information. I think that the private sector has been engaging — in the mining sector — directly with the borough around the information that they want before they go forward. In our reasoning, we think that it will take this year to do that work, so we have pushed forward the funding for the next three fiscal years. The number that we have taken is the best number that we have, which is the number that we saw the capital project identified as — the cost identified — in the public process that did occur last year.

Again, we are still committed. I know that the Yukon Party is doing their due diligence on the technology and spent some time following up on some of the innovation that we talked about. I am glad to see that they made that commitment and went and looked at some of the container bulk-hauling systems.

Again, we are going to be staying committed to this, and throughout the whole process, we have been having discussions

back and forth. Any surprise might have been misinformation provided by the members across the way.

Question re: Yukon First Nation procurement policy

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, so we continue to hear concerns from contractors about the implementation of the First Nation procurement policy. The problems that many representatives from industry pointed out to the government during the policy’s development are now becoming a reality. We continue to hear about shell companies that have been set up specifically to take advantage of this policy. We have heard of the bid value reduction system being manipulated by Outside companies to their own advantage. Unfortunately, none of this helps First Nation companies or local companies here in the Yukon.

Will the minister agree to suspend this flawed policy and go back to the drawing board to come up with something that actually works?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon First Nation procurement policy helps level the playing field for First Nation people and businesses and promotes a more inclusive economy. This policy positions the Yukon government as a leader in Indigenous procurement and has been widely praised as a model for other jurisdictions to follow. It has opened the door for larger conversations between the Yukon government, First Nations, and industry on how we can make government procurement benefit everyone.

This policy presents a positive step forward toward advancing reconciliation, and it has been done in collaboration with Yukon First Nation partners. It has now been more than three years since this policy was implemented, and the Yukon remains ahead of other jurisdictions when it comes to commitments and actions on Indigenous procurement.

Mr. Speaker, other Canadian provinces and territories and the federal government are looking to the Yukon to understand how they can leverage our experience to advance their own journeys toward reconciliation. For example, the department participated in recent meetings to share lessons learned and best practices with the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business on January 26, 2024, with the City of Toronto on January 29, 2024, and with the City of Edmonton on March 7, 2024.

There is good news with respect to the Yukon First Nation procurement policy, and we are nation-leading in this process.

Mr. Hassard: I would have to disagree with the minister on a lot of that.

Last year, a consultant conducted a two-year review of the policy, and one of the key findings was that there is an overwhelming perception in the industry that there is widespread — and I will quote: “... ‘gaming’ or using loopholes in the BVR administration...” This is exactly the concern that this government heard from industry when the policy was being introduced.

What changes has the government made to address these significant concerns?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question from the member opposite.

Bid value reductions are an important way to meet the objectives of the Yukon First Nation procurement policy. They are accessible to all businesses and increase the competitiveness of bids that include Yukon First Nation participation. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, an independent contractor was hired to conduct a two-year review of the bid value reduction measure. The consultant produced a report that was published on yukon.ca/en/growing-together on October 18, 2023.

The key findings are that bid value reductions are resulting in an increase in the number of contracts awarded to Yukon First Nation businesses and an increase in bids from Yukon First Nation businesses. Data does not indicate evidence of unintended negative consequences for bid value reductions, such as large market disruptions. There is a perception that people could be using loopholes in the way that value reductions are administered to benefit from the policy; however, pursuant to this report, there were very few specific examples of potentially problematic procurements brought forward. Mr. Speaker, socio-economic and cultural changes are long-term endeavours that require ongoing relationship-building, education, and communication.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the Leader of the Official Opposition has said that he does not support this policy. We do, and we are doing the hard work.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, every year, the Monitor and Review Committee makes recommendations to the government about how the policy can be updated and improved. In 2023 in the Monitor and Review Committee report, the committee pointed out some significant challenges and problems with the policy and the government's implementation of the policy.

My question again is very simple, Mr. Speaker: Has the government made a single change to the policy as a result of the recommendations of the Monitor and Review Committee?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, with Yukon First Nation and industry representatives, we co-developed the terms and references for the Monitor and Review Committee. This committee meets monthly, and it is responsible for monitoring outcomes of the policy and providing recommendations to the Yukon government in order to improve the policy. This committee's role is vital in order to ensure that the policy measures are contributing to advancing the policy's objectives and principles.

The committee's first annual report was released on March 15, 2023 and is available online. The report provides over one year's worth of data on the outcomes of the policy. Some of the highlights include: 6.2 percent of awarded contracts went to Yukon First Nation businesses; 17 tenders were re-ranked due to the application of bid value reductions; and the total value of the contracts awarded to Yukon First Nation businesses was approximately \$48 million.

Mr. Speaker, moving forward, the committee will continue to conduct regular data analysis and to monitor for any market disruption. The next reporting cycle will switch to a fiscal year report and will be released in the summer of 2024.

Mr. Speaker, expressed as a percentage, 6.3 percent — obviously, there is still work to be done. The member opposite

will know that, in the last three fiscal years, we have had \$434 million, \$547 million, and \$484 —

Speaker: Order.

The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Clerk: Motion No. 906, standing in the name of Mr. Istchenko.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Kluane: THAT the Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly transmit to the Prime Minister of Canada that it is the opinion of this House that the Government of Canada's planned increase to the carbon tax on April 1, 2024 should be cancelled.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, this is an honour for me to rise in the House today to talk to this motion, especially because it is near and dear to my constituents and all Yukoners. Let me start by saying that the motion I put forward is about affordability and the cost of living for Yukoners. It is about a government standing by Yukoners — not standing against them.

The Yukon Party has always been opposed to the Liberal carbon tax here in the Yukon. We have never thought that it would be effective but that it would actually be harmful to our economy and the lives of Yukon citizens. That is why we pushed for a specific northern carve-out to the tax. When the Environment minister announced the imposition of the carbon tax at the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment meetings in Montréal in 2016, we stood with our northern neighbours and fought for an exemption. That is the reason that we negotiated a specific carve-out for northern Canadians in the Vancouver Declaration. That carve-out says that any policy should recognize the particular realities of Canada's Indigenous peoples and Arctic and sub-Arctic regions.

The Liberal Finance minister ignored that and fought the carve-out and did whatever Trudeau wanted him to do. So, to eliminate the carbon tax, the Yukon Party changed their approach. We aimed to take it apart piece by piece. Last election, we promised to start by getting rid of the carbon tax on home heating fuel, because Yukoners don't have a choice about heating their homes during the winter. In the Northwest Territories, they were originally able to negotiate an exemption for home heating fuel from the carbon tax, and many Yukoners took notice of that.

At the time, we were told that would never be possible. Despite this, less than a year ago, the federal government announced that they were caving to political pressure and announced that the carbon tax would be removed from home heating oil until after the next election.

We were pleased to see that this has happened and that we were right. The whole logic of the carbon tax is falling apart. It simply has not had the effect that was intended. It is making life

more expensive for Canadians who are already dealing with massive inflation, and further increases will be very harmful.

We also don't think the Liberal version of the carbon tax is the most effective way to fight climate change. There are other more effective ways for governments to do that, and we have seen those around the world and even right next door in the United States of America.

This cost-of-living crisis has become so severe that many people simply cannot afford another tax increase by a government. Carbon tax and its effects and the upcoming increase has been dominating the news cycles lately — nationally, too. It has been a key part of Question Period in the House of Commons. It has been a major discussion point in legislatures across the country. Mr. Speaker, Yukoners cannot afford this tax, let alone an increase to this tax. Everything has gone up. The price of goods and services, fuel, electricity — basically everything we touch or do daily is more expensive.

I stood in the House when the government was promoting this great, new tax that would solve all the problems and that would help to end climate change and make the polluter pay, but that's not how it's going. Yukoners are having to decide whether to pay to heat their homes or to go buy groceries. This isn't an exaggeration. This is a real problem that many, many families are facing.

If the members sitting across the way have not heard this exact thing from Yukoners, they must be hiding and not actually speaking to their constituents. We are hearing similar stories like this from across the country. Canadians can't afford this tax increase.

Other governments are realizing — other Liberal governments are asking the federal government to pause the carbon tax increase set for April 1, but our Premier is a carbon tax hardliner and pretty much the last Liberal leader in Canada to stand up to the Prime Minister's failed carbon tax policy.

There is a growing movement across the country of political leaders urging the federal government to halt this upcoming tax hike. We have seen at least seven provinces write the Prime Minister to make this request. Here's what the Premier of Prince Edward Island told the Prime Minister — and I will quote: "With most goods arriving by diesel trucks ... adding to the cost of gas and diesel continually drives up the costs to goods, services, and food for Islanders." He goes on to say: "When we don't have any other alternatives here, it becomes punitive and unfair tax." I couldn't agree more, because this is exactly the case here in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, even the last remaining Liberal province is against the carbon tax hike. Here is what the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador said in a letter to the Prime Minister — and I will quote: "The coming almost 25 percent increase ... in the federal carbon tax on April 1st is causing understandable worry as people consider how they will manage the mounting financial strain."

There are many in the Alberta NDP who also agree. At least candidates for the leadership of the Alberta NDP are campaigning against the carbon tax. Even among Liberals, Mr. Speaker, there is a growing resistance to this tax increase. The Leader of the Liberal Party in Nova Scotia opposes the

April 1 tax hike, and so does the leader of the New Brunswick liberal party, Susan Holt. Even more surprising is that the Ontario Liberals are now backing down from their support for the carbon tax. It has truly become a national movement against this tax hike.

Yet still, in Question Period last week, the Yukon's Finance minister said — and I quote: "... it's not clear what the members opposite don't understand. They know that the Yukon carbon rebate program returns all of the carbon levies back to individuals, back to businesses, First Nation governments, and municipalities." If this is what the Liberal government truly believes, then they should have no problem standing against this hike. After all, it is just given back to the people anyway. But they don't seem to understand that this tax hike hurts people up front, only for them to get a few dollars back way down the road. Most would rather keep their money than face higher taxes on their daily expenses.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation is calling on the federal government to scrap the carbon tax, following the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report. According to the CTF, it shows that the carbon tax costs families hundreds of dollars more than they get back in rebates. The carbon tax costs families hundreds of dollars more every year than the rebates they get back — that is what Franco Terrazanno, the federal director of CTF, said. He said that the PBO shows politicians are using magic math to sell their carbon tax — magic math.

Along with this being a failure across the country, here in the Yukon, the Liberals can't even get the rebates to Yukoners. Right now, the government is sitting on \$22.7 million unpaid to Yukon citizens and Yukon businesses. This is even higher than last year. This is unacceptable and it just shows some of the many challenges with this policy.

It was a few years ago when the then-Premier, now Finance minister, was championing this failed tax. He said to me that the residents of Beaver Creek are going to have to get used to paying more for diapers in Beaver Creek. Those are the words of the former Premier, now our Finance minister. Well, he wasn't wrong about them costing more due to this tax, but I can sure say that they don't like getting used to this. They, among many other Yukoners, are just trying to make it day to day trying to decide which bill to pay. The carbon tax is a major contributor to this problem.

I was speaking to a constituent who just made the drive to Alaska for the Arctic Winter Games. A gallon of diesel fuel in Alaska was \$3.39 in American dollars, which translates to \$1.20 per litre here in Canadian dollars. Here in Whitehorse, diesel is sitting just under \$2 per litre and looking at another significant jump on April 1 — another increase. If this tax hike goes ahead, Yukoners will be paying almost 18 cents per litre for gas and over 21 cents per litre for diesel — all of this during a cost-of-living crisis.

It is ludicrous that Canadians are facing such high prices as a result of decisions made by their own governments, even more so when there is the chance for governments to hit the pause button instead of putting more hardship on Canadian families, and our very own government refuses to do it.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to this motion passing here today. I look forward to seeing Yukoners send a message to Ottawa that we stand with the rest of Canada against this carbon tax increase. I sure hope that the members who vote in this Legislature today think about their constituents and the high cost of living.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the member opposite for the opportunity to speak again about carbon pricing.

At the heart of the matter is addressing climate change. I was impressed to hear the Member for Kluane at least reference it once or twice in his remarks. It seems to get lost in a lot of the dialogue about carbon pricing, so let's begin by talking about what we're trying to do here collectively. It's about addressing climate change. It's about how we reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, which is trying to deal with the causes of climate change.

At the same time, I think he is right — it is a question about affordability. How do we make sure that we do this in a way that is affordable for Yukoners, for Canadians, for people? And it is about how we make this transition away from fossil fuels.

The reason that I start with this comment is because, when I saw an article in the paper — and some of the media that I have seen around it — there was all this conversation about taxes and prices and rebates, but it was missing the conversation about trying to address climate change. If we are going to talk about this again, I am not going to let go of that link.

Who are we trying to talk about here? Well, we are certainly trying to talk about Yukoners. We are also trying to talk about the planet and the well-being of the planet. We are trying to talk about future Yukoners. We are trying to talk about how to balance the costs of these actions against the costs of inaction, which I never hear the members opposite talk about. I will reference their platform, by the way, as I make these remarks, but I think that it is critical that we start off just by noting that, when I think about this issue, I do talk to Yukoners who don't agree with the carbon price and I talk to lots who do. In fact, at the last election, this was an election issue; in the election before, this was an election issue. In fact, both in the territorial election and in the federal election, this was an election issue, and it appears to me that the Yukon Party wishes to again make this an election issue. I think that is great, and certainly the federal Conservatives — their counterparts — wish to make it an election issue. So, it will be — let us call it three election cycles — three territorial elections, three federal elections.

The purpose of a carbon price is to try to give a signal to the whole of the economy that we are trying to make this transition away from fossil fuels. When I hear the comments from the Member for Kluane as he rises to talk about it, I think that he is addressing the very immediate needs — should I pay a dollar here or not and how will that impact this specific household? I think that is a really important question, but you also have to ask yourself the question about what the cost is down the road.

Some of the information that I will share today is about those ongoing costs. I sort of think about a couple of people — so that I try to put this in mind and try to get it away from us as the members of this Assembly and think about some average Yukoners. One of the people who I will think about is — I'm not going to name names, but he is a great guy in my riding who has done a ton of volunteering. He is retired and often, when he has heard me talk about climate change, will sort of swear at me and say, "John, do you know what you're talking about? Is this real?" He isn't so sure that this is something that's happening. He doesn't think that carbon pricing is a great idea. I will also think about his granddaughter, who now has a degree in environment, has come back to the Yukon, and is working here. She talks to her grandfather about the issue of climate change. Those are the two people who I am going to keep in mind. I appreciate both their sets of values. I am going to try to talk about these issues — the question of dealing with climate change, which is not a simple question by far, and the question of affordability.

When I learned yesterday that the Yukon Party wished to bring this motion here for debate today, I have to say that I thought about it a lot. My reason is that this has been an issue that I have dealt with for more than 35 years now. It has been a focus of a lot of my professional career. I'm going to reference some of that work to try to give a sense of this particular policy and why I think it's worth debating and why I think it's worth having it even in an election.

