



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 2

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35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, May 12, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

**SPECIAL SITTING**

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2021 Special 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 — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre**

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Wednesday, May 12, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome to the Legislative Assembly — no stranger to the Legislative Assembly — Mr. Ted Adel.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any further introductions of visitors? Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of Sexualized Assault Prevention Month

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government, on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, to recognize Sexualized Assault Prevention Month. This month is an opportunity to raise awareness about sexualized assault so that we can work together to end this violence.

First, I must extend my gratitude toward the organizations responding to sexualized assault in Yukon. Throughout the pandemic, these organizations have worked tirelessly to continue to serve and support victims during these challenging times — organizations such as the Yukon Women's Transition Home, Help and Hope for Families, Dawson City Women's Shelter, Les EssentiElles, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Yukon Status of Women Council, Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Association and the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, all of which continue to support and advocate for victims of sexualized violence.

I also want to acknowledge and thank all who are working on addressing this violence behind the scenes and calling out those in power, the co-worker who is standing up to sexist or inappropriate jokes made in their workplace, those who are on the phone, in the car, next to a campfire or at a kitchen table, those who are listening to their family member or friend without blame or judgment as they share their story, those who raise their voices when they believe something is wrong, especially when it is someone in a position of power. I think of the grandparents who are teaching their grandchildren how to be caring, the parents who are having difficult and complex conversations with their children about consent and healthy relationships. I think about those of us who are elected leaders; we must lead by example. If we do not, we are telling everyone,

including our youth, that it is okay to perpetuate these dangerous attitudes. That is not how we create change, Mr. Speaker.

This year's campaign for Sexualized Assault Prevention Month is all about raising empowered and confident kids. Yesterday, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and Les EssentiElles, along with their partners, hosted a barbecue at LePage Park to kick off Sexualized Assault Prevention Month with a family-friendly event. They had face painting, delicious food, live music, and resources for teaching healthy relationships to children and youth, consent boundaries, empathy, and respect.

This year's campaign is to remind us that it is never too early to start talking to kids in our life about consent. We can and should start these conversations about what it looks like and sounds like to ask for consent, but we must also be ready to educate ourselves about sexualized violence.

We should continue to check our own biases and misconceptions regarding the behaviour of victims and reflect on how our own mindsets reflect our actions. Are we, as individuals, contributing to the problem or the solution? I also want to recognize that some Yukoners are far more likely to experience sexualized violence, including the LGBTQ2S+ people, those living with disabilities, and indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people.

I was honoured to join with community members to walk along the Millennium Trail where the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre and the Yukon Arts Centre had installed a display of red dresses. There was also a powerful display of dresses right outside the building. These annual events and exhibits are not just a passing reference. They serve as a stark reminder to us that gender-based violence continues to happen every day, right here in our communities, to someone we know.

As elected officials and leaders in our communities, these visible reminders must move us all forward to take action urgently. Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy, which all three parties signed in a ceremony last December, outlined 31 actions under four paths. This whole-of-Yukon plan must guide us for the next 10 to 15 years. If we work together in partnership, aligning our resources with other levels of government and civil society, we can indeed change the story for indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit-plus individuals in Yukon. We must uphold their dignity and justice.

*Applause*

**Ms. Clarke:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize May as Sexualized Assault Prevention Month.

This month, we recognize and consider all people who have experienced sexualized violence in any form and give them our support. This is an opportunity for each of us to be aware that sexualized assault takes many forms, and it is often cloaked in shame and secrecy for those who have experienced this violence. With an increase of substance abuse, a marked decline in mental health, and lack of access to family and friends — these are few key factors in sexualized violence and assault.

We must continue to address and support those faced with these issues. The presence of COVID and increased restrictions have led to heightened stress and emotions and to higher levels of domestic violence. Over a year since COVID began, we are seeing many who need more supports and assistance.

All sexualized assault is wrong. This is not something that is acceptable anytime, anywhere, by anyone — not income level, not job status, race or gender, or any other factor. It is wrong.

Consent is key. Consent is freely giving permission through words or actions. Without consent, it is assault and can escalate into larger issues within the home or the community. We recognize those survivors of sexualized assault whose strength and inspiration speak louder than violence, and we thank those who work with victims of violence, who help them with tools to overcome and to move forward.

I would like to give special thanks to the incredible organizations that we have here in the Yukon, to the many who dedicate their lives and careers to work with people who have experienced some form of sexualized assault. They listen, they advocate, they counsel, and they help. Thank you to organizations like the Yukon Women's Coalition, Victim Services, the Women's Directorate, Queer Yukon, All Genders Yukon, and all others that work with survivors and toward the prevention of sexualized assault and other types of violence.

If you know someone who wants to share but is not anxious to share in an organized group, be there, listen, and do not blame. We must show trust and believe these victims, or they may be re-traumatized. Assure them that it is not their fault, and perhaps they will see the need for professional help. Everyone deserves a life that has respect, dignity, and safety.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to acknowledge that, during the month of May, we undertake national and local campaigns to prevent sexual assault. Sexualized Assault Prevention Month is designed to engage all folks as allies to prevent sexualized violence in our communities. It is about creating conversations so that together we can change our culture and our communities for the better, and it is helpful if we come at this topic with common understanding. Each year in Canada, it is estimated that there are 600,000 sexualized assaults; 99 percent of sexualized violence is perpetrated by men, while victims are of all genders and in particular are from marginalized populations. In the Yukon, it is important to note that rates are 3.5 times higher than the national average.

Sexualized assault will continue to be an issue of staggering proportions if it is labelled "a women's issue"; ending sexualized assault is everyone's issue. Men need to be on the front lines with women and non-binary folks fighting this issue and actively integrating awareness into their everyday lives. This is the thing: In order to make changes, we need to understand that these need to be implemented in all aspects of our lives, from actions to words, because words also matter and how we choose to interact with each other also matters.

Gender scripts are the rules that we learn growing up about how to interact with the opposite sex and each other. These gender scripts and attitudes colour how we see the world and can be so embedded in us that they are hard to see, but they still get lived out every day in ways that harm people. Gender scripts are not an excuse for behaviour that hurts others. We must all do the work of becoming aware of the gender scripts that are guiding us, to question them and to see how they hurt others, and to do the work of changing our perspectives. Let's stop using dehumanizing or sexist language. Let's stop making misogynist jokes.

We all have an important role to play when it comes to making our community a better and safer place to live. Sexualized violence is everyone's issue, and together we can end it, one conversation at a time, so let's continue to talk about it.

*Applause*

### In recognition of National Nursing Week

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to acknowledge National Nursing Week, which is observed in Canada and the United States during the first full week of May.

This week celebrates the vital role that nurses play in enhancing the long-term well-being and quality of life for all people in all stages of their lives. This year, the Canadian Nurses Association has asked Canadians who use social media to highlight the theme "#WeAnswerTheCall". This theme was developed by the Canadian Nurses Association to recognize the courage and commitment that nurses across the country have displayed at all times but particularly as they respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The past year has been a different one for Yukon nurses, one in which they have witnessed a great deal of change and uncertainty. While we are fortunate in our position and in our hospitals, long-term care homes, and health centres that they have not been faced with overwhelming numbers of COVID-19 patients as they have elsewhere, our nurses have nonetheless played, and continue to play, a vital role in fighting this pandemic.

During these extremely challenging times, they continue to demonstrate leadership as they work to safeguard all of us in our communities. Nurses are the front-line workers and key partners in teaching and reminding us all that evidence-informed best practice is the most effective way to control COVID-19, and they are a crucial part of the team here in Yukon as they work alongside our chief medical officer of health and Yukon Communicable Disease Control to protect our health and well-being.