I ask myself the question, "What am I going to do today that will make a difference?" I think that this is the moment. When the House Leader for the Yukon Party let us know that this motion was coming forward and that we would be debating Motion No. 906, I started thinking about it. Actually, I couldn't get to sleep, I was thinking about it so much.

Let me just begin by saying that, when the Member for Kluane just got up, he believes — or his party believes — that this is harmful to our economy, that his party would have sought an exemption, certainly around home heating fuel. He thinks it's wrong to have tax increases — at least the Yukoners he has talked with. He spoke about affordability issues, cost-of-living issues, expenses, and inflation a half dozen times in his opening remarks.

Let me just for a minute talk about how often this issue has come up in this Assembly. Back when the Yukon Party was in power in 2016, there was work that they did on the Vancouver Declaration. We didn't have very much dialogue on carbon pricing that I saw, but in the 34th Legislative Assembly after the 2016 Yukon election, we certainly did see it. The first question in Question Period was about carbon pricing. The opposition felt it was a pretty big issue. The very first question that we had, as a government, was on carbon pricing. The second question was on carbon pricing. A third time that same day, there was a question on carbon pricing. In fact, during the 34th Legislative Assembly, I counted 51 times that the Yukon Party raised the question on carbon pricing to the Liberal government.

I will note that there was once when the NDP raised a question on carbon pricing. Their question was that we should

go further with carbon pricing, but that wasn't the Yukon Party's —

Then, I also noted that the first motion that we debated — which was brought by the Yukon Party on a Wednesday like today — in the 34th Assembly was also on carbon pricing. So, it was a pretty important issue from that respect.

Since then, in the 35th Assembly — since the 2021 election — I went back and I saw 17 times. I haven't counted this week yet, so I would have to look back again, but let's say just under 20 times where carbon tax or carbon rebate questions were brought forward.

We also had a bill on carbon rebates that we debated and which got unanimous consent here in the House, but also, from the Member for Kluane, we had Motion No. 519, which was brought on November 9 and 23, which was talking about home heating. The main thing that I want to say is — a lot of focus on the issue.

By the way, the Member for Kluane, when he talked about this, he said that the carbon price on gas was going to 18 cents and it was going to 21 cents, but of course, the motion before us is talking about the increase to the carbon price on April 1 and that it should be cancelled. That is what we are debating. So, that increase is three cents: three cents on gas, and it might be three or three-and-a-half cents on diesel. That is what we are debating today. I think that is important. We are going from \$65 a tonne to \$80 a tonne on emissions.

Now, why do we have this policy in the first place? Let me, just for a second, talk about the purpose of the policy. It is very fundamental; it is to put a price on pollution. It is so that we say to the world: "These are things that we want to try to move away from." To this day, I am not sure where the Yukon Party is on this. I mean, I know that they don't support carbon pricing, but what I don't know is whether they truly are trying to address climate change or whether that is lip service.

So, let me go over some of that history so that we can just sort of get a sense of it. I know, for example, that in about 2006, Premier Fentie — who I think had just become the Minister of Environment — signed the Montréal Declaration, which basically said that climate change is a big deal and that it is impacting the north faster than other places. I was very supportive of that move of the Premier at the time.

Within a few years, that was followed by the Yukon *Climate Change Action Plan*. I think that was about 2009. That report came out, and it sort of had four priorities: leadership — the government should take a lead on addressing these issues; education — so that we inform the public about the challenges of climate change; mitigation — which is about addressing the root causes of climate change; and adaptation — which is addressing the impacts of climate change so that you don't stay in harm's way or you can take advantage if there is a positive outcome from climate change.

That plan was a good first plan, but, you know, what it didn't have was goals to reduce our emissions. It didn't have anything that committed us to try to reduce our emissions. It kind of said that we had reduced our emissions, but as I have pointed out previously in this House, that really came from the fact that the Faro mine had closed. When you looked at our

prior emissions, they looked high because we had the Faro mine operating and then when Faro closed, we had lower emissions.

That plan was updated twice under Premier Pasloski, in 2012 and 2015. If memory serves correctly, one of those times certainly was with the current Leader of the Yukon Party, who was the Minister of Environment at the time. I remember because I am a climate change researcher, and the Yukon government asked me to review the updates to their plan and to give them some feedback about the plan. I remember looking at it. I recall saying to government officials that we can't just keep sort of saying that we should do something and not do something. There were no actions that had tangible emission reductions to them, so this notion of trying to reduce greenhouse gas emissions was really not being delivered on.

For a second time, they kind of noted: It looks like we are doing something, because our emissions have dropped. But really, what had happened was that the economy was not doing well under the Yukon Party or while the Yukon Party was in — whatever you want to say — and as the economy contracted, then our emissions went down. That would be an awful way to build a plan — hoping for an economic contraction.

I pointed out to colleagues in the government — I said, "You know, you guys talk about emissions reductions, but you haven't got a single action in here talking about transportation." The reason why that's important is because over half of the emissions here in the territory come from transportation, so if you're going to get serious about reducing emissions, you actually need to understand where those emissions are coming from. It didn't take me much time working with government officials at that point to describe to them what was missing here. I recall talking to them at the time about a price on carbon.

I am going to get into that a bit and sort of discuss it, but before I do, let me just note that, in 2016, the premiers from across — there was a federal election. Maybe it was the fall of 2015. Anyway, the premiers got together under the Liberal federal government and said that we need to do something on climate change. They made this judgment call that collectively we should put a price on carbon.

I hear from the member opposite that he thinks: Yes, except for us. This is a principle that we call the "tragedy of the commons". You say that everyone else should do it but not us, because it's challenging for us. There are times and reasons when that is fair, but if there are too many people that start saying it or if everybody says that they are an exception, you end up with this problem where we don't take collective responsibility.

I have always argued that it is better for us to address it up front and take that responsibility, because I think that gives us a chance to help to shape the direction of the country. I appreciated that the then-Premier Pasloski signed us up to the Vancouver Declaration, which said that we should have a price on carbon. It's interesting to me to hear today the Yukon Party Member for Kluane state that they've never been in favour of this, because it was their Premier — he was in Cabinet at that time — who signed that declaration.

Let me just point out something about the platform. By the way, I am referencing now the Yukon Party platform. I guess I

am on page 9 under their energy and climate change section under the heading “Adjusting to a Made-in-Yukon Carbon Pricing System”.

That is the heading. So, the “... Yukon Party government will: Push for changes to our carbon pricing system...” They would look for exemptions. They said that they would also review the impact of the federal carbon tax on the price of groceries and essential goods to ensure that enough is being done to address affordability, and if the federal government cannot accommodate our interests, we will explore displacing the federal backstop with a made-in-Yukon carbon pricing system established under territorial legislation, similar to the process undertaken by the NWT. That was their platform.

By the way, I also happened to sit in — I was part of the debate on the environment, and the candidate for the Yukon Party, Mr. Eric Shroff, was there in that debate, who, by the way, worked on climate change for the territorial government previously. He said, on behalf of his party, that they would honour *Our Clean Future*. This is part of what I don’t quite get, because *Our Clean Future* says that we would have a price on carbon.

So, today, I now have already, in the opening remarks of this motion, a confusing perspective. The platform by the Yukon Party said that they would have a made-in-Yukon carbon price. The member opposite says that they have never supported it. I had their candidate stand up and say that they support *Our Clean Future*, which has a price on carbon, and it is kind of confusing to me where they are. I was hoping — and the Premier mentioned this in his remarks during Question Period: “I am looking forward today to hearing from the Leader of the Yukon Party about their made-in-Yukon carbon pricing system.” This is their platform commitment, and I would love to see it, because if you are going to say no to carbon pricing, I hope that you are saying yes to something else, because we have this big issue called climate change and the need to reduce our emissions.

There are a few other things that I will note for the record that, during the 35th Assembly, I sort of have gone through to try to grab where I have heard criticism from the Yukon Party around actions dealing with climate change. I have heard them — well, they voted against the *Clean Energy Act*; they voted against Better Buildings; they have criticized or spoken against the Atlin hydro project, the Moon Lake project, electric vehicles, the independent power producer policy — I don’t know what they are for, and I certainly don’t know how they would hope to address climate change. What I don’t want to see is that it’s just: Yes, for sure, trust us; we would address climate change. This is a very, very challenging question.

Okay, let me for a second now just go a little bit further back in some of the history of this stuff, and I’ll get to what I tabled earlier today. I mentioned that I have sort of been working decades on this issue of climate change. My research way back when was on glaciation cycles and how they impacted the planet. I did that research work back in the 1980s. I went on to be a lecturer while I was doing that research work at the University of New Brunswick, and I started teaching about climate change, and then I went on to be a lecturer at the

University of the West Indies and taught many topics, but one of them was about climate change. Then when I moved to the north, to the Yukon, in about 1998, I began working at the Northern Climate Exchange up at — well, it was the college at the time, not the university, but has since become the university. I headed up a research and education group on climate change. There were three offices across the three territories, and we looked at both adaptation and mitigation. Then I started teaching a climate change course at the college. It was put on every couple of years. It was called “Climate Change in the Circumpolar North”. I maybe taught it six times.

I decided last night — I looked back through Hansard to try to re-read our debate here in the Assembly on this topic to try to see about how we have addressed this really important issue of climate change and carbon pricing. I looked back through Question Periods to try to get a feel for it, but I also decided to look back into my own past to try to find my own course notes that I taught on climate change, and I am going to give a few examples of that.

I looked back through the classes I taught at the college. I looked specifically at the sections about solutions and how we were trying to address the root causes of climate change. This reduction of greenhouse gas emissions — or one of the ways to think about it is how we transform our energy economy away from this dependence on fossil fuels. I looked, and sure enough, there it is in black and white. I have a heading on carbon pricing, and I talk about it as a policy in its various flavours, how it can work, and why it is a pretty important policy. I recall doing an exercise with the class where we sat down and broke out into these various groups and we talked about solutions. I asked them to each champion one or two solutions that they thought would be the best solutions and then present to the class why those would be good strategies for addressing climate change.

We did that, and then they turned around and asked: Okay, what would you pick as your best solutions to try to address climate change? I recall that they said to give them my top three. My top three were agriculture and country foods — so, supporting access to locally grown foods or locally harvested foods, because then you build the local economy; you don’t ship that food up, and it’s way more resilient. That was one of my ones. I had one on transportation — I can’t remember whether it was active transportation or electric vehicles. I don’t recall what it was. It might have even been e-bikes. I know when I have raised this before, the Yukon Party has made jokes about it, but if we displace a car with an e-bike, it is a great thing. It’s good for health; it’s good for our roads; it’s good for the environment. The third one, my pick was a price on carbon.

In 2005 or 2006, I was asked to go to Ottawa to speak to Parliament on behalf of northerners to talk about climate change and how important it was. I gave a presentation about the impacts of climate change and why the north, in particular the far north, is feeling more of these impacts more quickly than other places around the planet. It really has to do with a whole bunch of feedback mechanisms relating to permafrost and the Arctic Ocean. Once those things start to move and tip, they

actually move very quickly, and we start to feel those impacts very solidly.

One of the things that I said back then to Parliament was: “A lot of people talk about the impacts we may feel about climate change”, but I said: “No, we are already feeling those impacts in the north now.” I gave a list of examples. I talked about why this was critical to a place like the north. When you go and be a witness to one of the parliamentary subcommittees and you are talking to a whole bunch of Members of Parliament, you happen to sit next to other people who are there as witnesses as well. I was sitting next to Dr. Ross McKittrick and Dr. Mark Jaccard. It turns out that Dr. Ross McKittrick was one of Canada’s prominent climate deniers — that the climate wasn’t changing and that we need not do anything about it.

I was very happy to be there to talk about the Yukon and the north and to describe the actual things that were happening that we could feel at the time. I remember Norma Kassi talking about Zelda Lake and how permafrost had given way and that lake had drained almost overnight and that a traditional fishing area was gone. I relayed that story and several others about the north, that we were feeling those changes already.

Dr. Mark Jaccard, on the other hand, is one of Canada’s pre-eminent energy economists. Later on today, I will try to give a couple of remarks from him, but he is someone whom I have always been impressed with who has talked about the importance — he talked about carbon pricing and why it was so important. I will come back to that when I get to economist Trevor Tombe.

In 2007 or maybe it was 2008 — and I tabled a report today. The report I tabled for us is from Encyclopaedia Britannica. I will just read the forward from — it’s called the *Encyclopaedia Britannica 2008 Book of the Year*, and it says: “In 2007 the future of planet Earth loomed large. Climate change was a worldwide concern; biofuels became an increasingly alternative to fossil fuels; and greater attention was being focused on designing buildings to be ‘green.’” That’s the start of the book of the year from Encyclopaedia Britannica.

The report that I tabled today was a report written by me. I was invited to write a special report to Encyclopaedia Britannica on the global effects of climate change. I will just now read from the end of that four-page report that I tabled.

“Another important mitigation strategy to promote the conservation of energy is to put a price on carbon. By assigning costs to carbon-dioxide emissions and placing a value on the reduction of carbon-dioxide emissions, a carbon market can operate in which carbon credits are bought and sold to provide economic incentives to meet emission regulations.”

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change “... has attempted to assess the potential costs of mitigation. Although the question is complex, there is some agreement that it would be on the order of 1% of global GDP. Some studies have also tried to assess the economic cost to society from the impacts of climate change with the assumption that no mitigation attempts are made. Although there is less certainty about these costs, there is agreement that they would very likely outweigh the cost of mitigation (for example, 1-5% of GDP globally, with the cost rising as high as 25% of GDP for ...” least developed countries.

That report was from 2008, and it was talking about 2007 because we had just had a new report out from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. So, Encyclopaedia Britannica approached me to see if I would write a scientific article about climate change writ large, which I was very happy to do. It’s not that it pays much money, but it really is an opportunity to try to express to the world the seriousness of this issue.

I am thinking about this because, when I started my remarks, I talked about these people I was using to think of, and one of them is a young person who would have been four or five years old at the time that I wrote this and here we are, 16 or 17 years later, still arguing about it.

I have always hoped that climate change was not a partisan issue. I have hoped that we would find solutions that made sense across the spectrum, because we need to do something. I just stress so earnestly that letting it slide is a mistake. Not addressing this issue means that we’re going to end up with more problems, problems like forest fires and flooding. When I think globally, I think about the challenges — I will just quickly list those challenges that we face. Of course, there are impacts from catastrophic events like I have just listed, and depending on where you live, they can be completely different. They could be hurricanes — that could be the challenge. But the bigger challenges are around the ability to continue to produce food and have access to water and then finally biodiversity loss, which comes right back to us here.

When I try to think about how important this issue is, I think about the fact that the Department of Highways and Public Works is having to move the Alaska Highway over because we have permafrost slump happening into the Takhini River. I think about having to rebuild a hockey rink and community hall or recreation facility because we have permafrost degrading underneath it or releveling a school to try to keep it safe for our students.

Then I also think about things like salmon. We recently heard at the Yukon Forum from the First Nation chiefs about how important salmon is to our culture, our livelihood, our history, and food security. What I know is that climate change is going to be very tough on some of these critically important species. It is totally the tragedy of the commons. We all have to do something to bring down emissions or we will end up with these problems all over the planet.