The work that nurses do is the very foundation of our health care system. They are the providers of front-line care to Yukoners in our home care program, our mental wellness and substance abuse programs, our hospitals, our community health centres, our long-term care homes, and our hospices.

I think that it is safe to say that each and every one of us can recall an encounter with a nurse and are thankful for their care and compassion in a very stressful time. They work

directly in Yukoners' homes and provide people with the care that they need to age well in their own communities with dignity and respect.

Nurses don't just provide people with physical care. They also help people emotionally and socially, particularly in our communities where nurses are the very foundation as primary providers of health and social services. This has been especially true over the past 14 months.

More recently, our nurses have taken the lead in providing COVID-19 vaccines to Yukoners in every community. Thanks to their tireless efforts, Yukon currently has the highest vaccination rate in the country. Because of this work, Yukoners who are fully vaccinated will soon be able to move about more freely and will be able to relax other restrictions.

I want to thank all Yukon nurses, as well as everyone working on our vaccine delivery, on the front lines, and in our communities, for their care and compassion. In particular, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the leadership of a few people through these last 14 months: Sheila Thompson, director of Community Nursing; Jane Boutette, assistant director of Community Nursing; Lori Strudwick, clinical manager at Yukon Communicable Disease Control; Sheryl-Ann Wasson, director of Safety and Clinical Excellence in Continuing Care; and Cathy Stannard, director of Public Health and the COVID Response Unit.

Of course, our thanks go to each and every one of our nurses. I invite all Yukoners to join my colleagues and me this week in showing our appreciation to all nurses in the territory during this National Nursing Week 2021.

**Mr. Cathers:** I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to recognize May 10 to 16 as National Nursing Week in Canada. The Canadian Nurses Association has chosen the theme "#WeAnswerTheCall" for 2021 to showcase the many roles that nurses play in a patient's health care journey. We are fortunate to have a great team of nurses across the Yukon working to support the health care needs of all of us.

We have nurses working in our community health care centres, in our hospitals, in private clinics, and as part of the vaccination clinics across the territory. We have nurses supporting medevac flights and providing essential education to children and youth. They work in continuing care facilities, home care, and at work sites.

Nurse practitioners, registered nurses, and licensed practical nurses all have an important role to play and are an important part of the bigger picture of Yukon's health care system. They are committed to lifelong learning and adapting to the fast-changing medical world. As medicines, best practices, policies, and technology change, you can be sure that nurses are continually learning and evolving, and that has been doubly true during this time of the pandemic that we find ourselves in.

Throughout all these changes, hand hygiene remains one of the most important and effective methods for reducing health care-associated infection and cross-infection between patients. In 1860, Florence Nightingale wrote that nurses should wash

their hands frequently throughout the day, demonstrating an early awareness of the effectiveness of this simple procedure, and that advice holds true to this day. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a reminder that effectively applied hand hygiene is a vital intervention that can be used to prevent the spread of disease, and that message has been emphasized by many throughout this pandemic.

Over the last year plus, during the pandemic, nurses and other health care professionals have been carrying an even heavier load than normal and experiencing a more stressful work environment. We want to thank them for all that they are doing in that.

I also recognize that we have Yukoners who came out of retirement to assist with vaccination delivery and — for them and everyone else who has been part of the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign across the territory — we thank them for the excellent work that they have been doing on behalf of all of us. We would like to recognize all of the work that is done by nurses to address the health care needs of our citizens.

I would also like to thank the Yukon Registered Nurses Association for the work that they do and acknowledge the fact that they are committed to their mandate of promoting safe and effective nursing practice on behalf of the public and the patients they serve. We would like to recognize, as well, the past and present members of the board for the work that they do.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Official Opposition, thank you to our nurses across the Yukon for all the work that they are doing here today and the work that they have done to address all of our health care needs throughout the territory.

*Applause*

**Ms. Blake:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Yukon nurses during National Nursing Week.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on the courage, commitment, and sacrifices that nurses work with. This pandemic has also confirmed the important role that nurses fill as they persevered to meet the challenging and uncertain demands of the past year while redesigning models of care to ensure access to health care. It is another reason that we have all come to trust in these health professionals to provide the very best in expert and professional nursing care.

Nurses are the embodiment of dedication, competence, and compassion. They are often our first point of contact when accessing health services. At one time or another, each of us has been impacted by the work that they do. Nurses, nurse practitioners, certified nursing aides, and licensed practical nurses work in every sector of our community. They champion the cause of public health, shape policy, and are essential in the concept of collaborative care. Nurses are an integral part of our lives. They are with us from birth to death and at every step of the way.

We extend our thanks to nurses in our communities, as they are deeply involved in all aspects of primary health care and health education.

Nurses demonstrate daily their incredible ability to adapt and be creative while remaining responsive to the diverse health care needs of the communities that they serve. Nurses continue to maximize the use of resources that they have at any given time, especially during periods of intense stress. They continue to demonstrate cultural awareness and safety and assure person-centred care in all aspects of their work and continue to shape the delivery of health care services within our territory.

We give thanks to all nurses in the territory. Thank you for your continued devotion to your calling. National Nursing Week brings attention to honouring your work and sheds light on the challenges of your career while celebrating your successes and contributions as you overcome adversity.

*Applause*

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Speaker:** Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling the *Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees*, dated May 12, 2021.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

**Ms. McLeod:** I have for tabling today a document by the Department of Finance, entitled *Economic evaluation of proposed changes to the minimum wage*.

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

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill No. 2: *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)* — Introduction and First Reading

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I move that Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 2 agreed to*

**Speaker:** Are there any further bills to be introduced?  
Notices of motions.

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

**Ms. McLeod:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to initiate upgrades to the two Alaska Highway crosswalks in Watson Lake to include pedestrian-activated flashing lights to address safety and visibility for both pedestrians and motorists.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to disclose the full estimated cost of implementing the 76 recommendations contained in the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to recognize the impacts to rural residents caused by the windstorm of October 26, 2020, including many fallen trees and some destroyed buildings, by waiving its solid-waste tipping fees for brush, clean wood, and demolition material resulting from the storm.

**Ms. White:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to act on the Health Canada recommendation that individuals over the age of 55 get the SHINGRIX vaccine by covering the cost.

**Ms. Tredger:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to communicate to the Ross River Dena Council and the community of Ross River clear times on the repairs to the washout on the Robert Campbell Highway and what measures are in place to ensure that emergencies, medical or otherwise, are attended to in a timely manner.

**Ms. Blake:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to offer emergency support to the Government of the Northwest Territories to deal with the flooding in the communities of Fort Simpson and Jean Marie River.

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

### MOTION OF URGENT AND PRESSING NECESSITY NO. 1

#### (Standing Order 28)

#### Implementation of rent control

**Mr. Dixon:** I rise to request unanimous consent of the House to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity pursuant to Standing Order 28:

THAT the House urges the Yukon government to halt plans to implement rent control on May 15, 2021, as outlined in the Liberal Party's confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon New Democratic Party, in order to:

(1) develop solutions to mitigate the harm that this announcement has caused to attendants and landlords; and

(2) properly consult with affected Yukon landlords and tenants on the details of any rent control proposal prior to implementation.

This is a matter of urgency because, as you may be aware, this policy was first announced on April 28 as part of the Liberal and NDP coalition agreement. In that announcement,

there were no details shared by the government or the NDP beyond the fact that it will come into force on May 15, which is just three days away.

This is why this is urgent and pressing. A policy is coming into force in three days and there have been no details shared on this policy. Further, there has been absolutely zero consultation on this policy by the Liberals or the NDP prior to announcing it and, unfortunately, this is already having negative impacts on landlords and on tenants. As a result of the Liberals and the NDP not engaging on this major policy beforehand, the Yukon Party has launched its own consultation. We have already heard from landlords who have had sales of their properties fall through as a result of this.

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

### Point of order

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

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** It's my understanding that the member opposite is allowed to speak to why that motion might be urgent, pursuant to Standing Order 16, but he has clearly wandered into the substance of the motion and what he wants to say going forward.

It's my understanding that you must first determine whether or not the motion is of such pressing and urgent need and that, if he has any remarks, they must be respectful of that limitation and only address that point.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** Standing Order 28 allows him to have brief introductory remarks.

**Mr. Dixon:** I will keep my remarks brief, as you have indicated.

As I noted, all of this comes into effect in three days. This is why we are raising this as an issue of urgent and pressing necessity. We believe that the government needs to halt this policy and consult before implementing it. We also believe that the government needs to come up with a way to compensate those who have already suffered as a result of this.

With that, I look forward to the unanimous support of the House to support this motion.

**Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition, pursuant to Standing Order 28, is required unanimous consent to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity:

THAT the House urges the Yukon government to halt plans to implement rent control on May 15, 2021, as outlined in the Liberal Party's confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon New Democratic Party, in order to:

- (1) develop solutions to mitigate the harm that this announcement has caused to attendants and landlords; and
- (2) properly consult with affected Yukon landlords and tenants on the details of any rent control proposal prior to implementation.

Is there unanimous consent?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Some Hon. Members:** Disagreed.

**Speaker:** Unanimous consent has not been granted. This then brings us to Question Period.

### QUESTION PERIOD

#### Question re: Rent control

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, the written agreement between the Liberals and the NDP has become the defining and foundational document of this government. Since it was signed, we have already begun to see the fallout of these Liberal-NDP policies, especially in the rental housing market.

Tenants have been evicted, rents have gone up, landlords are putting units up for sale. One local real estate agent described it as mass confusion and no leadership.

Yesterday, when media asked the Premier about how this would work, he pointed the finger at the Leader of the NDP and said, "That's a good question for the Leader of the NDP."

When the Leader of the NDP was asked about this policy, she pointed the finger and said that she is looking forward to finding out how it's going to work from the government.

So, Mr. Speaker, can someone tell us who is in charge of this policy and how it is going to work?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** We will start with the fact that we were asked for unanimous consent. We really didn't get any notice for this motion to begin with, which is in the Standing Orders — but also misinterpreting the full announcement yesterday, as far as the agreement.

There were specific things in the agreement that, of course, should be asked of the NDP, but specifically, we are the government of the day that is going to be pushing forward the pieces of the CASA, of the agreement.

Just to correct the record, the Leader of the Official Opposition is starting with not necessarily giving the full story as far as how the media asked a question yesterday, but my minister responsible will be able to answer questions today and throughout the week on the CAS agreement but also on this specific aspect of it as well.

I just want to clear the record before we start here on the wrong foot, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, of course the Premier's comments are recorded, so we can certainly review those.

The chaos that has unfolded in the rental housing market since the Liberals and the NDP announced their agreement has impacted many Yukoners. We have heard from landlords who are putting their rental units up for sale. We have heard from tenants who have seen eviction notices or dramatic rent increases. We have even heard of sales falling through because of this policy. Meanwhile, we have heard nothing from the government. They had a chance to explain this policy in the throne speech yesterday but chose to ignore the issue altogether. Instead, all we have seen is the Premier and the Leader of the NDP pointing fingers at each other.

So, can the Premier tell us what policy, regulations, or legislation will be changed in order to bring this policy into effect by May 15 — a date, I would note, that is only three days away?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It is an honour to rise again in this House for the first time following the last general election.

Mr. Speaker, during that election, the number one question I heard at the door — and I'm sure many of us did — was: "How are you going to address affordable housing in the territory? How are you going to cool the housing market?"

Well, when you have a nation-leading economy, Mr. Speaker, and when you have a phenomenally low unemployment rate, as we do in the Yukon, people are moving here and looking to buy and rent homes.

It is hard to keep up with supply in such a market. We are working hard to meet and exceed the demand to take the edge off the housing market. Community Services developed a record number of lots in our last mandate. We are committed to developing twice as many lots in this mandate to deal with the supply issue. Our allies in this government, the Yukon New Democratic caucus, heard from constituents as well. The New Democrats support and have proposed a rental cap.

The results of the election are clear. The majority of Yukoners have asked our government to work closely with the opposition. Unlike the Yukon Party, the Yukon New Democratic caucus reached out in a spirit of cooperation to establish a government for all Yukoners. We are working with our partners to implement the solutions they have proposed to address affordable housing in the Yukon.

**Mr. Dixon:** These policies will certainly have an impact on the supply of rental units, as we have seen a number go up for sale. Just a few months ago — in December 2020 — the Leader of the NDP brought forward a motion about rent control. In denouncing that motion, the former Deputy Premier talked about how irresponsible it would be to implement rent control without first consulting those affected. The former Deputy Premier said — and I quote: "Other than the anecdotal information, I think that it is important to reach out to the others on this particular topic and to do that work before it is brought forward."

So, Mr. Speaker, will the Premier take the advice of his former Deputy Premier and actually do the work to consult those affected? Will the government pause the implementation of this ill-conceived policy and launch a proper consultation before moving ahead?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The member opposite is asking me about consultation and — ignoring for the moment that we just had an election — I will say that I am reluctant to accept advice on consultation from the Leader of the Official Opposition. We all know his abject failure to consult on the Peel watershed that put us before the Supreme Court. We also know that his abject failure to consult cost us years of time and hundreds of thousands of dollars in court fees, and it broke trust with our First Nation partners throughout the territory.

Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I am not going to take advice on consultation from the Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### **Question re: Individualized education plans**

**Mr. Kent:** In the agreement signed between the NDP and the Liberals, it states that the recent cancellation of individualized education plans, or IEPs, will be reversed, and of course the Yukon Party supports this action.

While debating this issue on March 10 in the Legislature, the MLA for Whitehorse West stated — and I'll quote: "There have been no changes to IEPs within the Education department." He then went on to say — and I'll quote again: "I have spoken to Autism Yukon, I have spoken to my constituents, and I have delivered the same message — nothing is changing."

So, on the one hand, the Liberals have publicly stated that there were no changes to IEPs. Then on the other hand, they have signed an agreement that says they will reverse the changes they made to the IEPs.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Education clarify this for us? Did the Liberals share wrong information with the House when they claimed there were no changes to IEPs?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** It is my honour to rise today in the Legislative Assembly as my first time as the Minister of Education to talk to such an important question from the Official Opposition. Thank you very much for the question.

Supporting students with diverse abilities and special education needs so that they can be successful is our top priority. The Department of Education is working hard with our families. The Department of Education is working very hard to fulfill the recent commitments that we have made under our confidence and supply agreement to ensure that any student who may have been transferred from an independent educational plan in the recent past will be able to be reinstated. We're working directly with those parents and students to ensure that the path is the right path for them. It is through a comprehensive review of inclusive and special education that policies or processes in respect to IEPs may be further examined.

We will always uphold our commitment to ensuring that any further changes in IEPs or other independent plans —

**Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kent:** During the election, all three parties were asked questions about the Liberal decision to cancel IEPs by the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon. Answers were posted on their Facebook page on March 24. One of the questions was — and I'll quote: "Will you instruct the Department of Education to reverse the ill-conceived directive to remove children who are expected to graduate off of IEPs?"