By the way, when I think about responsibility — and this comes back a little bit to the comments from the Member for Kluane — Yukoners’ emissions are about on average with Canadians, which in some sense is really impressive, because we live in the north. The fact that our emissions are about on par with average Canadians and that we are one of the three northern territories means that we have already done a lot of things right to get emissions down. But when I think about our responsibility as Canadians and where we have emissions in the world — I have often heard from people that it is China and that they need to reduce their emissions. Of course, there are a lot of people in China — that is correct — but on a per capita basis, our emissions are two or two and a half times as much on a per person basis as someone from China, so I think that gives

us a lot of responsibility. It also gives us historic responsibility, because climate change feels that change going back many decades. We had the advantage of the industrial revolution here and now it will come to other parts of the planet.

If we think about our responsibility and I compare us with, for example, someone from India, which is now the most populated country on the planet, our emissions on a per person basis are 10 times as high — 10 times. I feel a lot of personal responsibility around that. I hope that we as Yukoners feel that responsibility. That said, I'm not trying to virtue signal to Yukoners. I think that it's better to find solutions that are advantageous to Yukoners, but I say this for a couple of reasons. One is to point out that this issue of carbon pricing has been around for a long time and we're about to have yet another election where we debate it. I think it's pretty important that we move on and get to the outcomes.

I want to just make a couple more comments about the whole sort of mitigation and adaptation thing. I still get asked from time to time to go and talk to classrooms — even now that I am elected — and to talk about the issue of climate change. I like to do it because I then go back and re-read the literature and see where things are at. What I will say to you, Mr. Speaker, is that back in 1988 — so, 36 years ago when I started teaching about climate change at university — we knew that climate change was real. We weren't sure how fast it was going to come and we thought we might have a fair amount of time to deal with it. But within five or 10 years, we knew that, no, it is much faster than we had projected. By the time I wrote that article that I quoted from in 2008, we had just had the 2007 global report come out about climate change and we said then that, yes, it is beyond a doubt that we are seeing the climate change now and that it is human-caused and that we should get going on solutions. But we haven't, and as a result, the situation has gotten more dire.

As it turns out, because we were trying to be a bit conservative with our projections, we have underestimated the impacts. The impacts are actually higher than we anticipated. So, when we talk about the impact — I use numbers to talk about GDP, but what you really want to think about is whether this is going to hurt salmon or whether it is going to cause a forest fire or increase the risk of forest fire, which is going to affect us. Those sorts of things are faster than we thought.

Whenever I go to talk to a class of students, I always say to them: "Be careful about my biases." I list them off and I talk about the fact that I am an elected person, which means that I have a political party and so there is going to be a bias there. By the way, I think that all of us here have a bias that way — in different directions, of course, because we have different political parties, but I believe that we all have a bias. My second bias, which I think is the much bigger one, is that I really care about the Yukon. I love this place and so I am swayed to try to think about the impacts that we have here more than I probably think about impacts in other places, but those sorts of challenges to us are critical.

I just state those biases so that we can keep moving as we talk about this stuff. Very quickly, what I hear from the young people I talk to is: You need to do more. So, not less but more.

I met with the Fridays for Future, the youth climate change group, a couple of months ago. They went on the radio right afterward — CBC interviewed them — and I called them up afterward and I said, "Hey, did you have that interview lined up when you were talking to me? Because you didn't mention that." They said yes. It was good to let me know. I said, "By the way, I asked you if you had any other questions or concerns, and you said no. Then you went on the radio and said you had more questions and concerns. So, just a reminder that, when I'm right in front of you, please tell me those things so I know. You're not obligated, but it would help me to try to get solutions."

Anyway, the main point that they raised with me is that we need to do more. My sense of what they are asking for is about actions that will address the causes of climate change. Of course, I think it's important that we adapt to climate change, but those actions are pretty critical. When I talked with them and they said that we need to do more and we discussed what we could do, I warned them at that moment. This was back in December when I met with them. I said to them: "You should watch out for this campaign that is coming to get rid of the carbon pricing" — the "Axe the Tax" idea. I will talk about that, too, but the main point I want to make is that these young people are pressing us.

When the Member for Kluane asks, "Have you talked to Yukoners?" My answer is yes. Have I heard from Yukoners who think that we should not have a price on carbon? Sure, I have. Show me a couple of Yukoners and I will show you a half a dozen opinions. There are a lot of views out there. For sure, I hear from Yukoners who are concerned about this, and I'm going to present my argument about why this is still good in light of the concern about affordability. What I want to say is that I hear from a lot of Yukoners as well who believe that we need to do more — a lot more, in fact.

I have a book upstairs that has been brought to me by folks from the Council of Canadians that talks about how I should take a war-like footing around this issue — that we should be much more aggressive about it. So, I am always hearing from a range of Yukoners who talk about this issue, and what I think I hear from all of them is that they want a sustainable future, that they want an affordable future. Those things are in common, and I think that is what we need to try to work toward, hence why I am up debating about a carbon price.

Let me then just sort of bring it back to carbon pricing and talk a little bit about this issue. I talked about Dr. Mark Jaccard earlier. Dr. Jaccard — we have continued to ask for advice on a range of issues, but I should point out that he is currently the chair of the BC Utilities Commission. That is sort of like our Yukon Utilities Board. BC is a lot like the Yukon, generally speaking. It is a hydro province; we are a hydro territory.

By the way, when I think about why our emissions are close to average for Canada, I should point out that our emissions on a per person basis are way, way, way lower than the average emissions for a Northwest Territories resident or a Nunavut resident. The reason is twofold: (1) we have hydro power and long-term hydro power, which I have stood in this House and said is really super important and (2) we are very

well-connected by a transportation network, which just means that you don't, you know — I will note the difference for Old Crow, but for the rest of the territory, we are able to supply by road year-round, and that is super important.

Dr. Jaccard, some time ago — I remember him when he was up here in the Yukon before I was elected, and he was talking about carbon pricing, and he said that, you know, if you are really trying to deal with climate change, you need to have a policy that is dealing on the economic side of carbon. He said that it can be a carbon price or it can be a cap-and-trade system or it can be a whole bunch of regulations where everything is regulated, but you need to have that signal. So, he said that if you are serious about climate change, you need to have these sorts of things, and I remember him listing them off. I am pretty sure that I talked about that sometime back in 2017 here in this Assembly, but I was hunting for it and I couldn't find the references, so my apologies if I am somewhat repeating myself. But at least I will emphasize the point that Dr. Jaccard, whom I remember meeting, as he presented to parliamentarians, spoke about the importance of this. I caught the Premier referencing this the other day when he stood to answer in Question Period. It sort of went like this: "Hey, Yukon Party, if you don't want a price on carbon, what do you want? What would you do?"

By the way, I said earlier that I have always hoped that climate change is not a partisan issue, in other words, that it shouldn't be just one political party that has the ideas to fight climate change. I think that we all have to have ideas, and we can come with different policy approaches, but I have not heard what it is, and maybe the Leader of the Yukon Party will stand up to speak. And I am also looking forward to hearing from the NDP about this issue, because when we had that last motion in November 2022 from the Member for Kluane on carbon pricing, that motion — the NDP didn't rise to speak to it at that time or vote.

I do want to hear what their idea is instead, and this was their platform. They said that they were going to have a made-in-Yukon carbon price system. So, just let us know what that is so that we can talk about it and let Yukoners understand whether you are serious about this or not. When you think about those flavours of an economic model to deal with pollution — that idea of "polluter pay" — if you put them on a spectrum and sort of look at them — a price on carbon, a cap-and-trade system, a whole bunch of regulations — the one that more aligns with sort of fiscal conservative values of letting the marketplace do its work is a price on carbon.

I am going to quote — I just hunted about economist Trevor Tombe. You may recall him, Mr. Speaker. He was part of the Financial Advisory Panel that we struck in 2017, I think, to look at this. We felt that the Yukon Party had left the trajectory of the territory moving in the wrong direction and we needed to course-correct, so we asked to have an independent Financial Advisory Panel which looked at things and gave us their recommendations. One of those folks was Dr. Trevor Tombe.

I saw a tweet from him from a couple of nights ago. He said, "Some boldly claim that there is *zero* evidence CTaxes affect behaviour. That's simply not true."

I read an opinion piece of his. He says, "Whether you like carbon taxes or not, the rationale is simple: provide an incentive to lower emissions and let individuals and businesses decide how.

"Economically, it's cheaper than the alternative..." I will end my quote there. I will get to more of this, but another quote of his is this: "Don't blame carbon pricing for affordability challenge ... In fact, Canada's carbon pricing rebates ease affordability pressures for most households." That's one of the main arguments that I'm going to get to here, but the reason that this is a central policy is because it works across the whole of the economy.

I believe that it is having an impact. We have our group that models how much of an impact a carbon price has. We asked them to measure all of the actions under *Our Clean Future* to see what impact they have on emissions reductions. By the way, *Our Clean Future* has a couple of hundred actions, and we had the climate advisory panel give us more recommendations. I will note for the record that they certainly didn't ask us to drop any of these policies; they asked us to enhance them.

When I look at the analysis work about how much we are reducing emissions — you know, it grows over time because it has more time to have effect and because it has been changing in the amount. I think the numbers were — well, I'll have to look them up to be sure, but there is a significant amount of reduction based on carbon pricing. So, on that side of it, I want to say that it works, but the place where I think it really has an impact is around the signal that it gives out to the economy. I now have mining companies — majors — coming to me and saying that they are interested in building a mine, but the only way that they are building a mine is if we can get them clean energy — renewable energy — because they are not interested in this. They want to provide critical minerals — develop mines for critical minerals — and they want to do it in an environmentally sound way.

So, the numbers for emissions reductions are — in the range of 16,000 to 24,000 tonnes of emissions reductions are attributable to the price on carbon.

The reason that it is a central policy and why I have, throughout my career, recommended it as a strong policy is because it tells the whole of the economy that this is the direction we want to move in. It says that there are things — side effects — that we did not anticipate with the burning of fossil fuels and we need to address those. We can't keep moving in the direction of dependence on fossil fuels; we have to find a way to transition off of fossil fuels. It is not easy; it is difficult, and we want to do it in a way that provides as much affordability as possible.

Let me talk for a minute about the affordability question. I know that the Minister of Finance's team looks at this question to try to see what the impact is on the rebates. A minute ago, the Member for Kluane stood and talked about the number of dollars in the budget that are there from the carbon rebate.

The answer for that is that those dollars come in and then those dollars go out by rebate. The Minister of Finance can speak to it, but I asked him where that account was at right now,

and he said that it's down to about \$1 million. The member opposite quoted \$22.7 million. Those dollars are going back to Yukoners. What we said was that we should rebate the money to Yukoners, that we should not grow government, and that was what we ran on in the election. By the way, that's what's in *Our Clean Future*, which the members opposite also said they support, but I still can't quite figure out what their intentions are.

Let me just pull up another quote. I have also heard — and I have referenced this a few times. This is from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. He said — quote: “I don't think that there's any surprise to anyone that the Yukon Party certainly is pro oil and gas...” This whole argument that I am trying to make is how we move away from fossil fuels and not keep that dependency.

When I think about that affordability question, the analysis that I see — and I hope that the Minister of Finance will share some of this when he rises to speak to this motion — is really about how much money we are getting back and to whom. The idea is that we collect it as a pie and we redistribute it out to each Yukoner. There are some differences. The first difference is that the pie is divided up. We give some money back — not too much but some — to municipal governments and First Nation governments. We give some back to businesses. We give the lion's share back to Yukoners.

There is a subtle difference between Yukoners who live in and around Whitehorse and Yukoners who live farther away, because we recognize that there is more dependence on fossil fuels if you are farther away from Whitehorse. For each Yukoner who lives outside of Whitehorse, we give the same amount back. What that basically means is that if you are someone who has spent less on the fossil fuels — thus less on the carbon price — you will be getting more back, and if you are someone who has spent more on fossil fuels and polluted more, then you will get less back than you spent. Even though each of those people gets the same amount back — but they get back different depending on what they gave in. That is the polluter-pay principle.

But it turns out — and we can run this analysis — that the people to whom we are typically getting more money are those Yukoners who have a lower income. Why is that? Because they tend to have smaller houses and go on fewer trips abroad and things like that. So, people — let's say someone like me — who have a higher footprint would pay more into the carbon price and maybe get less back. But if the argument by the Yukon Party is about affordability, which is what they said, then the truth of it is that this program supports Yukoners on the affordability spectrum. In fact, I even referenced that slightly in my article for Encyclopaedia Britannica a decade and a half ago.

So, here is this opportunity. We have a policy which is about addressing climate change. It is sort of a central piece of that policy. You can have other policies that will do it. We have heard from economists who think that it is the most effective of those policies. The Yukon Party has said that they will come up with their own. They haven't told us what it is; this is their great opportunity to talk about it. I don't think they will, but I look forward to hearing what they have to say.

Then we look at the question of affordability, which is the main premise about this, and it turns out that the carbon pricing is strong on supporting lower income Yukoners.

How about the flip side of that? What about — because the Member for Kluane was talking about how, when he talks to his constituents, they don't want to put money out of their pocket up front and get money back later and that is a challenge. But the other side of it that he is not talking about is two-fold.

The first part of it is that what his approach would be is to just keep that dependency on fossil fuels. If we don't find solutions for Yukoners to move away from fossil fuels, they will, of course, keep using fossil fuels and then we're going to continue to have this problem over time, so that is why *Our Clean Future* has a suite of solutions. The Yukon Party just keeps saying: No, don't like that one; don't like that one; don't like that one. But they don't tell us what they would do. Effectively then, we end up with climate change forever. As I pointed out at the beginning of my remarks, the costs of climate change are going up astronomically, and those costs are going to be borne by Yukoners, whether it is a house that had to get sandbagged to protect it against flooding or whether it is fires that come through. This past summer, we saw two communities evacuated and one of our mines evacuated twice. We can't keep drifting like we are asleep at the wheel. So, I look for what the Yukon Party has to say about this. I mean, come on — where is your plan on climate change?

Finally, let me just talk for a few minutes about this campaign that is called “Axe the Tax”. The first time I heard “Axe the Tax” — let me work backwards in time. I'm hearing it now from the leader of the federal Conservatives. I have heard it today from members opposite, and I'm not sure whether those were remarks in Hansard or off-mic remarks, but they are definitely saying it. I remember hearing it in those federal elections that I was referring to earlier, and I remember hearing it back in British Columbia, maybe in around 2008 — I would have to look back to get the election that it was in. Amazingly to me, at that point, it was the BC NDP that had the campaign to “axe the tax” against the Liberals' price on carbon, which I think came in 2008.

Thankfully, that was not successful. Currently, I believe that the BC NDP government — or the current BC NDP government — is supportive of a price on carbon and certainly has very progressive policies around climate change. I enjoy working with them closely because of all of their strong policies.