Part of the Liberal response to this was to blame principals. Their exact quote was: "Some administrators may have changed education plans without the support of students and parents. This must be rectified and addressed immediately." This is a serious allegation to make, so I'm wondering when and how the Liberals became aware of this situation.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I'll just continue on, in terms of my previous answer of upholding our commitment to ensuring that any changes to IEPs and other plans be made only after meaningful consultation, of course, also with Yukon First Nations and all of our partners in education.

There is a lot of information on yukon.ca, as well, on individual learning plans and other types of special plans for students. I want to say again that our education system needs to support all students to thrive and unlock their full learning potential. It is vital that we always meet the needs of individual



students in a way that reflects the diversity of learning needs in our schools. We will always continue to improve on how we provide education to support all of our students.

In the past, there have been many plans and reports on these issues, but little was done to actually understand how to meet the needs of Yukon students. We continue to offer a variety of student supports and are also working to identify a more comprehensive and responsive program.

**Mr. Kent:** Just for the minister, I'll repeat that quote and their answer to LDAY during the election campaign. It said — and I quote: "Some administrators may have changed education plans without the support of students and parents. This must be rectified and addressed immediately."

Hopefully the minister gets a chance during this final response to answer when and how the Liberals became aware of that situation, because it is a very serious allegation to make.

When the minister is able to answer that, can she also tell us how many students were affected by the changes to IEPs that the Liberals claim were made by principals, and if all affected families have been informed that this situation will be reversed?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, we continue to offer a variety of student supports and are also working to identify a more comprehensive and responsive program to address student needs. We are working in partnership with all of our partners, including Yukon First Nations and other partners throughout our education system, for all students.

We are listening to our students and our school communities to review and use individualized education plans. We will ensure that every student has the support that they need. We are committed to the review of inclusive and special education. We're looking forward to that and the findings from that review. The review will help us also to understand how to best serve Yukon students and to ensure that we are meeting their needs, Mr. Speaker.

Again, supporting students with diverse abilities or special education needs so they can be successful in schools is absolutely our top priority.

#### **Question re: COVID-19 vaccine**

**Ms. White:** Just five months ago, the Moderna vaccine for COVID-19 became available for Yukoners. As a territory, we looked out for each other and Yukoners came out in droves to get vaccinated. Many experts agree that reaching 80 percent vaccination would go a long way to protecting our communities. Over the last few weeks, the rate of vaccination has slowed down considerably. Although we have seen some great solutions from local businesses and community members to encourage people to get their shots, only 66 percent of Yukoners have received both doses of the vaccine. What is this government's plan to make sure that we reach a critical mass of 80-percent vaccination across the territory?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** As far as what herd immunity comes to, that will be left up to the chief medical officer of health to determine, for this particular disease, what percentages of vaccinated population — with consultations and conversations with the medical community, not only locally but also nationally and internationally.

But I will respectfully correct the record for the member opposite. Since our announcement of Canadians with verified vaccines being able to not self-isolate, we have actually seen a big increase in the number of people who are getting vaccinated. I think the number that we heard, for the first day after that announcement, was 150 extra people showing up as walk-ins into the clinic. So, we are noticing a change in the vaccination rates already. Dr. Hanley and his team have always had various concerns about how we make sure that we get rid of misleading information, make sure that Yukoners have the most up-to-date information on yukon.ca — and it has always — working through Health and Social Services and also our team in the Executive Council Office and through Community Services as well — to make sure that we had a strategy to have the best supports possible, have vaccines ready and available, and also the information ready as well.

We will continue to do that, but I will say that, in the last week, we have seen an increase in those spike rates.

**Ms. White:** Just to be clear, that 66 percent of Yukoners having been fully vaccinated was sent out today as part of a press release.

Earlier today, our chief medical officer of health said that he wants everyone who lives, stays, or works in the Yukon to access the vaccine. Many businesses and key industries like mining and tourism rely on seasonal workers, many of whom come from out of the territory. This summer these workers will be in communities across the territory for extended periods of time, interacting with and serving the public in many capacities.

What is the government's plan to protect our communities from COVID-19 and ensure that seasonal workers will have access to the vaccine during their time in the territory, no matter what community they are based in?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Both in my previous role working with Community Services and working with the vaccines, and now with my role with Energy, Mines and Resources as we work with seasonal workers who arrive here in the territory, we actually have a program that — if the workers are here in the territory, we are working to get them vaccinated. That has actually been ongoing for some time now. I can work to get numbers for members opposite, but one of the differences in the statistics that are out there — if you watch really closely, you will see that the statistics that are given daily are for all the doses that are given here in the Yukon, and the statistics that are given weekly are for those eligible Yukoners. So, the difference is that those people who are here as workers in the territory — not people who have travelled here pretending to be workers in the territory, but those who are really legitimately here — we are doing that work because we think it will keep Yukoners and the territory safer.

**Ms. White:** So, we are glad to hear that Yukon will administer the recently approved Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to all Yukon youth ages 12 and up, including those in communities. For this rollout, the minister spoke about providing one opportunity for youth in the communities to get their shot and medical travel for those who cannot get vaccinated at the temporary vaccine clinics.

Will the travelling Pfizer vaccine clinic for youth visit every community in the Yukon and, if not, which communities are going to be visited?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** It is the case that a few hours ago, I spoke to the Yukon public and to the Yukon media, alongside Dr. Hanley, regarding the fact that we have obtained Pfizer vaccines to allow all Yukon youth ages 12 to 18 to be vaccinated within the next coming weeks — approximately four weeks, we expect. The plan for how that rollout will proceed is currently underway. We have noted that it may not be possible to visit every community. In the event where that's the case, certainly the goal will be to attend every community, but in some communities — at least in the initial information that I have — they might be visiting two communities in one day, for instance, depending on the geography. Once we have the details of those communities and the dates for those, we will of course share them with the community leaders and with the individuals there so that families and children can be ready to obtain the vaccine. We're looking forward to this important step in the battle against COVID-19.

#### **Question re: Living wage and minimum wage**

**Ms. McLeod:** Normally, the independent Yukon Employment Standards Board conducts the minimum wage review process in a public manner and makes recommendations based on public input and evidence.

Instead of this evidence-based process that provides transparency and certainty, the Liberals and the NDP have created a backroom political process. The Liberal-NDP agreement has mandated a new minimum wage to come into force this year. Yukoners need the Minister of Community Services to clarify the process for minimum wage reviews going forward.

Will the Employment Standards Board be used to conduct public reviews for minimum wage in the future or will businesses have to wait for the results of the next Liberal-NDP backroom negotiation?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am really happy to address this question on the floor of the Legislature this afternoon. As the member opposite has indicated, we have a board that oversees the setting of the minimum wage in the territory. The Government of Yukon has an opportunity to present information to the board as a stakeholder prior to the board making its decision on behalf of Yukoners.

The Yukon Liberal caucus and the Yukon NDP caucus recognize that employees earning minimum wage may face challenges in making ends meet. Through the 2021 confidence and supply agreement, we agreed that this increase to minimum wage will provide additional support to these valuable workers and we will be making a presentation to the board on the government's position on why the minimum wage should be increased to \$15.20 an hour by August 1, 2021.

**Ms. McLeod:** The previous Minister of Community Services told this House that we need evidence-based reviews of minimum wage increases. He said that he did reviews of minimum wage and felt we measured up quite well compared to the rest of the country.

In January 2020, the Economic Research branch of Yukon's Department of Finance released an economic evaluation of the proposed changes to the minimum wage, which I tabled earlier today. The report concludes that increasing the minimum wage to over \$15 too quickly puts Yukon's labour market in what it calls the "danger area" for job losses. They go on to say that this would negate any higher earning benefits.