We had it then, and I also remember it — I am trying to think back to when it was. This weekend will be the funeral-in-state for past Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. I remember when he brought in the GST, there was a campaign from the Liberals to axe the tax on GST. It's a popular thing to do and say — when it's popular, by the way. It rhymes; it's easy to remember, but the problem is that it doesn't deal with climate change. It doesn't deal with the affordability question, because it will keep people dependent on fossil fuels.

By the way, that three cents at the pump that we're talking about coming on April 1 — I think a week or two ago, the prices went up 10 cents at the pump. That was nothing to do with a

price on carbon. That was everything to do with the fact that fossil fuels have a lot of volatility in their price, and we anticipate that, over time, the prices will go up, and we need to find solutions for Yukoners to move away from them.

I started my comments today talking about — I think that this is a super serious matter. I present this issue to Yukoners. When I think about those Yukoners whom I'm trying to talk to today, those who are not as confident about climate change but think that, yes, maybe we need to do something, this is an important policy — for those Yukoners, especially those young Yukoners who look ahead in time and say, "Oh my gosh, we're creating a world that is not sustainable. We must address this issue."

By the way, just to sort of personalize it a bit, back in 2007 when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report came out talking about — I think it was their fourth report — and it talked about how climate change was real and caused by humans, I was asked to go on a series of lectures in the United States and the Pacific Northwest. The Canadian Consulate asked me to go and talk to these university audiences to discuss this issue of climate change — public talks at universities, typically.

There was one night when I was to give a keynote address, and I was thinking about it a lot, and there was, on the radio, a report coming from the vice-president of the United States. He stood up and he said: Scientists now know that climate change is happening, but they are not sure what is causing it. There is no agreement on what is causing it. I went: "Whoa." I thought: Come on, look. It is so clear; we have written it down for you. We are saying it — climate scientists — we are saying no, this is human-caused and we are going to need to address it, and the impacts are only going to get worse. Some of our pages probably weren't born yet when I was due to give that talk.

I remember that night making the decision that maybe what I ought to do is get involved in politics and get into the decision-making role, because — and my point wasn't that I could move all decisions over, but it was that I was going to strive to inform the public fairly, because what I felt that the vice-president of the United States had done in that moment was to undermine democracy. If you don't inform the public fairly, how will they possibly make good choices at the ballot box? You know what? Last night, I kept thinking about that. So, I take this so seriously that, when I come in here: What am I going to do today that will make a difference? This is my attempt to do that for Yukoners.

Where I will close today is, last week, there was question in Question Period that was raised by the Leader of the Yukon Party, and he was talking to the Premier or he was posing a question about carbon tax exemptions for home heating fuel, and I heard remarks as well from the Member for Klusne today. I am just going to quote from the Premier: "This is the commitment I will make to Yukoners: I will stand up for our future generations. I will stand up on the right thing to do. What I will not do is, like the Leader of the Official Opposition, flip-flop on whatever makes sense on the day. I have watched it on renewable energy; I have I have watched it on carbon pricing. Go back and see what the Leader of the Official Opposition

says in the middle of an election and what he will say three years later — whatever it takes for him to get a shot at power.

"No — if this means that Yukoners in the next election feel that this is something that they want to vote against me or us on, okay; so be it, but I will stand up for what we believe in; I will stand up for what is right for the next generation, and that's how we're going to govern."

I tell you, Mr. Speaker, I felt very proud to be a member of this government that day that is doing the hard work, trying to take the hard decisions that we know from the evidence, from the science, from decades of experience, and from talking to Yukoners, by the way, that this is what they feel is important. We must find this path to deal with climate change. Carbon pricing is an essential piece of that. It can be a different policy. I understand that, but it can't be nothing. So, I implore the Yukon Party to tell us what their made-in-Yukon carbon pricing system is. That would be terrific.

Mr. Speaker, I will wrap it up there. I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak to this very important issue. I look forward to further debate today.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, it is a hard time for Yukoners right now. We are hearing all the time from Yukoners who are struggling to pay their rent and their mortgages. We are hearing from Yukoners who are scared that the homes that they have worked so hard to have will be damaged or destroyed by fires and floods. There are Yukoners who couldn't buy groceries this winter because the river crossings they rely on didn't freeze, and there are Yukoners in town who couldn't afford them. Young Yukoners want to know how they will ever afford a home of their own, and they are also living in constant dread of the future. We have all heard them chant: "You'll die of old age; we will die of climate change."

Yukoners are facing a crisis of affordability, and they know that affordability will only get worse as the catastrophic effects of climate change around the globe disrupt supply chains and throw the world into chaos. The Yukon's health care system is teetering with thousands of Yukoners without access to primary health care and many more facing delays in surgeries, inability to access services, and cutbacks everywhere. Yukoners desperately need better investments in health care, but millions of dollars every year that could be used to make life better for Yukoners are being used to fight wildfires every summer and flooding every summer.

Last summer, Yukoners were struggling to afford groceries. At the same time, many of them were being forced to leave their homes, as entire communities were being threatened by wildfires. Yukoners were struggling to afford gas, and at the same time, we were watching next door as what felt like the entire territory of the Northwest Territories was evacuated, all caused by wildfires fuelled by climate change.

We hear stories of people who are struggling to afford to get out on the land and hunt and paddle and hike and camp, and they also don't know what their future relationship with that land will look like as it changes at an ever-faster rate due to climate change.

We hear from Yukoners that they are struggling with affordability, that they are struggling to make ends meet, and we hear from Yukoners that they are terrified of climate change — terrified of what is happening now and what will happen in the future. We have to act on both. There might have been a time when we could take problems one by one. Maybe when the Yukon Party was in power, they thought they could just tackle one problem at a time. They were certainly capable of making many problems at a time, but that just won't work anymore, if it ever did. We desperately need to tackle more than one problem at a time, because Yukoners are hurting from an affordability crisis, and they are hurting from climate change.

As all of us who have stepped up to be leaders in this time — leadership now requires handling more than one problem at once, and that means thinking about climate change and affordability at the same time. We have to do both at once. We can't pit these problems against each other and say: Well, this is causing problems here, so we're going to get rid of it — but we'll make this other problem worse at the same time. We can't do that.

So, when I think about climate action, what will help us create a future that is liveable for us? Liveable for us — that is what we're talking about. The term that I think best encapsulates that is "climate justice". I just want to read a quote from the United Nations Development Programme, and they are talking about climate justice, and it says — quote: "Climate justice means putting equity and human rights at the core of decision-making and action on climate change. The concept has been widely used to refer to the unequal historical responsibility that countries and communities bear in relation to the climate crisis."

I think this is a really important concept, because there are a few things: One, we know that climate change is not going to hit us all equally in the world. I think that, in the north, we are very aware of that. We see our climate changing faster than the rest of the world. We are very aware of that. When I think of First Nation communities who have such an integral relationship with the land, they are going to be far more affected than someone who does not go out on the land. We are at a time when everyone is going to be affected, as we see supply chains change across the world, as we see wildfires and floods, and as we see our air quality drop. All of us are affected by climate change but not equally.

When we talk about climate justice, we also talk about who will be affected by our climate action. We have choices about how we respond to climate change. We can respond in a way that keeps things the way they are, more or less. We can have policies that mean that the rich stay rich, the poor stay poor, everything proceeds as usual, and we will just tackle climate change. The opposite of that is climate justice. When I think about climate justice, I think about policies that move us toward social justice, a better society, a fairer society, and a more equal society. I hope that whenever we're talking about climate action, we are thinking about that.

We have seen some really incredible examples of that leadership in the Yukon, and I want to talk a little bit about the Yukon Climate Leadership Council's report, *Climate Shot*

2030. I have talked a lot about it in the Legislature, and I keep talking about it because it was an incredible amount of work by some incredible Yukoners who thought really carefully about how we, as the Yukon, could address climate change. It really seems to have fallen on deaf ears. We kept getting promises that we would hear responses to it in the 2023 *Our Clean Future* update. Well, that update didn't come until mid to late December 2023, which is about five or six months after it usually does, so that was pretty frustrating. They said: Well, don't worry; we are going to respond then. But there really wasn't a response there. There are tens of items in this plan and tens of recommendations that were never discussed in that report, so I don't know. I don't see a response coming at this point — I will just say that — which is pretty frustrating for all the people who worked on it.

I want to talk about their work, because I think their work is really valuable — even if it doesn't seem like this government is listening to it — because they talk about how all of our actions toward climate do have choices in them, and they do have choices about whether we move toward a more equal and fair society or not. When they make their recommendations, it's very cool, because for each recommendation — I'm just finding the pages — they talk about their co-benefits.

So, for each action, they say that a co-benefit might be that it improves social equality or it might increase system resilience and diversity, it might increase self-sufficiency or security, and it might foster community health and vitality. I think that is really cool. I think that it is really cool that they are considering these actions not just in light of the carbon reductions but also: How do these move toward a fair, just, or more resilient, more diverse world? I think that they have done some really incredible work.

I think that another brilliant example of climate action that looks different from our current society, that looks different from keeping the status quo minus some carbon, is the work of the Yukon First Nation youth climate fellowship, who really created an extraordinary project where they created a whole different way of thinking about these problems. For example, their plan really emphasizes the need for a deeper approach to climate action. They talk about focusing on reconnection within oneself, within others, and the land. It aims to address the root causes of climate change and shift approaches to health, housing, food, energy, economics, governance, and education. They spent two years developing this plan, and it is full of what they call "seeds" — ideas that can help us change the way we approach climate action — and I think that is a really remarkable thing.

There is so much more for us to do when it comes to climate action, and it needs to be done in a way that makes our society look better and fairer and more just. I think of examples — one that comes to mind is electric vehicles. Don't get me wrong — I love electric vehicles; I have one; it's great, and I love it — but I am just going to say that they mostly benefit the people who can afford them, which is not a lot of Yukoners. An alternative is public transportation. That is something that can

benefit all Yukoners, regardless of how much money they make, and actually hits a much wider range of people.

Unfortunately, what we have seen from this government is, despite making a commitment in the last confidence and supply agreement to fund free transit for the City of Whitehorse, when the push came to shove, they were willing to expend the exact dollar amount that they committed and not a penny more, despite the fact that they had money for landlords and ore docks and all kinds of other things. They said: Nope, no more money for free transit; that's it. That was frustrating — that was pretty frustrating, because we had this opportunity to address affordability and climate action at the same time — these problems that go together and need to be addressed together.

Something that I think a lot about is home retrofit. That is a great example of how we can save energy, but it costs a lot of money to retrofit your home, and even with grants, even with loans, it is a lot of money up front that not everyone has the ability to access.

I think a lot about how we can create opportunities. I think about some of the neighbourhoods I have gone through in Whitehorse or have spent time in where there are people with cardboard in their windows. There is energy pouring out of those windows — not to mention what it is like to live in a house with cardboard in your windows. How do we create programs? How do we create policies that mean that those people can have energy-efficient windows that would save their heating bills, because heating bills are expensive? They could save the carbon emissions coming from the heat pouring out those windows.

It's amazing to me how much comes back to housing. When I think about climate change, when I think about affordability, when I think about the labour shortage, it all seems to come back to housing. Investing in public housing that is available to people, that is energy efficient, is a really good way to take climate action in a way that is in sync with climate justice.

So, today we are talking about the carbon tax. I want to talk a little bit about some of the details of how the carbon tax works in the Yukon. As we all know, we pay it at the pump and we pay it when we buy heating fuel. I think it's not super clear to people about what happens to that money after it gets collected, so I want to shed a little bit of light on it. This is going to be a high-level overview, not a deep, deep dive. I don't have the numbers in front of me, but I am going to try to talk about it a little, because I think there is a lot of confusion about it. I am sure the Minister of Finance will correct me when he gets on his feet.

That money gets collected and then divided into pots. The first pot goes back to individual Yukoners. As you have often heard said, on average, Yukoners get back more than they pay in. I will grant you, that sounds too good to be true. How can that work? I would really love to talk about why, because I don't think that gets talked about much. How did that happen? It sounds like a magic promise. I believe it is actually what is happening, and it's because people are paying in who don't get money back, and that is particularly tourists. We have a lot of tourism in the Yukon. All the people who come into the Yukon

and pay at the pump for fuel and pay that carbon tax on the fuel — that money collected from them goes back to Yukoners. If we talk about getting rid of the carbon tax, we are actually talking about individual Yukoners getting less money. I just wanted to throw that out there.

Before it sounds like I am too excited about how the Liberals have been managing the carbon tax, I want to talk about some of the changes we made — I think it was last fall, but it might have been the spring — to the way carbon taxes are done for mining in the Yukon. Initially, there was an exemption around mining. The Yukon government actually negotiated that some Yukon mines would not receive a price signal, that they would be rebated exactly how much they paid on their gas, which is just a bizarre idea.

I don't know why we think that companies that are benefiting from Yukon resources, that are contributing to a lot of carbon release from landscape degradation — which is something that we haven't even talked about yet today, but I will talk about it more — shouldn't have to participate in the carbon tax like the rest of us. That was bizarre. I don't know why that ever happened. It was really bizarre to hear both other parties get up and talk about what a shame it was that the exemption was ending. I'm glad it ended, but it was a missed opportunity, because there was potential there to use that carbon tax to do more than just rebate that money but actually to help companies and to incentivize companies to do better when it comes to their emissions.

One of the ideas that we put forward was that receiving those rebates could be tied to meeting climate change reduction goals. That was an opportunity that we just walked by and left. I say "we" — I would have loved to see that happen — that Liberals I guess walked by and left. That's a shame. They really did the bare minimum when it came to closing loopholes and really only because they were leaned on federally.

Anyway, I want to come back to this point about affordability, because Yukoners — like I said, it's a hard time for Yukoners. They are really struggling. We are hearing from people who are struggling to put food on the table and struggling with the effects of climate change. We hear from youth all the time who don't know how they're going to afford their future and also don't know what that future is going to look like. I just have to stop and say that if the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources doesn't like what the youth say on the media — on the radio — because they didn't tell him that they were going to do a media interview — they can say whatever they want to say, and I think we should be listening regardless of whether they give us a heads-up about what they're saying or not.

You know, there is this term that has kind of emerged in the last little while called "climate anxiety," and it talks about this idea for young people living in this uncertain future where they don't know what their world is going to look like. They don't know how liveable their world is going to be. When we talk about climate justice, you know, a lot of that is talking about climate justice for youth. You know, the people who are adults and are alive now have really benefited from the way we have used fossil fuels. You know, we have a lot of wealth as a

country that we have because of the way we used fossil fuels. We're benefiting — and we're reaping some of the harms now. I think they're already here; this isn't something that's going to happen in the distant future; it's already here, but the price for that is going to be mostly borne by future generations.

When we talk about climate justice, I think about our commitment to young people and to future generations. How are we going to leave the world better for them? How are we going to take the benefits we've used and try to pass on some of those benefits or, at the very least, mitigate some of the consequences that they will have to deal with because of our actions?

I hear of young people talking about how they don't know how they are going to afford a house, they don't know how they are going to afford rent, and they don't know if they are going to be able to stay in the Yukon or come back to the Yukon because they don't know if they can afford a place to live. They also don't know what their future is going to look like because they don't know how liveable their world will be.

We have these crises of affordability and climate change. We can't separate them, we can't talk about them individually, and we can't ignore one to deal with another. We have to, as leaders, have the vision, the bravery, and the boldness to deal with them both at once and to find solutions that make both of them better. We don't really have a choice about that. Our next generations don't really have a choice about whether we do that or not. It's what we have to do.

I just want to say to Yukoners that we hear what you're saying. We hear that it's really hard to put food on the table and we hear that it's really hard to fill up your vehicle. We hear that you are experiencing the effects of climate change and that you are afraid of wildfires and floods. We hear that you don't know what your children's lives are going to look like and you are afraid of that, too. We hear all of those things together, and I want to make the commitment that we are going to look for solutions and work and fight for solutions that make both of those things better. Getting rid of the carbon tax is not it.

So, I will finish by saying that we will not be supporting this motion. Thank you for the time in the House today.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thanks to my colleagues who have spoken so far and for the opportunity to discuss an extremely important and serious conversation that the world is having as we watch climate change effects locally, nationally, and globally.

I am going to start by responding directly to the Member for Kluane about the carbon-pricing rebate balance. This is something that really gets the ire of the Department of Finance up quite a bit. We have explained this a few different times to the members opposite about how, when you are working with the federal government and the CRA, the money has to get through our FAA — through our rules and procedures — and how that gets accounted for in the books. Pointing to a number in the balance and the opposition saying that this is how much money is currently in the bank is just not accurate, yet they just keep going back to that narrative.

I had Finance get the most up-to-date numbers, and so I am just going to start with that. By March 31 of this month of this year, we expect to have received in total \$95.2 million in revenues since the inception of the carbon rebate program. By that same date, we will have paid out \$88.2 million in rebates across all recipient groups. Now, this is expected to result in \$7 million in funds not yet paid out — \$7 million in funds not yet paid out — not the numbers that the Yukon Party are posting and saying. As they talk off-mic, they still obviously don't believe that number from the Department of Finance.

So, of that remaining amount, \$1 million will be paid out to municipalities on April 2, so take \$7 million minus \$1 million — on April 2. Approximately \$3.5 million will be paid out to individuals on April 5 — minus \$3.5 million from that number. When you take a look into all the considerations and take a look at all of the individual "buckets", as we call them — whether it is First Nation governments, municipal governments, business rebates, and individuals — this leaves a balance of approximately \$2.4 million to be disbursed as early as possible in 2024. It can't be any clearer than that. We have explained to the media — and they seem to have understood it, which is great — the differences between the CRA and us, making sure that we have a final reconciliation of those numbers — the books and the deposits and all of that. But the Yukon Party will still go out and tell people that we are holding all this money. It is not insulting to me because it is just not factual, but it is really insulting — I believe, anyway — to the people in the Department of Finance who have worked evenings and weekends, going above and beyond, working with businesses, First Nations, municipal governments, and working with individuals, making sure that this money is being doled out appropriately and, every year, getting better and better and better on it. I want to congratulate the Department of Finance team that does the extraordinary work to get that money out, despite what the Yukon Party would have you believe.

Mr. Speaker, I have risen in this Legislative Assembly to respond to criticisms of carbon pricing and the need for there to be a system so that Yukoners are not stuck with the financial and environmental costs when others pollute. At the core, this is what it is: Who pays for pollution? Should it be a polluter-pay system, or should the taxpayers — the average Yukoners — pay for that degradation?

It's a tough question. It's a tough question for all political parties. It's a tough question for the Conservatives right across the country right now because, at the core, it is steeped in a strong, powerful, and dangerous movement of some Conservatives — I'm not saying the Yukon Party at all in this consideration — not believing in climate change. I believe that the Yukon Party does believe in climate change; I do. I firmly do. I believe that every single person in this Legislative Assembly believes in climate change. I also believe that they were doing the right thing when they signed the Vancouver Declaration, and they deserve to get credit for that signature.

In 2016, by adopting that declaration, the Yukon Party, under their former Premier, Premier Pasloski, committed the Yukon to adapt — this is a quote: "... a broad range of domestic measures, including carbon pricing..."

Yes, I am making sure that we understand the unique nature of living in the north — that's for sure — but what the Member for Kluane forgot to say in his opening remarks was that they were also committing to that carbon pricing, which is a good thing, and I commend the Yukon Party and the then-Premier for that. The then-Premier from the Yukon Party also helped the working group to advise Ottawa on how to implement the same carbon pricing that the current Yukon Party has been opposing our whole time in government.

Again, it comes down to the model. How do we implement a model that makes sense and that is fair? That would answer some of the questions from the Member for Whitehorse Centre as well about exemptions and what is fair under the parameters of a federal system and a Yukon carve-out.

There have been a few times when the Yukon Party has been okay with carbon pricing, as my colleague from Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes went through. They campaigned on it in 2021 under the current leadership. That support was pretty fleeting, though, because, once the campaign was done, so was the commitment.

Also, again, we could talk about the confidence and supply agreement and how the Yukon Party said that they would take that over on our behalf — friendly, nice — and work with the NDP on CASA. The CASA, by the way, lauded *Our Clean Future* and our environmental plan that our Yukon government released in 2020. We are hearing off-mic that certain people in the Yukon Party don't support *Our Clean Future*, but the leader of their party said that he would implement all of CASA, which really has a lot to do with *Our Clean Future* — the environmental plan that we released in 2020 which rightfully promotes the values and the impact of carbon pricing.

But the Yukon Party members across the way seem to really dislike it when we remind them that there is a little bit of a divide here between the members and the leader when it comes to that CASA commitment and supporting *Our Clean Future*.

Mr. Speaker, we do know that when elections aren't in view and when our better judgment wins out, this is a Yukon Party that does believe in climate change, and sometimes we do hear them saying that they are promoting a carbon-pricing system. We definitely know for a fact that they are not necessarily supporting the federal Liberals' carbon-pricing system, but we have had glimpses of them saying that, yes, we need to do this, whether it's through CASA or whether it's through the Vancouver Declaration and other examples.

Some Yukoners may be asking why the Yukon Party would be supportive of carbon pricing. They are on the conservative end of the spectrum; their caucus members attend Conservative rallies in Canada — Canadian parties — and support them. So, does that seem like a conservative thing to do? That is the question when it comes to carbon pricing. Well, it's because of Conservatives; it's because Conservatives these days have a hard time seeing the policies for what they are, which are truly conservative approaches that keep us from having to resort to further regulations, to more expensive programs, and to more government involvement.

I will remind members of this Chamber and Yukoners listening at home or diligently reading through Hansard in years to come that a carbon tax began in Canada in March 2007 in Alberta back when they had the Progressive Conservative government. Mr. Speaker, do you remember the PC government in Alberta? They were around for a bit — 43 years, so quite a while. Now, Alberta became North America's first jurisdiction to legislate greenhouse gas reductions from large industrial emitters via a carbon levy.

Flip ahead to one month later when BC made history by joining five united states which had already brought in a carbon price. British Columbia was under a more conservative — at least by BC standards — government, I will remind you, Mr. Speaker. A year later, Ontario and Quebec joined to show that some non-conservative governments can be willing to take a good idea from the right — from opposing teams.

I always like to think that this is my style as well. I have always been in favour of applying good ideas from both sides — all sides of the political spectrum — a thievery of policy in the sincerest form of flattery, I guess, in certain cases. But I bring this up just to say that, once upon a time in this country, carbon pricing — a price on pollution or a carbon tax — whatever you want to call it, because it doesn't really matter — was seen as a conservative idea, because it is one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as it creates a financial incentive for people and businesses to pollute less.

Most economists whom I know are right of centre. They are progressives in their perspectives. They would also be the first ones to say that if a government is going to collect for a price signal for the industry and for the international community, don't keep some of that for your own endeavours. That is why we push back against the NDP saying, "Let's keep some of that and apply it" — no, the signal needs to be succinct and it works. I tabled a document today talking about hundreds of economists all agreeing on exactly that structure.

Again, this conservative concept — well, it was a well-known political entity in Canada, Preston Manning, who came out and supported the carbon price in 2014 — definitely not a Liberal. One could argue that he wasn't even progressive. He was one of the architects of the reform movement. We also know that a fiscal conservative, Stephen Harper, also believed in carbon pricing. He announced to the chamber of commerce in London, UK a plan of his that would — quote: "... effectively establish a price on carbon of \$65 a tonne."

What I'm getting at here is that carbon pricing should be the crown jewel of conservative platforms. We have an environmental emergency occurring. The north is experiencing climate change at three times the rate that the south is. We see it in our roads, we see it on our traplines, and we see it from the terrible environmental disasters that we face almost every year now. Yukoners and Canadians and frankly all humans are going to have to pay for the cost of climate change. Do we want it to be now while we can do something about it and say something about it, or do we want to pay through the nose in five, 10, 15, or 20 years from now and pay the extraordinary costs for

environmental recovery efforts and mitigating efforts instead of trying to curb this while we still have a chance?

In the climate classes that I took back in 1988, the numbers that the climate scientists set there — and people said that this was hoax and wasn't real. Those numbers proved the test of time. Their 50-year window has, if anything, collapsed more to a 40-year window. We have been hearing this from economists and we've been hearing this from environmentalists for decades now.

I wish that nobody had to pay for climate change, but somebody does. This is about cost, and again, I will say it: The cost of pollution should fall to the polluter and not the taxpayer, and those taxpayers who will pay the brunt of this will be our children. It will be the next generation as well; it will be our children's children. No Members of the Legislative Assembly who are here currently are young enough that we will truly experience the brunt of what climate change is going to do to our territory or to our country in years to come, but it will be because of us and because of our generation — and we have heard the members of the NDP talk about that. Our young people and the next seven generations are going to have to pay the cost.

Let's talk about that cost. Let's talk right now about something that the Yukon Party doesn't talk about, which is the cost of climate change. We always keep on hearing about the cost of carbon pricing. We hear one side of that argument and not the rebate side, but that is going to cost. We have already gone over the GDP numbers of carbon pricing; my colleague mentioned that.

So, I want to go on to the cost of climate change. The Parliamentary Budget Office that was quoted today by the Member for Kluane also estimated that the cost of climate change has lowered Canada's GDP by 0.8 percent. Now, in a Yukon context, 0.8 percent of GDP is roughly \$28 million per year. That money is not being rebated back to Yukoners. That money is coming out of our economy — \$28 million each year — because of the cost of climate change.

To the Yukon Party members across who flip-flop on carbon pricing, who do not have an environmental plan, and who couldn't get those projects out the door and left so much federal money on the table from their time in government that they left us with an incredible infrastructure deficit when we started — I want to ask them: Who should be paying for that \$28 million? How do you rebate that \$28 million of lost GDP because of climate change back to Yukoners? It is just a reminder. The number is only going to increase as the climate worsens. That is why governments — political parties — need to have plans. While we listened to Yukoners who told us clearly that they are passionate about the climate and making sure that we do something about this, we have seen that most Yukoners want to see us doing our part. The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes talked about the tragedy of the commons. I completely agree with his statements. Most people whom I talk to also believe that we should be doing our part. That is why we listened and we prepared the *Our Clean Future* report and are implementing it.

I want to go back for a second to carbon pricing, which the Yukon Party brought up today through this motion. We are still not sure what their plan is to deal with climate change, but we are hearing the criticism of the carbon-pricing mechanisms, saying that it is very expensive to Yukoners. It's important that I talk about some of the merits of it. Conservatives used to like it back when they were fiscally conservative, but let's just talk about today — the actual current model we are talking about.

Carbon pricing on pollution is a central pillar of Canada's efforts to address climate change through the *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change*, or PCF for short. I was there when it was getting off the ground. I was the chair of the Council of the Federation. I worked with all the premiers right across the country so that we could get a system that was acceptable for all Canadians, so that the country could look the next seven generations in the eye and say that we stepped up to the plate and accepted that the climate change fight was real and we had to fight it — not because we could be winners or losers or that it was going to be politically sound. I'll tell you: Carbon pricing — when you think about votes — is always an issue, but when you think about what's right and what is the right thing to do, it's less of an issue as far as whether or not we should or shouldn't have one.

Because of the importance of actually having a system, I think that it's extremely important, and so that work was important to me. When we take a look at what we were able to carve out for Yukoners and what we were not able to carve out for Yukoners, it was hard for us to argue with our premiers and with the federal government for a carve-out on fossil fuels for heating homes when 90 percent of our energy comes from hydro; whereas, in the Northwest Territories, they could make that argument because they don't have the amazing infrastructure that we have here. That argument made sense for an exemption.

Now, placer mining — that's a criticism we get from the Yukon Party. The criticism we get from the NDP is that we gave this money back to the placer miners. Well, in that case, we made the argument that, in this industry — talking about carbon leakage. We talk about gold being a commodity that is going to be traded. If it's not traded here, it's going to be traded in another country that might not have the same regulations, rules, and human rights considerations. Also, the exemption made sense because there were no alternatives in that particular industry. At the same time that the output-based pricing models were going to be considering a mining industry, this is such a small industry in comparison, we could make that argument. I was very happy to be able to make the argument for fuels for planes as well. We have an awful lot of things that we could argue for and so we made those exemptions.

I am going to end by just saying this. I have argued with the federal government on carbon pricing. I've done it here. It's not necessarily the best model. I have argued to put a five-year review into the pan-Canadian framework to do exactly that. Let's compare our model to Québec's model, to BC's model, and to California's model. Let's see if the increases match up with the decrease in the carbon emissions. I think it's fair if you have a plan to consider — then you should be in the argument

about what plan we should be moving toward. But if your plan is to just stick your head in the sand, well, that will be the only part of your body that won't be burned off as the rest of the Yukon burns to the ground through the environmental degradation of climate change.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time to be able to speak to this motion.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to respond to Motion No. 906, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane. I am cautiously optimistic after hearing from my colleague the Member for Klondike that we have reached a point in time where the Yukon Party, or at least some of their members, believe in climate change. This is progress. They may flip-flop on this topic, but for now, they appear to believe in it. Let us cherish this moment. Now we only need to persuade them that we need to do something about it.

I see that this motion is a continuation of the Yukon Party's principle of not leading by example — zero ideas from the other side of this Assembly, no plans whatsoever. Facing the challenges presented by climate change, we know that business as usual is futile. We are witnessing an increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather events. These occurrences hurt lives, displace communities, destroy logistic networks, disrupt and delay the flow of goods and services, create capacity failures, and lead to immense costs of remediation. The damages caused by storms and extreme weather events amount to trillions of dollars globally, including infrastructure damages, supply chain disruption, and other economic impacts.

The report by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction estimated that, between 1998 and 2017, direct economic losses from storms, hurricanes, and extreme weather events accounted for approximately \$2.9 trillion in damage.

As humanity faces climate change, policy-makers are seeking the most effective climate policy instruments. In that regard, the transition to climate neutrality requires deep, structural changes that cannot be achieved through incremental measures. The carbon-pricing mechanism is part of this puzzle of broader policy moves and a strategic combination of climate change measures. Carbon-pricing mechanisms are insufficient as a stand-alone measure, but we know that pricing of negative externalities is one of the central pillars of environmental economics. In other words, putting a price equal to the social damages of greenhouse gas emissions internalizes their negative externality by market-based incentives.