Can the minister explain why the government has chosen to ignore the evidence presented by their own officials to put jobs at risk?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm happy to address this question this afternoon. This changes all the time, Mr. Speaker. This isn't a static situation. The situation in the community, in the territory, and in the provinces across the country changes all the time.

As I said, as committed to, Yukon's new minimum wage rate that we're pursuing aligns closely with Alberta's and British Columbia's rates. Since October 1, 2018, Alberta's minimum wage has been \$15. As of June 1, 2021, British Columbia's rate will be \$15.20. Nunavut has the highest rate of \$16, while Saskatchewan is the lowest with \$11.45. Currently, Yukon's minimum wage is the fifth highest in Canada, at \$13.85 per hour. In 2019 and 2020, Yukon's minimum wage increased above and beyond the annual consumer price index increases.

The increase outlined in the confidence agreement further aligns with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition's recent call to implement the 2018 Employment Standards Board's recommendation to see minimum wage over \$15 per hour by 2021. That's the recommendation we're going to be making to the board to meet the commitment that we have made to our allies, the New Democratic caucus.

**Ms. McLeod:** The previous minister indicated that when the Yukon's minimum wage falls into the lower half nationally, it triggers a review by the Employment Standards Board. This agreement by the Liberals and NDP circumvented this evidence-based process and cuts Yukoners out of the minimum wage review, but we also know that the Premier has declared that the sky is the limit for what he's hoping to see from this coalition agreement with the NDP.

We know that the NDP leader has committed to closing the gap between minimum wage and the living wage, which she said was over \$19 an hour in 2019. We can only expect that any negotiated extension of their agreement will include the NDP's desire to make the minimum wage equal to the living wage. Can the Minister of Community Services explain to Yukoners why the Liberals and the NDP no longer care about receiving public input on minimum wage reviews?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I must disagree with the premise of the question posed by the member opposite; that is not the case.

I will say, though, that the Northwest Territories' minimum wage is actually going to be more than \$15 an hour as of September 1 this year. So, we are seeing this threshold being crossed by virtually every single one of our neighbours to actually meet the needs of citizens in the territory who are struggling to make ends meet. This government has addressed

many, many needs in this territory — of those most in need are parents. We have a new universal childcare policy that is also going to help lift Yukoners out of poverty. It is going to actually put more Yukoners to work and enable them to come back into the labour force. That in itself is going to allow us to have people from the Yukon start to work in the territory, lessening our need to import workers from down south, which should help with the housing issue. We are dealing with the housing stock as well. We are doing an awful lot on this side of the House with our colleagues in the opposition benches to make sure that Yukoners are better looked after and are more affluent than they were before.

**Question re: Road maintenance**

**Mr. Cathers:** Spring is upon us and we are hearing from people across the Yukon about roads that are in poor condition. I have questions for the Minister of Highways and Public Works today about road issues that my colleagues and I have heard from our constituents. The first road I would like to ask about is Takhini River Road, which is seriously in need of a major upgrade to the roadbed, road surface, and ditches.

As the minister knows, I have raised this issue with his predecessor many times. This spring, large sections of the road were again under water. The road condition deteriorates every spring after it rains and after heavy traffic. At times, the road condition is bad enough that fire trucks or ambulances may not be able to respond if there was an emergency at a home on this road. Will the minister agree to take action and make Takhini River Road a priority now?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the opportunity to rise for the first time in the 35<sup>th</sup> Legislature to respond to the member opposite's question. The Yukon government certainly takes the safety of those using the territory's highways very seriously and the Member for Lake Laberge is quite correct that I have heard him with his able advocacy with respect to Takhini River Road over the course of the last — or at least persistent advocacy with respect to Takhini River Road — over the course of the last four and a half years.

I am in the process of being briefed with respect to many different files at Highways and Public Works and I note that I have received a letter from the member opposite from May 6, 2021, wherein he does indicate the concerns that have been outlined by the member opposite in the House today.

I will undertake to receive a full briefing and I will get back to the member opposite with respect to the specific concerns that he raised. I have certainly acknowledged that the member opposite has indicated that Takhini River Road represents an ongoing challenge for the service in that area. As I said, I will return to the member opposite on that topic.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do appreciate the minister's commitment to consider my request and to get back to me regarding Takhini River Road.

The next road condition issue that I wanted to raise with the minister is one that occurred yesterday when there was a washout on the highway between Faro and Ross River, which means that this road is now impassable. This is the main road

for groceries and other goods to the community and, like Takhini River Road, it is also required for EMS service as well.

Can the minister please tell me: When will this washout on the highway be fixed and what work is being taken to prevent and mitigate further flooding along this and other highways so that communities do not get cut off from their main roads?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I, in fact, did receive a briefing and some pictures of the site that the member opposite is referencing on the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River, and it's quite a notable gap in the highway now.

I had an opportunity to speak to my staff and my deputy minister at Highways and Public Works and am advised that the site was actioned almost immediately. The Department of Highways and Public Works is optimistic that the road section will be passable, they say, potentially by the end of the day today — but in any event, by tomorrow. I have asked that the notice be posted widely on 511 and on social media, and you will see that the gap is substantial.

I certainly thank the hard-working crew of Highways and Public Works who are tasked with that job around that portion of the Robert Campbell Highway for doing the excellent work that they always do. They have moved quickly, and we are optimistic that this issue will be addressed either later today or by tomorrow.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do thank the minister for answering that question. That is something that we are not used to from his predecessor when we asked questions in this Assembly. I know that the minister right now is dealing with a large stack of issues that his predecessor did not address in the Highways and Public Works portfolio.

Another one on this list is that, last summer, there was a lot of concern raised by Dawsonites and other Yukoners travelling to and from Dawson about the condition of the north Klondike Highway near Gravel Lake. There has been a large construction project there that has been ongoing for over a year now and has caused damage to vehicles and at times made the road virtually impassable.

Can the minister update us on when this work will be completed?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the question from the Member for Lake Laberge. I must concede that I have not been briefed on that specific file, but I will certainly return to the member opposite in due course. I will receive that information in the next day or so. What I can say, of course — as we heard in the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislature — is that there is a substantial and ongoing project on the north Klondike Highway — I believe pursuant to the Gateway project — but, in any event, that work will continue during the summer of 2020. The area of concern that the member opposite — the Member for Lake Laberge — has referenced may be part of that construction portion. As stated, I have not been briefed yet on that specific concern that the member has raised, but I will endeavour to return to the member as soon as is practicable.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### ADDRESS IN REPLY TO THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

#### Motion No. 20 — Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT the following address be presented to the Commissioner of Yukon:

MAY IT PLEASE THE COMMISSIONER: We, the Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, beg leave to offer our humble thanks for the gracious speech which you have addressed to the House.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Education:

THAT the following address be presented to the Commissioner of Yukon:

MAY IT PLEASE THE COMMISSIONER: We, the Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, beg leave to offer our humble thanks for the gracious speech which you have addressed to the House.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I acknowledge first that we are gathered today on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council. We extend our gratitude to the ancestors of the indigenous people of this land for taking care of this magnificent beauty that we call home. I thank them for welcoming us to live and work here.