An increasing number of academic studies demonstrate in both national and cross-country analyses that carbon-pricing mechanisms can effectively reduce carbon emissions or at least dampen their growth without affecting economic growth and employment. The estimates of emission-reducing effects identified in ex-post evaluations fall within a fairly broad range and are often rather moderate. The academic literature is clear that the level of the carbon-price mechanism rate is a crucial factor in determining its effectiveness.

Mr. Speaker, disasters cost money — a lot of money. The climate change crisis that we are dealing with is bringing upon

us significant events of flooding, landslides, variable precipitation, and massive wildfires. Here in the north, we are extremely fortunate to receive significant federal support. Realistically, our tax base here in the Yukon could never afford the amount of investments that could be required in our infrastructure in the Yukon. The cost of evacuating the population of Yellowknife was enormous, and it is still being calculated — thousands of internally displaced persons and over the course of the summer of 2023, approximately 50 percent, at one time or another, of the population of the Northwest Territories — the significant cost to evacuate the Village of Mayo and to evacuate the population of Old Crow.

We have witnessed the immense stress and upset of many Yukoners and half of the residents of the Northwest Territories who have had to leave their homes and communities. With the spring approaching, many Yukoners are concerned. Several years of severe flooding have affected locations throughout the territory, damaging homes, properties, infrastructure, and displacing people. These types of events have and will continue to have real and lasting impacts on Yukoners' lives.

There were the significant costs to repair multiple washouts that we experienced last spring along the Dempster Highway or multiple blown-out culverts following the spectacular flooding in the Klondike Valley subdivisions of Rock Creek, Dredge Pond, and the Henderson Corner last spring, the near-destruction of an almost brand new bridge at Clear Creek, which, if it had to have been replaced, would have been in the range of \$12 million to \$15 million. How much does it cost to monitor and fix the permafrost slump at kilometre 1456 on the Alaska Highway, which the Member for Kluane likely knows very well from his frequent trips between Whitehorse and Haines Junction?

Highway maintenance costs in discontinuous permafrost areas can be up to six times higher per kilometre than in non-permafrost areas — six times higher. That question was asked in Question Period today with respect to Shakwak funding and the significant and ongoing challenges that the Yukon government faces in connecting Burwash Landing with Beaver Creek in some of the most challenging highway conditions in the Yukon.

As Minister of Highways and Public Works, I recognize the immense value of each dollar invested in resilient infrastructure as we face these rising challenges. According to a recent report by the Canadian Climate Institute, proactive adaptation to climate change can mitigate its impacts and provide a return of investment of approximately \$13 to \$15 per dollar spent.

In November of 2021, an atmospheric river brought a month's worth of rain down on several areas of British Columbia in the Lower Mainland all the way to Hope, British Columbia within two days. The damage wrought by this extreme precipitation was extensive. Main access routes leading to several areas of the province were cut off. Six bridges either completely collapsed or suffered catastrophic damage. On BC's Highway 8, seven kilometres were washed away. With temporary repairs standing at approximately

\$250 million, the total cost of damage just from that one weather event stands at an estimated \$1 billion.

The members opposite don't seem to comprehend this or are just being politically cynical. The members opposite are parroting their federal leader in Ottawa who is calling for a non-confidence motion of this measure today. Similar to Conservatives in Ottawa, there is a disregard of the facts and science in pursuit of partisan advantage.

Members opposite cannot stand here complaining about the primary mechanism we have as a nation to price pollution, proceed with asking it to be cancelled, all the while demanding more funding from the federal government for the Yukon. We can't pause climate change, we can't pause the increasing costs of adapting to climate change, and we shouldn't ask for a pause to increase one of the measures in place on a national level to combat it.

Our government is always concerned, of course, about affordability and the adverse impacts for Yukon households. Public acceptance of carbon-pricing mechanisms depends on several factors and can be increased by providing public information, avoiding negative distributional effects, and earmarking part of the revenues for environmental projects and climate investment. To dispel the rampant disinformation, I would like to make it clear that the carbon-pricing mechanism is an example of a feebate. Individuals pay fees in proportion to their use of a commonly owned resource, and the money is returned as equal rebates go to all co-owners. In the case of carbon pricing, the common resource is the atmospheric carbon sink.

The incentive for households to reduce their use of the resource here — their carbon footprint — is not diminished by rebates, since their individual use only affects what they pay, not what they receive. Households that have the largest carbon footprint generally would pay more than they get back. Lower income households that typically have the smallest carbon footprint would generally receive more than they pay. Middle income households would roughly break even, thus being protected from adverse impacts on their net incomes.

The result of this policy is defined as a decrease in vertical inequality. In that regard, a carbon-pricing mechanism is consistent with the ethical premise that the gifts of nature belong to all in common and equal measure; however, just because emissions are legal within an existing regulatory framework does not mean that they should be free.

Carbon pricing is fundamental toward implementing the polluter-pay principle. The economic principle enshrined in principle 16 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992 is that the costs of pollution and its abatement should, where possible, be borne by those emitting it.

I would like to speak to some of the academic literature of the effects of carbon-pricing mechanisms on macro-economic performance. In this regard, the most researched Canadian jurisdiction is our neighbour to the south, the Province of British Columbia.

A report by Murray and Rivers in 2015 found no significant impact on economic growth for the British

Columbia carbon tax, and this was again confirmed by Elgie and McClay in 2013 and Metcalf in 2019. The Azevedo 2018 report did not detect a negative impact on aggregate employment, and Bernard found, in 2018, an increase in overall employment by 4.5 percent in the period 2008 to 2016.

In their evaluation of carbon taxes for European countries, Metcalf and Stock in 2020 concluded — and I quote: "... we find no robust evidence of a negative effect of the tax on employment or GDP growth. For the European experience, at least, we find no support for the view that carbon taxes are job or growth killers." A second cross-country analysis by the same authors for 15 EU carbon tax countries cannot find adverse effects on GDP growth and employment as well."

This is how we will move the needle. Yukoners want us to take climate change seriously. Unfortunately, the Yukon Party does not appear to share this sentiment. Just this last weekend, 14.2 degrees Celsius was recorded in Carmacks, shattering the prior record of 10.6 degrees Celsius. Environment Canada also indicated that records were broken in 38 British Columbia communities, with 22.8 degrees noted in Quesnel.

The challenge of climate change can feel immense. Many people feel that they cannot contribute at the individual or community level. Throughout all corners of the territory, we are seeing and experiencing changes due to climate change. We do not expect this to decrease in frequency anytime soon.

We have committed to an ambitious target of reducing our non-mining emissions by 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030. We are under no illusions that this target is ambitious and requires a significant amount of work and investment. By aiming for this target, we are in alignment with national and international commitments to avoid the most catastrophic impacts of climate change. This is why, in 2020, our government released *Our Clean Future — A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*. Through the *Our Clean Future* strategy, we have committed to taking action to build a better, cleaner future for the Yukon by working toward four key goals: reducing the Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions; ensuring that Yukoners have access to reliable, affordable, and renewable energy; adapting to the impacts of climate change; and building a green economy.

Our Clean Future commits the Yukon to a target reduction of non-mining emissions by 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030 and to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. Our government will continue to work to implement the actions laid out in *Our Clean Future* and address climate change, protect our natural surroundings, and to ensure that our territory and communities continue to grow and thrive.

Last December, I shared with Yukoners the third *Our Clean Future* annual report, which provides details on the government's progress on *Our Clean Future* goals and targets. In 2022, the Government of Yukon implemented significant climate actions, including introducing a new *Clean Energy Act* to legislate the greenhouse gas reduction targets, implementing a Better Buildings program in order to offer affordable financing for energy retrofits on Yukoners' homes and buildings, establishing a geohazard mapping program to understand the risks from climate change to the Yukon's

transportation corridors, and making significant progress on community wildfire protection plans for communities across the Yukon.

Since 2020, the Government of Yukon has completed 62 of *Our Clean Future* actions, 113 are in progress or ongoing, and three have not yet been started.

When we first introduced *Our Clean Future* in 2020, we knew from the onset that we would need to strengthen our approach year over year as we considered new research and technology to assess progress and to receive input from our partners. The Government of Yukon continues to consider innovative solutions to climate change while working with others to accelerate our emission reductions.

Thanks to the work of the Yukon Climate Leadership Council, the support of the Youth Panel on Climate Change, and the support of many public service employees, last December, I announced 42 new actions to be included in *Our Clean Future* that span seven key areas, including transportation, homes and buildings, energy, people and the environment, communities, and in innovation and leadership.

These new actions will strengthen our efforts on two key fronts: helping us to adapt and build our resilience to climate change impacts and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. Our government is already working hard to implement these additional actions to help us to reach the goals committed to in *Our Clean Future*. The Government of Yukon will continue to invest in protecting our communities from climate change while reducing emissions and building a cleaner, more prosperous territory.

As we heard from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Member for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, we have had the honour and privilege over the course of the last three years to speak to the youth climate leadership council and to youth in general, including youth who have attended both the Legislature and the federal building for the climate strike actions that have occurred over the course of the last number of years. We have spoken to those young persons both at those demonstrations and privately, and I hear them loud and clear that inaction is not an option, and carbon-pricing mechanism is one of the tools in the toolbox to advance climate justice and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but there are many Yukoners and certainly the next generation of Yukoners who demand that their elected officials take action — we are doing so. It has certainly been an honour and a privilege to have been a minister of both Highways and Public Works and the Department of Environment over the course of the last three years where we have been able to promote many greenhouse gas-offsetting measures through retrofits, green vehicles, better plug-in electric vehicles, and many solar arrays in our off-grid communities.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion today. We will certainly be voting against the motion.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, there is a huge disconnect in our society that warrants some examination this afternoon. This debate gives us the opportunity to probe just

that. I thank the Official Opposition for bringing this motion to the floor this afternoon, and let's get at it.

I am in a strange place this afternoon. When talking about wildfires, storms, and the like, I generally urge calm. There is no sense in getting freaked out in the face of a crisis. Fear shuts down all rational thought, and that's really not good for anyone. We need calm, rational thought these days. That said, we need to discuss some deeply troubling trends, so for a few minutes, I am going to scare the heck out of you, because we need to understand what's at stake, all the while asking you to remain rational so that you understand that we need to make sacrifices and act to change humanity's trajectory on man-made climate change. This is the trick this afternoon.

We have to delve into the fact that things are no longer normal — normal from the perspective of a 60-year-old guy like me who remembers the relatively placid and predictable Canadian summers of his youth and his 20s, 30s, and 40s. Normal for the generation born in 2005 and on is going to be vastly different. They won't have the points of reference many of us in this Chamber have. Simply put, the world's weather is getting owly.

We have been told that this would happen for decades. Now we are seeing it in real time. Last weekend in Whitehorse, it was beautiful. It was 12 degrees above zero, zero being the norm for this season. It was weird, but it was nice, I have to admit. That said, in the back of my mind, there's a tickle in my lizard brain. It's unsettling. Québec has issued wildfire warnings for some parts of the province. It's the earliest such warning in history. It has been a mild winter. Snow cover — snow that used to define the province — heck, used to define the entire country — is disappearing faster than usual. Last month, Alberta declared its wildfire season had started. That's earlier than normal. More than 100 fires are still burning in BC and Alberta. They burned throughout the Canadian winter. BC is starting prescribed burns to protect communities against wildfires. This is the runup to this year's fire season.

Last year was bananas. It was the hottest year on record by a country mile. Climate scientists say humanity is in uncharted territory. The sheer number of temperature records broken last year was staggering, and they didn't just get broken; they were smashed.

In Lytton, BC, which burned to the ground in less than two hours in 2021, the temperature set a Canadian record of 49.6 degrees Celsius. That is five degrees hotter than the country has ever seen before — five degrees hotter. Mr. Speaker, turn your thermostat from 15 to 20 degrees and see the change in your house; it's profound. Global sea temperatures hit new records in May and June, and Arctic sea ice coverage hit a record low. Weirdly powerful rainstorms flooded communities in Vermont, India, Japan, and Montréal, and we have also seen unprecedented storms in BC, the Maritimes, and central Canada. The Yukon saw historic floods in 2021 and 2022 and a devastating flood in the Klondike last year. North America was blanketed in thick clouds of smoke from Old Crow to New York City, and that smoke came from unprecedented wildfires burning in Canada — 15 million hectares burned, more than seven times the historic national average. Last year,

Yellowknife saw a frantic evacuation. Here in the Yukon, wildfires provoked the evacuation of Mayo and Old Crow and threatened farms and homes near the Takhini bridge. The Yukon has seen our wildfire season start to stretch into what used to be the demobilization season.

Now, I could go on and on and on. So, what are we going to do? What are we going to do? This is the point this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It's clothed in carbon pricing, but really, what we are talking about is the devastation we are seeing around the globe and coast to coast to coast in Canada. We must do something to encourage people to ditch fossil fuels in favour of more efficient, greener alternatives. We have to cut the pollution. That's what we're talking about. You can call it carbon emissions — it's pollution. We're trying to get the pollution out of the atmosphere — start curbing that trajectory we are on, that catastrophic trajectory. The best way to do that is to put a price on the pollution we are producing.

In Canada, we are doing that, and we are reimbursing the money we gather back to Canadians, making life more affordable through the charge we're putting on the pollution that Canadians, Canadian businesses, and Alaskans are producing going to and from their homes in Alaska and all over the country. We're putting a cost on the pollution that we're producing as a society, and we're reimbursing every cent to businesses and to local people, making life more affordable for Yukoners and Canadians. That's the plan, and it's working. We're seeing in provinces like BC that the carbon emissions are starting to drop.

From 2016, the side opposite, the Yukon Party, has been objecting to this, sort of. They signed the Vancouver accord; we heard that from my good colleague earlier today. They signed that and then: Oh, we're not in favour of this — but they sort of were. They sort of were trying to play the progressive a little bit. And then we get into office and they are against it and against this, that, and the other thing, again and again opposing it every chance they get from 2016 until they get to the 2021 election. Then they campaigned on it. I just tabled the campaign literature earlier today. My colleague referenced the campaign material as well.

They said: Hey, progressives, you might have a safe harbour here. As soon as the election was over and they lost, they rejected it. As a matter of fact, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin claimed in this House that it never happened, but the proof is there. It's on your table. I tabled it this afternoon. So, we get flip-flops. They are for it when it brings them closer to power, but they're against it when their base is howling in anguish because they are endorsing something that the oil and gas industry — which is really backing their party — is upset about. They play both sides.

There is a reason why the Yukon Party is considered betwixt and between and in flip-flop mode and why they don't want rented diesels and do want a diesel plant — a second fossil fuel plant. They built an LNG plant, and now they want to build another. There's a good reason for that. It's because they want to start to leverage the fossil fuels in the territory for the plant. They are not going to say that publicly because Yukoners don't want to frack the territory. We heard that expressly in 2016, but

that is the play. You build a \$100-million fossil fuel plant — an LNG plant, a second one — and then you say: Hey, why are we trucking all this stuff up from Surrey? We can get it right here in the territory and put Yukoners to work. That's the play. The problem is that it is continuing the Yukon's addiction to fossil fuels and continuing to keep us addicted to pollution.

Our government sees things differently. The Premier stated it quite simply the last election. We are not going to tie the future generations in the territory to fossil fuels. We are working very hard to get us off the junk. We are working very hard to transition the territory to a new paradigm. We are leveraging the wonderful investments that we saw in hydroelectric power years ago and building on that legacy — which already provides more than 90 percent of our power — to continue and build for the future on windmills, biomass, perhaps geothermal, solar, more efficient vehicles, more efficient running of our government services, more efficient transportation networks. That is the whole goal. That is why our government — the progressive Liberal government — continues to support a carbon price on pollution and why we continue to support trying to make life more affordable for Yukoners by reimbursing the entire collection — all the money that we make on the carbon-pricing mechanism — back to Yukoners to make life more affordable. It is elegant; it has been endorsed by educational institutions around the globe as currently the best way to start to curb our addiction to polluting carbon fuels.

So, the point is that there is a huge disconnect in our society, and it shows up right here in this Chamber. People come to me and talk all the time about the crisis that we are facing with wildfires and with floods, and they are caused by the growing effects of man-made climate change brought about by polluting fuels — carbon, polluting carbon. They are upset about it and they are worried. What are you going to do? What are you going to do? I hear it all the time.

We have a solution; it's in place. We are working on it; we are starting to see the results. It is a sacrifice, and I understand that. You see it at the pump every time you do it; you are going to pay a couple more cents. That money is going to come back to you. It will come back to the most efficient of us faster. It will come back — as my colleague has noted earlier, low-income Yukoners will see less of an effect and more of a rebate, making their lives more affordable even as they start to prepare the future for a cleaner, brighter Earth.

That's what we believe in. We are not going to sell the future generations of Yukoners short. The opposition party, not so much. They are going to try gull Yukoners by saying: We sort of have a plan. They have never said what it is. They are going to try to lead people astray. Save a couple of cents on your gas, but what they are not telling you is that people are getting that money back already. They are not telling the whole story, Mr. Speaker, and that is really disappointing. They have no plan, and they are not telling Yukoners the whole story, and they haven't for 13 years while they sat on their hands and did very little for our climate. We are reaping the price today.

We have to acknowledge that we need to change our behaviour. We have to cut the pollution we are creating as a

society. Currently, the best way to do that is through a price on carbon. We are standing committed to that for the future of the territory. The far side, not so much, and they have no plan. This may save you a couple of bucks at the pumps, but they are going to cost the nation billions, and it could cost us the planet.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Istchenko: Today in this Legislative Assembly, we have heard a lot from government ministers who talk a lot about things but did nothing to address the crux of the issue — the issue of this motion — the affordability and the cost-of-living crisis.

This government here today was doing everything they could to defend their federal counterparts in the decisions they are making — or not making — around the carbon tax issue.

It is disappointing that they are not interested in the affordability issue. We are not here today to debate the carbon tax or whether it is or is not working. The issue that is meant to be on the table today is simply to have Yukon add our voice to the growing number of jurisdictions asking the federal government to hit the pause button on the April 1 issue and it was for the Speaker to do it. It would give people a chance to deal with inflation that they are already facing. They could maybe get their heads above water and maybe be able to afford things.

It's funny — well, not surprising but funny — to see that the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes came to the House again today with a research project that he has undertaken in order to provide us with the statistics on the number of times that we raised the carbon tax in the House. Frankly, we will continue to bring it up if it means representing Yukoners — our constituents, their constituents — and their interests. As I said earlier, if the members across the way would have actually been talking to real people in their ridings, they might have been hearing the same things that we are.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? They are right; it was an election issue and I'm sure it's going to be an election issue coming up in the next election.

There is a huge disconnect with the government today. It's unfortunate for Yukoners, but let's get this thing to a vote.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Blake: Disagree.

MLA Tredger: Disagree.

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

Speaker: The nays have it.

I declare the motion defeated.

Motion No. 906 negatived

Motion No. 905

Clerk: Motion No. 905, standing in the name of Mr. Cathers.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to begin consultation and work on the development of a Yukon firearms act which would:

- (1) support the establishment of a chief firearms officer for Yukon;
- (2) protect the private property rights of law-abiding firearms owners; and
- (3) support the creation of a regulatory framework.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today as the Yukon Party Official Opposition Justice critic to introduce this motion on behalf of our caucus. The intent of the motion is this: that we urge the Government of Yukon to immediately begin consultation and work on the development of a Yukon firearms act that would support the establishment of a chief firearms officer located here in the Yukon, protect the private property rights of innocent firearm owners who acquired their property lawfully, and support the creation of a regulatory framework that would limit the implementation of any federal firearms confiscation program.

In beginning my remarks, I want to emphasize four things. It is important to take an evidence-based approach rather than one guided by emotion. Public policy based on fear is not the right approach to take. Second, the so-called gun buyback program is actually the proposed confiscation of lawfully acquired property from innocent Canadian citizens, including Yukoners, who have done nothing wrong. Third, it's clear that diverting public money and police resources away from dealing with serious issues, including organized crime, would actually make the Yukon and other parts of Canada less safe. Fourth, the National Police Federation, which is the union representing RCMP members, agrees that the federal Liberal government's

approach diverts police resources away from where they are needed the most.

They issued a position statement about the matter of the Trudeau government's firearms legislation and the so-called "buyback program" in which they clearly and specifically stated that those measures actually — and I quote: "... diverts extremely important personnel, resources, and funding away from addressing the more immediate and growing threat of criminal use of illegal firearms." It is clear to anyone who looks closely at the evidence that what the Trudeau Liberal government is proposing would divert police resources from where they are needed most and instead targets licensed firearms owners and would forcibly confiscate their lawfully acquired property. The federal Liberals' actions are completely politically motivated and are contrary to the advice of RCMP members, a number of police chiefs across the country, and other experts on public safety.

In a previous Sitting, this House passed a motion urging the Yukon government to ensure that territorial policing resources are not diverted to assist in the implementation of the federal government's so-called "gun buyback program", which, as I noted, is really forcible confiscation by another name. Notably, the Premier and every one of the Liberal MLAs in the government caucus voted against protecting the rights of Yukon hunters and other firearms owners that day.

As I mentioned during that debate, it's also worth noting that the proposed gun confiscation program could impact the constitutionally protected subsistence hunting rights of First Nation citizens. While any such provision in federal gun legislation and any actions taken by confiscation agents against a citizen who has subsistence hunting rights are likely to eventually be overturned by a court if challenged, how many Yukoners have the money to defend their legal rights in a court case that may ultimately go all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada? There is a real risk that someone's legal rights would be trampled on by the gun confiscation program and they would simply not have the financial ability to defend themselves in court.

The current Premier took over after that motion passed this House, and while he did oppose the much-hated sweeping amendment to Bill C-21, we have seen no evidence to date that he actually opposed the original version of Bill C-21, and it gave that message to the federal government.

Earlier today, he tabled his letter to the Hon. Dominic LeBlanc, dated January 18 of this year, regarding the appointment of a chief firearms officer resident in the Yukon. I was actually quite surprised to see how half-hearted that letter appears where he actually states that — quote: "From the Government of Yukon's perspective, the service provided..." — to the Yukon — "... by the Chief Firearms Officer based in British Columbia has worked well to date. However, we would be interested to explore the potential benefits of a Chief Firearms Officer resident in the territory." Again, the letter is at best actually a half-hearted endorsement of that concept, and it's certainly not critical of Bill C-21 itself.

Again, if the Premier has sent other letters to the federal government or pushed back against Bill C-21 and a gun

confiscation plan with the Prime Minister, I invite him to share the evidence of that with us. The Premier has been talking a good line to stakeholders representing Yukon firearms owners claiming that he is on their side but today is about putting that to the test. Today is an opportunity for the Liberals to join us in standing up for Yukoners on the issue of the rights of hunters and other innocent firearms owners who acquired their property lawfully and have done nothing wrong. The question is: Will they do that?

If the Liberals vote against the motion, talk out the clock, or try to bog it down with amendments or procedural manoeuvres, we will see and Yukoners will see that they are acting more like the local branch office of the Trudeau Liberals and are not standing up for Yukoners.

The legislative assemblies of both Saskatchewan and Alberta have passed legislation to protect firearms owners. We believe that model can be improved on but should be used as a starting point for discussions with Yukoners about how we can protect the property rights of innocent people if the federal government proceeds with gun confiscation. In Question Period today, the Premier appeared to give us a preview of how his government plans to dodge the issue and avoid standing up to Ottawa. He seemed to be trying to argue that this is all just out of territorial jurisdiction — probably, maybe — but that excuse has several problems with it.

The governments and legislative assemblies of both Alberta and Saskatchewan believe that this is within provincial jurisdiction and have passed laws to protect their citizens. We believe that it is also within the Yukon's power and in the best interest of our fellow citizens to take action in this area. I do acknowledge that there is an argument that this could be a legal grey area; however, even if it is a grey area, like those two provinces do, the Yukon should make best efforts to develop legislation that will protect innocent people from unjustified confiscation of private property and make the sincere attempt in that area.

If the Premier actually does have a legal opinion from someone other than a member of his Cabinet indicating that there is a reason that parts of this are outside of territorial jurisdiction, he is welcome to table that opinion and has the ability to share it with the public.

I also note that one of the methods the federal government appears to be considering for possible confiscation methods involves using contracted confiscation agents who would not be police but would be a business. The Yukon very clearly has jurisdiction in the area of corporate affairs. The government can require licensing for businesses and staff of businesses, which could include additional licence requirements, training requirements, and compliance requirements for a business offering gun confiscation services beyond any requirements they might have at a federal level. Like Saskatchewan and Alberta, the idea of this is that a licensing requirement for gun confiscation agents could be created and then no licences ever issued by the provincial government or, in our case, the territorial government.

I want to just refer back briefly to a letter that I sent to the Yukon Minister of Justice on June 8, 2022 in which I outlined

concerns with the federal government's legislation and proposed alternatives, because it is quite relevant to the debate today.

Quoting from that letter, I said, "On behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition, I urge you to contact your federal colleague Minister Mendicino to oppose Bill C-21.

"While more action is needed to address gun violence in Canada, it is important to take an evidence-based approach to this problem rather than one guided by emotion. Public policy based on fear is not the right approach to take.

"We strongly encourage you to read the position statement by the National Police Federation (which is the union representing RCMP members) on the matter of gun control legislation. While their position statement on the current state of gun violence in Canada was issued in November 2020, it is directly relevant to this new legislation, as it addresses matters including the so-called 'buy-back' program proposed by Mr. Trudeau, and the federation's own priorities.

"As stated by the National Police Federation, 'Effectively addressing the threat of Canada's growing illicit firearms market and related increased gang violence requires the urgent, efficient, and effective deployment of law enforcement expertise, personnel, and financial resources.'

"The union representing RCMP members goes on to state:

"'Costly and current legislation, such as the Order in Council prohibiting various firearms and the proposed 'buy-back' program by the federal government targeted at legal firearms owners, does not address these current and emerging themes or urgent threats to public safety.'"

I then went on later in the letter to note, "We urge you to listen to the expert advice the National Police Federation provided in that position statement, and recognize that most of the gun control measures currently proposed would actually divert important personnel and resources from where they are needed most.

"Last year, the Toronto Police Service indicated 86% of the guns seized in connection with crime were illegally obtained from the US black market and across the country, most gun violence is connected to organized crime.

"The focus of any serious, responsible plan to address gun violence in Canada must target organized crime, and guns smuggled across the border from the United States. It is also important to tackle the causes of crime, including diverting at-risk youth from becoming involved in gangs."

Later on in my June 2022 letter to the territorial Justice minister, we provided a list of specific policy proposals that would be a better approach to dealing with gun crime while protecting the rights of innocent people. In those proposals, we borrowed quite heavily from recommendations made by the union representing RCMP members. Here is another excerpt from our June 2022 letter:

"The Yukon Party Official Opposition suggests the following specific actions:

"1. Appoint a Chief Firearms Officer for the territory, reporting to the territorial government. This would make the position more accountable, speed up the processing of PAL

renewals for law-abiding citizens, and also allow for faster suspension of a licence if required.

"2. Lobby the federal Liberals to cancel the proposed 'buy-back' program, repeal the May 2020 Order-in-Council, and allow law-abiding firearms owners to keep their legally acquired property. As stated by the National Police Federation, the 'buy-back' program actually 'diverts extremely important personnel, resources, and funding away from addressing the more immediate and growing threat of criminal use of illegal firearms.'

"3. Prioritize crime reduction, gang diversion, safe communities, secure borders, Canadian enforcement agency integration, and cross-border safety of the public and all police officers. This was called for by the National Police Federation.

"4. Lobby for increased funding for the RCMP Border Integrity Program, to enable dedicated proactive RCMP investigative weapons enforcement activity and the dismantling of gang and organized crime firearms smuggling. This was called for by the National Police Federation.

"5. Help law enforcement properly address crime prevention rather than focusing funding and resources towards the ongoing monitoring of unrelated restrictions on licensed and regulated firearms owners. This was called for by the National Police Federation.

"6. Prioritize and lobby for increased resources for the federal policing program of the RCMP. In 2018, the Yukon — like other jurisdictions — actually lost police positions used for investigations into matters such as drug trafficking and organized crime due to federal cuts to this funding. That funding should be restored, and enhanced.

"7. Lobby for Gun and Gang Violence Action funding from the federal government to be able to be used by provinces and territories for policing.

"8. Work with all orders of government to address the root causes of organized crime, including early identification of at-risk youth, diversion programs, and job-skills training to help at-risk people find opportunities and productive alternatives to becoming involved with a gang.

"We believe these alternative measures would be a more effective approach to dealing with the real issues facing Canadians, and improve public safety while respecting the rights of law-abiding firearms owners."

So, as I noted, we have not only called on the territorial government to oppose the gun confiscation plan, deceptively referred to by the federal Liberals as a "buy-back program", but we have outlined on more than one occasion specific policy proposals for taking a better approach to addressing organized crime and gun violence. That is, again, what we are attempting to do with the motion here today.

Ultimately, we are also confident that, if the government moves forward with developing a Yukon firearms act, legal counsel would help the government find a way to do as much as we can, as Yukoners, in that act and find alternative approaches if there is a reason why the models used in two provinces need to be altered or should be improved on. The starting point of this should be beginning work on this and consulting with Yukoners.

Developing a Yukon firearms act to protect the rights of law-abiding firearms owners should begin by considering the legislation passed in Alberta and Saskatchewan for that purpose and working with local stakeholders and the public to improve and adapt that model to meet the needs of Yukoners.