Mr. Speaker, I come from the Tahltan Nation on my mother Thelma Norby's side, and I am Norwegian on my father Bern Norby's side. My parents settled here years ago — decades ago, in fact. I come from a matrilineal society, so I follow my mother, which makes me a member of the Wolf clan. My people are matrilineal and come from Telegraph Creek, BC, but I am a born-and-raised Yukoner and I feel that I am part of this land. I believe, of course, that we are the sum of our experiences. I am a proud mother of two amazing sons, Jedrek and Colin. Jedrek is now in his fourth year of university in Victoria, and Colin is a successful Yukon tradesperson building his independent life as an entrepreneur. I believe that our greatest responsibility in life is to raise our children to the best of our ability, and I consider my sons my greatest achievement. They are the reason I strive to do better and to make our community healthier, safer, and more vibrant. I am married to my wonderful husband, Rick McLean. He has held me up and supported me in so many ways over the last year and a half, and I am truly grateful to have him in my life. He has supported me a great deal, especially over the last couple of months.

Thank you so much to Mountainview for putting your faith in me over the last four and a half years and for continuing to put your faith in me for a second term.

It truly is a tremendous honour and one that I do not take lightly. I also want to thank the incredible team of people who supported me through the 2021 election. They believed in me, and I'm grateful to each and every one of them. I'm truly proud

of the campaign that we ran and how we kept it positive and focused on our leadership abilities.

I am going to be repeating some things that I said in my very first reply to the throne speech when last elected. It is always difficult to speak on your own behalf about your strengths and accomplishments. Our culture teaches us to be humble. I think this is especially true for women. There is a group of dynamic young people coming up behind my generation, and I want to acknowledge them. I continue to be determined to model visionary leadership and to work from strengths, a leadership approach that was modelled to me by many folks in my life. My most important role model, though, was my mother, Thelma Norby. She taught me the value of hard work and her never-ending ability to have compassion for people. She taught me that being a leader was about being of service to others and that it was not about power or ego. In fact, it was the exact opposite. She set a fine example for me and her other children.

I'm standing here today because of all the teachers, elders, and leaders in our community of Yukon who have taught me, and they are my role models. One of my most dear role models was my uncle, the late John Edzerza. He was one of my mentors, and I know that he is still with us in some ways. He would be standing right here beside me, encouraging me, if he was still here with us, to do the very best that I can do for Yukon. Today, when I was preparing to speak in this response, I went back and read his Speech from the Throne when he became Minister of Education. It truly grounded me in why I am here.

The most valuable teaching received from these individuals was the importance of building relationships and partnerships as a cornerstone for advancing any initiative. This is my strength, and I have strived to bring my personal and work experience into the Government of Yukon each and every day.

There are so many accomplishments that I'm proud of over the last four and a half years, and as I expressed to Mountainview, these are their accomplishments too, because they are the ones who voted for me to be in this Legislative Assembly to represent them.

The first that I want to talk about is the renewal of the relationship with our indigenous people — our First Nation people of Yukon. Our very first bill was Bill No. 1 to establish Aboriginal Day on June 21. I'm very proud of that accomplishment.

We also held 16 Yukon Forums. We had a number of completions of heritage plans — Lansing Post, Conrad, and the Fort Selkirk renewal. Those two are almost completed. We have had completion, of course, of the MMIWG2S+ strategy — and we brought culture into this Legislative Assembly. I'm so proud of the day that we were able to pay tribute to the late Doris McLean in a cultural way. We also worked hard to restore the beautiful totem pole outside, and we did it in a ceremonial way that embraced our partners. It took us some time, but we did it in a different way that I'm very proud of.

We protected the Peel River Watershed.

In terms of tourism, I'm proud to have the first new tourism strategy in 18 years, the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy — Our Sustainable Tourism. Our Path. Our Future.*

We also established a creative and cultural industry strategy — the first in our history in Yukon. We developed, based on our tourism development strategy, a relief and recovery strategy that helped us through COVID-19. We established a heritage MOU with all self-governing First Nations through the Yukon Forum.

In terms of the Women's Directorate, I'm very proud of the work that we did to establish a sexualized assault response team and to establish and work with the LGBTQ2S+ community to develop an LGBTQ2S+ action plan.

In terms of legislative milestones that we worked on collaboratively, as a one-government approach, I'm very proud of the *Vital Statistics Act* changes that we made, the changes to the *Human Rights Act*, *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*, the *Equality of Spouses Statute Law Amendment Act (2018)*, *Public Service Labour Relations Act*, and the *Married Women's Property Act* that was repealed, and the *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identify Protection Act*. We hosted, as well, a culturally grounded federal-provincial-territorial ministers meeting in Yukon for women and gender equality. It was the first time that — and my colleagues attested to that — the FPT meeting was held in that way.

I'm very proud of the legislation on PTSD and prevention of psychological injury that I helped lead in this Legislative Assembly during the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly and the work that we did on the modernization of the Yukon *Workers' Compensation Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

In terms of COVID-19, our tourism relief and recovery strategy helped us to be grounded and work with our partners and work in a one-Yukon approach to our response to the crisis that we faced in tourism as a result of COVID-19, as well as the cultural supports that we increased for artists so that they can help us tell the story, going forward, and our overall careful management. That is why we are here today, Mr. Speaker. We are here in the state that we're in because of careful management of COVID-19. We did not take for granted for one day that we had Yukoners' lives in our hands and that every decision we made would have an impact on seven generations to come.

In terms of my riding of Mountainview, I'm very proud that I was able to help champion the Alaska Highway redesign and rebuild and advanced the timeline, which is now nearing completion. I'm very proud of that work. We also championed the Kwanlin Dün First Nation community hub project, which is also nearing completion, and worked with my colleagues to ensure that Kwanlin Dün First Nation had a new playground.

I had many meetings and collaborated with the local associations in my riding and built relationships, went on trail walks with the association members to understand the concerns of the area — particularly in the Tank Farm area — championed the formation of a Mountainview safety and wellness committee and am really looking forward to digging into ensuring that this work continues, and opened numerous case

files with my constituents, and we continue to work on them diligently now.

Opening lines of communication, particularly during COVID-19, was a high priority. Prior to COVID-19, we hosted community events such as barbecues, dinners, and meetings. At the beginning of COVID-19, I started the livestream events to ensure that I was staying in touch with my constituents, and I also made sure that we communicated in other ways. I am just wanting to thank Mountainview again for putting their trust and faith in me as their voice in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

The Speech from the Throne is ambitious and inspiring. It is a reflection of what I heard at the doors, as well, during the campaign. Folks in Mountainview were most concerned about inclusion, housing, infrastructure, and recovery in a holistic way from COVID-19. I am looking forward to working, of course, with my colleagues in the NDP caucus. I think that this is a real opportunity for positive change for Yukoners. I am excited for the opportunity to do this work alongside my colleagues. Again, this is the way that I wish to do my work — in a collaborative way — and so I think that this is a real opportunity for all of us.

Before I get into my new portfolios, I would also like to express that moving on from Tourism and Culture and the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board is a bittersweet moment for me in that I am sad to leave these portfolios. I have gained a tremendous amount of knowledge, respect, and care for the people who do this work each and every day. I have built a lot of passion around these files and so it is hard to let them go, but I know that, in taking on the new role in Education, I am stepping into some big shoes. The previous Minister of Education did a fantastic job and really brought forward a modernization of our education system, and I am very pleased, of course, to continue on. I know that she will be here to ensure that I am supported in this role, as I will be doing with my colleagues. I am handing Tourism and Culture over to the Minister of Economic Development. I am here, of course, always to support Yukoners, and I look forward to seeing where my colleagues will take these portfolios next, including the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. I am sad, of course, that I am not going to lead the debate on the new legislation; however, I know that my colleague will do a fantastic job, and I am excited to see those changes for Yukoners.

It is going to be a challenge to take on a new portfolio but one that I am very excited about, which is why I went back today and really read over some of what my uncle said when he took on this role, because it has really helped ground me. He said a lot of the same things that I feel in my heart, and I know that this is very much upstream from the work that I've done in my previous career in justice, health and social services, and child welfare, which is very much downstream. So, I look forward to the challenges.

In terms of the Women's Directorate, I'm so pleased to have the opportunity to continue on as the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate. I'm very proud of the work we have achieved over the last four and a half years. There were

some incredibly hard emotional days, but we made some huge strides forward.

When I'm thinking of this — when the Yukon hosted the very first meeting for the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, it was a huge honour but a very painful process to go through as well. I hold my hands up to all those families who had the courage to testify first in that inquiry.

Going forward, my priorities remain the same. I want to ensure that all Yukoners have a voice, resources, and representation. Yukon will continue to be a leader when it comes to our missing and murdered indigenous women and girls response. Again, last December, the Yukon became the first jurisdiction in Canada to release its response to the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and we remain the first jurisdiction to have a comprehensive response.

The Yukon strategy, *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ People Strategy*, outlines 31 items under four main paths to guide our action in response to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Strengthening connections and support, community safety and justice, economic independence and education, and community action and accountability are the four paths.

Work is now underway to finalize the implementation plan for this important project, which will detail concrete actions to be taken by partners and stakeholders. Yukon will also continue to lead when it comes to our actions to make Yukon the most inclusive place to live in Canada. We are now finalizing our action plan to ensure that programs and services are LGBTQ2S+ inclusive and responsive, which we are committed to releasing publicly this year.

The action plan is based on engagement with Yukon's LGBTQ2S+ community and will focus on improved inclusivity, both as an employer and as a service provider. While work continues to finalize the action plan, work is already underway, including the most comprehensive gender-affirming care policy in North America, the ban on conversion therapy for minors, as I already mentioned, the delivery of World Professional Association for Transgender Health training for health professionals, improved timely access to supported mental health and wellness services for LGBTQ2S+ Yukon citizens, offering LGBTQ2S+ awareness and inclusion training to all Yukon government employees, and the recent opening of a new gender-neutral washroom in the Whitehorse visitor information centre.

The Yukon pride centre is one of the actions identified in the five-year action plan to provide a safe, welcoming, and supportive gathering place for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners. We are working closely with Queer Yukon to make this much-needed centre a reality.

In terms of education, it's such a huge honour to take on this incredibly important role. Our kids are the foundation of everything we do. As I started out by saying, everything that I do has been about my children and all of the children in the

Yukon. It's our duty to make sure that we are setting them up for success.

My vision is that our education system can meet every single child where they are and help them grow and be successful in whatever way they define success. As a mom, I have seen first-hand the struggles many kids face here in Yukon. I have also seen so many kids face incredible challenges and yet emerge as huge success stories. I think that's attributable to a lot of different things and a lot of work that we need to do as a whole in Yukon.

My first external meeting as Minister of Education this week was with the Council of Yukon First Nations leadership yesterday. This was important and symbolic for me, as it's an indication of how I want to begin this relationship. I'm very lucky to be inheriting a file from such a strong minister who made huge strides over the last four and a half years in modernizing the system. I feel like I've inherited a really great department with a very strong team of people.

There will be some really challenging and difficult conversations about how we best serve the needs of our kids over the next couple of years. This is especially true as we begin to work on the review of inclusive and special education, as I talked about today in Question Period. There are so many great opportunities.

Yukon recently became only the second jurisdiction in Canada to implement the universal early learning childcare program, which will live now in the Department of Education, and I am very pleased to take that on. This is something I heard again and again at the doors over the last election. This program will change lives. It will get families — and mothers, in particular — back on their feet. It will empower them. I am so proud of this program. I am so proud to be championing this during this mandate.

I will wrap up my comments now. Once again, I want to thank my constituents for their support for me as their MLA for Mountainview. I am so excited for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead of us in this mandate. I think we have a real opportunity here to make lasting change for Yukoners. I thank you so much for giving me this opportunity to be the first to respond to such an inspiring and I know very ambitious Speech from the Throne.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise here today in response to the throne speech. First of all, I would like to thank my constituents in Lake Laberge for re-electing me again as their MLA. I am pleased and honoured to have the opportunity to continue to work with them and for them in that capacity. I am especially thankful for the increase in votes and support since the 2016 election. I would like to, as well, give a very big thank you to everyone who helped with my re-election campaign, especially people who helped me for many days throughout it, and I look forward to continuing to work with all my constituents, as well as other Yukoners, to try to represent their needs well both in this Legislative Assembly and outside it.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to serve as the Official Opposition critic for Finance, Health and Social Services, Agriculture, and Justice, as well as Deputy House Leader. I thank the Leader of the Yukon Party for that opportunity. I would, as well, like to thank all of our caucus and all of our staff for the work that they do day in and day out. I would like to note that, during the 2021 election, we were grateful to have the support across the territory, which elected eight of us as Yukon Party MLAs, and we are also pleased to have won the popular vote in this spring's election.

We recognize that we're continuing in the role of Official Opposition. We do have an important duty to the people who voted for us and indeed to all Yukoners to hold the government to account to bring forward our ideas, our solutions, and what we hear from our constituents and other Yukoners. I look forward to doing my very best to try to fulfill that role and to provide Yukoners with the very best services and advocacy that I can provide here in this Legislative Assembly.

I will be saving most of my remarks for comments in reply to the government's budget. With that, I will wrap up my comments and turn it over to another member.

**Ms. Tredger:** It's a strange experience to stand here in the Chamber down here on the floor instead of up in the gallery.

The first time I ever came here, I was a high school student. My social studies teacher brought us here to watch Question Period. I remember thinking how quiet it was, how silent it feels in here. It must be all the carpets or maybe it's that beautiful tapestry that eats up the sound, but what feels strange about that silence is that my job — our job — is actually hearing the many, many voices of Yukoners — some that are loud and assertive, some that are just whispers; sometimes they're speaking all together and sometimes they're competing.

I listened to the throne speech and I thought about all those voices and of all the stories I've heard and will hear — the stories that all of us hear every day. I reflected on my own personal stories that led me to be speaking to you here today. I thought about the MLAs whom I've had the great privilege to learn from and the people who worked so hard to elect me. I thought about Whitehorse Centre and the incredible people who make it their home and the big job that lies ahead of me to hear my constituents, seek them out, and to act on their behalf. I thought about all this as I considered the throne speech.

The first story I want to share, of course, is how I came to be living on this land — this land that's the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council — and of how I have the privilege of enjoying land across the Yukon that belongs to each of the Yukon's First Nations.

My relationship to this land is that of a settler. My family came to Canada from Europe several generations ago and we came uninvited. I love the Yukon so dearly, and I also know that my relationship with it is complicated.

I'm standing here today as a member of a colonial government that has a dark history. I'm saying all of this because I believe it's important to acknowledge reality. I know that we are responsible for a heartbreaking amount of harm and

that reconciliation is our responsibility — that reconciliation needs to be part of everything we do.

Since this is my first speech in the House, I want to share with you a little bit about who I am and how it shapes my perspective. My parents brought me to the Yukon when I was just one year old. Our family built a life in Pelly Crossing and my childhood in central Yukon shaped a big part of who I am today. We eventually moved a few kilometres downriver from the Pelly Farm by the mouth of the Pelly River, where we lived in a cabin without electricity or running water. That didn't stop us from much. My mom was so determined that we would have the opportunity for music lessons that she wired an electric keyboard to a car battery and started teaching my sister and me piano — a gift that I am still grateful for as a musician today. I wouldn't trade my upbringing for anything and, if you ever find that I am out of cell range, it is a pretty good bet that you can find me up there on the Pelly River.