To begin this work, the Yukon Party Official Opposition is calling on the territorial Liberal government to begin by consulting with First Nations and stakeholders, including the Yukon Fish and Game Association, Yukon Trappers Association, Yukon Outfitters Association, Whitehorse Rifle and Pistol Club, Yukon Handgun Association, the Yukon RCMP, and with the public.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will note again the three parts to this motion all envisioned from the development of a Yukon firearms act that would: support the establishment of a chief firearms officer in the Yukon reporting to the Yukon; take steps to protect the private property rights of law-abiding firearms owners; and support the creation of a regulatory framework, much as has been done in Alberta and Saskatchewan, which is aimed at preventing the federal government from being able to move forward with gun confiscation if they decide to do so because of licensing requirements of the provincial government or, in this case, of the territorial government.

With that, I will close my remarks, and we urge all Members of the Legislative Assembly to join us in supporting this motion today.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the motion that is before the Legislative Assembly is premature. The interests brought forward with respect to this motion are important questions, nonetheless. They are important questions that are being decided in this country by jurisdictions that have put forward opportunities to test this question, which is truly complex.

The motion urges the Government of Yukon to immediately begin consultation and work on the development of a Yukon firearms act that would support the establishment of a chief firearms officer in the Yukon. I will speak about a firearms officer and also a chief firearms officer who is already operating in and for the territory. What I think is critical here is that it might lead someone to believe that there was no such person at the moment and that nobody was doing that work, which is not correct.

There is also the second part of the motion which speaks to protecting the property rights of law-abiding firearms owners. There is likely nobody in this Legislative Assembly — I won't speak for everyone — who doesn't believe that law-abiding firearms owners' property rights should be protected.

Thirdly, it supports the creation of a regulatory framework — here is where it gets tricky — that would limit the implementation of any firearms confiscation program. So, the purpose described here in the third part of the motion is to literally create a regulatory framework — legislation of some kind — not to benefit Yukon firearms owners or protect public safety of Yukoners but for the purpose — perhaps not for the sole purpose, so I won't put that there — of limiting the implementation of a federal firearms confiscation program.

Well, we know quite a bit about that already. We know that there have been cases in Canada — and I will speak about them in a moment — that have gone to very high courts in this land for the purpose of testing that some 24 years ago.

Granted, there are still some opportunities for other parts of legislation that have come forward — again, which I will speak about in a moment — to test that. But creating a regulatory framework that would limit a federal firearms confiscation program has quite likely been determined to be not constitutional, but I will come to that as well.

I think that it's important to start with a few general statements. Firstly, the Government of Yukon supports the rights of legal gun owners in the territory while also supporting an approach to gun control that helps to protect public safety. Again, I'm pretty sure that all Members of the Legislative Assembly would, in fact, support such a concept and such a statement. Again, I don't want to speak for anyone else, but our government supports the rights of legal gun owners in the territory while also supporting the approach to gun control that helps to protect public safety. This is a very hard question. It's a complex question; it's a complex issue. Bill C-21, which is the current federal legislation with respect to trying to achieve those two goals — protecting legal gun owners and protecting public safety at the same time — those are very difficult challenges for a single piece of legislation to achieve.

That is why we continue to work with the federal government on making improvements. It's also important for Yukoners, I think, to recognize that, in light of the struggle that we have — the complex issue that is before us all in this Legislative Assembly — and that Yukon has the highest per capita number of prohibited and restricted firearms licences in Canada and lawful firearms owners in the territory include hunters, trappers, and people performing remote and wilderness work — all of their rights, all of their interests, must be protected in whatever we manage to ultimately achieve.

Our government is closely monitoring Canada's next steps on Bill C-21 and the rollout of the buyback program. My recollection — and I can confirm this — is that the moratorium of the buyback program that has been discussed to date is set for the fall of 2025. While this is a hard question and complex question for us all to deal with, there is an opportunity for us to achieve a better way forward together.

We are exploring all mechanisms that are available to us to support law-abiding firearms owners. It's truly a priority.

I want to just look for one of my other notes for a moment. I will come to speaking about the opportunities for how we might get there collectively as a community, as a society, as Canadians, and as Yukoners.

The approach that we have taken to this work is to be collaborative. The legislation that has been introduced in Alberta and Saskatchewan and the questions outstanding about whether that legislation will survive a court challenge is one way in which to go there, but I am going to suggest that, instead of going into our corners or drawing lines in the sand, we should come together to try to determine what the best course of action is and what the best solutions are. Canadians ultimately need and want to be protected from violent crime that involves

firearms all too often. They also want to make sure that property owners' — lawful gun owners' — rights are protected as well.

Canada is reviewing the firearms program delivery for the north, including the rules and responsibilities of a chief firearms officer and has engaged with Yukon Public Safety officials.

There is a Yukon firearms officer based in Whitehorse who deals with the on-the-ground components of the program that currently exists with respect to their roles and responsibilities — things like certification for training, range inspections, liaising with businesses that sell firearms, and other items related to the *Firearms Act* and other items related to the federal legislation that currently exists — that being Government of Canada law. That person works here in the territory and has those responsibilities.

In addition, there is a chief firearms officer who is responsible for the Yukon and they currently are located in British Columbia. They deal with more complex issues related to licensing and other items under the act. They do not traditionally deal with the public-facing side of the program. This is where I have some difficulty with the motion, because the motion assumes that either one of these people don't exist or that whatever it is that they are doing is incorrect. Then, ultimately, it just says that we should support the establishment of a chief firearms officer for the Yukon. Well, there actually is a chief firearms officer for the Yukon. I don't want to guess at what they are meaning — but something that is separate or different from this.

What I think that we should be focusing on is if there are challenges with what those individuals do, with their responsibilities or who pays them or with how much their work relates to the Yukon, then we should try to solve that problem, but this motion won't do that.

The Government of Yukon and Yukon M Division RCMP are at this moment comfortable with the current arrangement and we have expressed that, but we have continued to engage with Canada and the other territories in the north on potential changes to that arrangement. Conversations are ongoing about whether or not our current chief firearms officer has enough responsibility. Are they properly funded to do the work that they need to do? Do they have enough work here to do that, or should there be something where we cooperate across the north?

Certainly, the message we have sent to Canada is: You must deal with us and speak to us and come to the table for us to resolve what the best way in which to deliver such a program is and what the responsibilities of those individuals are. We are in active conversations with the Government of Canada about better addressing the needs of Yukoners for the administration of federal firearms legislation.

Now, let's speak about the idea of a regulatory framework, which I understand from the submissions from the member opposite to be something similar to the legislation that was passed back in 2023 in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

On March 28, 2023, the Government of Alberta passed the *Alberta Firearms Act*, giving more tools to protect areas of provincial jurisdiction over firearms while expanding the role of the Alberta chief firearms office. Then, on April 6, 2023, the

Government of Saskatchewan passed *The Saskatchewan Firearms Act* to enhance public safety across the province and protect the rights of lawful firearms owners.

The Yukon Party, I think, here in this motion — and I base that on a press release that they have previously done that urged the Government of Yukon to enact firearms legislation based on similar legislation passed in Alberta and Saskatchewan, so I think I'm making a fair calculation there that this is what this motion is trying to do. I note that both provinces' firearms acts reflect an attempt by the governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan to provide a framework — at least, it appears that they are providing a framework for resistance to the federal government's firearms buyback program. I think they have also stated quite publicly that this is one of the roles of these pieces of legislation, and they also expand the role of their provincial firearms officers.

Canada has used the mandatory firearms buyback program to collect firearms that it has deemed illegal, or at least will do so, providing a window of time in which the owners can surrender firearms for compensation, and then penalties, if they exist, for owning such firearms will only occur after that window. I will confirm the date, but I think it's in the fall of 2025. It is important to note that both Alberta's and Saskatchewan's legislation prohibits a police officer or anyone else from acting as a seizure agent without a licence from the Minister of Justice — the provincial Minister of Justice. The powers of a seizure agent are defined in the regulations of each of those pieces of legislation.

Essentially, the intent of the legislation appears to be to preclude anyone — unless they are authorized by the provincial minister — from collecting firearms in those provinces as part of a buyback program. It is unlikely that the affected ministers would actually ever issue such an authority for those individuals to work in that way.

The legislation also prohibits municipal governments and police forces — we clearly don't have a municipal police force here in the territory — from accepting funding for the enforcement of a specified enactment without meeting the requirements that are set out by Cabinet-imposed regulations. An initial legal analysis notes that this legislation could leave firearms owners in these provinces in a situation where they are actually unable to comply or to return their prohibited weapons, again, for compensation and then ultimately be offside of the *Criminal Code*, which is clearly not what we would want here.

I think what's really important to note is that the intention appears for those pieces of legislation to thwart federal legislation.

Now, the question will become whether or not those pieces of legislation are constitutional. We have some hints about how that might happen and whether that, in fact, will be the case.

The federal constitution act gives Canada the exclusive authority to enact criminal law. By tailoring legislation on licensing for buybacks and seizures as opposed to licensing or the regulation of firearms themselves, there is a possibility that a court in this country could characterize the legislation — I am talking about the Alberta- and Saskatchewan-type of legislation — as a statute that does pertain to property and civil rights

rather than criminal law; therefore, if that were the case, they would be deemed to be in the proper jurisdiction or constitutional within the authority of the provinces to make those kinds of laws.

However, it is perhaps just as likely that the legislation could be found to be *ultra vires*, which is Latin for “outside of the scope”. Excuse my translation, but it’s for the best content here. So, it’s sort of outside of the scope of what their jurisdiction would be, given that its purpose could be found to thwart the federal initiative stemming from the exercise of criminal law powers.

As it pertains to activities that are within the sole jurisdiction of the federal government — of course, being criminal law — the Government of Yukon, as I have said, and the Yukon M Division RCMP are currently working and having conversations with the federal government about the chief firearms officer and how that can be relevant and important to serve the goals of the north. We are talking to the other Canadian territories as well.

Let me speak a little bit more about the potential constitutionality of this.

This is all critical, because this motion asks us to go and do the work to enact a piece of legislation that is very much like the Alberta and Saskatchewan versions. We have some hints in the past law and then in a current case that is before the court. I will suggest that it is important for us to wait and make sure that we have more information about if and when any provincial or territorial legislation were to be enacted with respect to firearms — how that could possibly and properly be done.

Alberta has previously been unsuccessful at challenging amendments to the federal *Firearms Act* on the basis that they unduly interfered with the province’s sphere of influence over property and civil rights. Alberta has argued that they should be able to enact firearms legislation that protects the rights of individuals, and they characterized those rights as property and civil rights, clearly arguing that they were outside of the realm of criminal law — remembering, of course, that the sole authority to create criminal law in this country lives with the federal government. It’s the constitution act of Canada, it was the *British North America Act* before that, and it was section 91 and section 92, division of powers — probably genius in the grand scheme, not that there haven’t been many, many arguments over the years about whose jurisdiction it was to enact laws with respect to certain activities — all of which is to say that this country is based on the idea that there are certain laws that are in the jurisdiction of the federal government as a whole.

Their laws apply corner to corner to corner to corner of this great country — sea to sea to sea, as they say — and apply in every jurisdiction in the same way. Then, there are, of course, the authority for provinces, and now territories, to make laws that live and apply in their own jurisdictions. There have been very interesting cases over the years where those two authorities have crossed swords, if you will, and then the courts have the authority to make those determinations.

The Alberta government challenged the federal *Firearms Act* by classifying certain property and civil rights in Alberta and challenged it back in 2000. The Alberta Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada both disagreed with the Alberta government at the time and found that the restrictions on gun ownership that were attempted by the Alberta government were properly characterized as criminal law. So, not property and civil rights — criminal law jurisdiction and activities that fell within that sphere. This is known as the Firearms Reference back in 2000, and it is reported in the Supreme Court of Canada reports No. 1 for 2000, in page 783.

So, that is one hint about what the highest court in the land and the Alberta Court of Appeal would say to attempts of legislation to characterize firearms ownership or licensing or buy-back programs as somehow being property rights and not criminal law jurisdiction. So, 24 years ago, a good hint.

In April of 2023, the Federal Court of Canada heard a legal challenge — it is known as *Parker vs. Canada*, which is the Attorney General of Canada, and the challenges are to the federal firearms ban that was announced in 2020. Initially, those challenges were dismissed back in October 2023.

But then, in November 2023, four of the applicants, including the Canadian Coalition for Firearm Rights, filed appeals before the federal Court of Appeal. Again, this is just in November, a number of months ago — November 2023. Since that time when the four applicants filed that appeal to the federal court, Saskatchewan has since applied for intervenor status. Sorry, I’m not aware as to whether or not that has been granted, but no date has yet been set for the hearing of that matter. So, we will clearly get a very good direction from the federal Court of Appeal when that matter has been heard.

Again, I should note that the Alberta — in each of these two cases or as I’m characterizing them now as very good hints, very strong hints — well, first, the reference case and then the case that is currently before the Federal Court of Canada that has yet to be heard — will give us good direction and good advice about how any such legislation should be properly written.

Now, I want to make sure that I’m clear for Yukoners that the Alberta and Saskatchewan pieces of legislation have not yet been tested specifically. It’s not that there has been — as I say, it’s not that there have been no cases that give good direction. Again here, I would like to say that this is such a difficult challenge for Bill C-21, the law now, to do everything for everyone. We have very important rights of gun owners, firearms owners. In this territory, we know that we have more than most, and those rights absolutely must be protected, but there is a very serious issue of public safety that must also be addressed. Does Bill C-21 do enough for both of those challenges? Maybe not, but what we can do now is to work together to determine what it is that Canada, Canadians, and Yukoners need to support both public safety and property rights for individuals.

As I said earlier, instead of going to our corners, I would like to see us work together on achieving those things. We are currently doing so with our continued work with the federal government, with the RCMP consultations, and the work that

we are doing together with our northern partners across the territories, across the top of Canada, for the purpose of making sure that we can determine how to best have a firearms officer in the territory, how to best protect those individual and property rights, and how to progress in a way that protects us.

I think I have made it clear that unfortunately I don't think this motion will do that. To that end, for that work that is ongoing, it's important for Yukoners to know that the director general in charge of federal firearms initiatives has met with government officials here in the territory, with the RCMP, with local stakeholders — such as businesses, local NGOs, and Indigenous groups — with firearms-related associations — including the ranges, the fish and game associations, et cetera — and government organizations, such as conservation officers, in all three territories. That work is being done, I know, in furtherance of our conversations to see what is for the best in the Yukon. Canada is exploring the possibility of locating a chief firearms officer in the north — either one for all three territories, with more officers and safety officers located across the north, or one chief firearms officer for each territory. That conversation is ongoing.

You may have heard public conversations about it from the senator for the Yukon. I know it is being discussed at many levels. At this stage, we believe that things that must be taken into account are the cost of such a position, the ability to recruit for that position, and the volume of work. I am very pleased to say that —

Speaker: Order.

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

Debate on Motion No. 905 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following documents were filed March 20, 2024:

35-1-178

Appointment of Chief Firearms Officer resident in the Yukon, letter re (dated January 18, 2024) from Hon. Ranj Pillai, Premier, to Hon. Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Government of Canada (Pillai)

35-1-179

Report on French-language services 2022–23 (Streicker)

**Written notice was given of the following motion
March 20, 2024:**

Motion No. 917

Re: regalia in public gallery (McLean)