Like so many young people, I left the Yukon to go to school and to seek opportunities. I moved a lot, studying and working, but I always say that the best move I ever made was back home to the Yukon.

There is a story I would like to share from that time when I learned about the power of sharing stories. It was the last year of my undergrad and my friends and I realized that we had run out of time to take a gender studies course during our course of studies and so we decided that we had better do it ourselves. So we started what we called a "feminist book club" — which wasn't a very accurate description because we didn't read much. Mostly, we got together every Monday night. We cooked dinner, drank wine, and told story after story about our experiences as women. It was in that sharing of the stories that we realized that our individual experiences were part of a broader pattern. Just to name one — we found out that all of us got talked over in meetings by men. We started to realize that maybe it wasn't that our ideas weren't good or that we were too quiet; the problem was that we live in a deeply sexist society. Those conversations were a catalyst for me. I couldn't stop thinking about those patterns, those invisible forces of oppression that are constantly shaping our lives. Those conversations about gender led to conversations about race and then to conversations about disability, sexuality, and more. Once you see the way these forces act in our society, they can't be unseen.

At the same time as I was learning and thinking about all that, I also started working as a speech therapist with young kids. It was a job that I loved and also a job that drove me to be more political. I found it so rewarding to work with kids as they struggled with speech and language, but all too often I encountered other barriers that these children had. I would phone a family and ask them if they wanted to schedule some speech therapy and on the other end of the phone was a stressed parent saying yes, of course they would like to do speech therapy, but first they needed to figure out where they were going to live this week or how they were going to get food on the table.

There are hundreds of kids whose families struggle with the basics here in the Yukon, for whom every week and every

day is a struggle to get by. As a speech therapist, there wasn't much I could do to help them with those challenges.

Why is it so hard to find housing? Why doesn't a full-time job pay enough to feed people? Why do so many of these challenges disproportionately hit racialized people? We're a wealthy territory; I can see the wealth all around us. We're also a caring territory. The solutions exist. All that's missing is will from the politicians. So I put my name forward for public office.

There have been a thousand new things to navigate in becoming an MLA and also a few to leave behind. A big change for me was stepping down as the president of the Queer Yukon Society. The queer community of the Yukon has meant the world to me. I didn't always believe it would be possible for me to live here. There was a time when I thought I would have to leave the Yukon to be an out queer person. I wasn't sure that there was a place here for me. Of course, there were already queer people here at that time, but as a teenager, I didn't know them. I didn't know that they existed.

So, when I came back to the Yukon as an adult, I was utterly delighted and relieved to find there's a vibrant, warm community of people — people who are deeply committed to making the Yukon safer for everyone, youth who know what they need, and they aren't afraid to come here and tell us what it is and volunteers putting in hundreds of hours behind the scenes. They put those hours in to create new and better programs so that queer and trans folks have access to the services they need.

By far the best thing that has happened to me since I was elected was yesterday. The students from the Rainbow Room came to visit, and their teacher introduced me as the first queer woman elected to the Yukon Legislature, and the students broke out cheering. It reminded me that's a big deal — not so much for me as an individual, but for my community. It matters that we aren't reliant on our allies to carry our messages forward and make decisions on our behalf. It matters that we get to speak and make decisions for ourselves.

So this feels like a victory. It's also only the beginning. Without wanting to assume too much about my colleagues, it's a strange thing to be the only queer voice speaking here today. I'm only one member of a wonderfully diverse and varied community — and a very privileged member, at that. I know that there are so many more members of my community who can't be here yet because of the hundreds of real and significant barriers that are standing in their way — barriers of homophobia and transphobia, discrimination that ranges from personal attacks to subtle aggression to systemic disadvantages. I commit to working to dismantle those barriers so that there's a long line of LGBTQIA2S+ legislators who follow me in through these doors.

I am so proud of our community. I am so honoured to be part of it. I have learned a lot from the queer community — lessons that I intend to put to use in my new role. I have learned about listening for the voices who aren't being heard, about looking around the table to see who's missing. I have learned about being brave and about standing up for what is right even when it's not popular. I learned that speaking out about

something that affects you personally takes an incredible amount of energy and effort, so I know that when someone calls me out, it is a gift and it should be appreciated as one. That is not easy — I know that is not easy — but it is a challenge that I commit to: listening with an open mind and an open heart and knowing that the people who share their stories with me are giving me a gift.

I feel so honoured that the people of Whitehorse Centre chose me to bring their stories forward and to make the changes they need. I absolutely didn't get here alone. I want to thank my amazing volunteers, all the people who knocked on doors, all the people who put up signs, all the people working behind the scenes to make it possible for me to stand here today.

In my life, I have been very lucky to have an inside view on the work of being an MLA. As many of you know, my dad, Jim Tredger, sat right around here somewhere as the MLA for Mayo Tatchun. What I remember the most is how many hours he spent driving, the miles he put on his truck as he tried to be in every spot in his riding at the same time. One spring, I was back from university and I got to join him on one of his trips. We went to a graduation in Carmacks, and unfortunately it was at the same time as a meeting up the Dempster that was about the Peel. There were only a few hours of the meeting left when we finished in Carmacks, but dad was determined that we were going to try to make it, so we drove up the highway. Just as we were on the last stretch of the Dempster, cars started passing us. The meeting was over and everyone was driving home. I was pretty disappointed, and I think dad probably was too, but he said it was worth it to try to be there. That taught me a lot about the work of being an MLA. It is showing up to listen, putting in the miles to be there. That night, we camped at Tatchun Creek with many of the people who had been at the meeting. I played Joni Mitchell on the guitar and listened to the talk about what they were fighting for, and I thought, "Yeah, it was worth it."

There is a lot to learn about being a good MLA, and I am lucky to have amazing models to follow. I want to thank the former Member for Whitehorse Centre, Liz Hanson, for her incredible leadership in the riding.

There are so many things to admire about Liz, but what stood out to me the most was how she took her encyclopedic knowledge of policy and systems and she made them work for people — real people. Their lives and stories were at the heart of everything she did. I know she's enjoying retirement, but I also know that she will be keeping at least one eye on what's happening here.

Whitehorse Centre has been represented by some big and mighty voices. I'm so humbled and grateful for the privilege to be following the footsteps of Margaret Commodore, Todd Hardy, and Liz Hanson. I'm determined to rise to the challenge of representing this community.

When I started knocking on doors not so long ago, I had no idea how many stories I would hear. So many people took time out of their day to talk to me. They told me hard stories — stories of being unable to pay rent, stories of being shuffled between departments as they tried to get medical help, stories about falling between the cracks in our systems.



They also told me stories of hope and connection. They told me of the ways that they wanted to help their neighbours. Some of them said to me: "I'm doing okay, but that's not enough. I want my neighbours to be doing okay too." These stories of hope and fear all told me the same thing — Yukoners have higher hopes for their government and for all of us.

A few themes emerged over and over again. The housing crisis is very real in Whitehorse Centre — street homelessness, the invisible couch surfers moving from place to place — young and old alike — struggling to find rental housing. The dream of home ownership is way out of reach for so many.

Those who have rentals face the looming threat of 20-, 30-, and 40-percent rent increases. I know that some of my colleagues think that these are rare exceptions and not the rule, but I'm here to tell you that I stood in people's doorways as they told me in hushed tones about their rents increasing hundreds of dollars in a single shot. They begged me to do something and begged me not to tell their landlords that they were complaining. This is a very real reality for many renters. That's why I'm so glad we were able to negotiate a rent cap. The Yukon is woefully behind on this. The majority of Canadians live in jurisdictions with rent controls. It's time to give this basic protection to our renters, and I'm so proud that we're making it happen.

Another theme that came up a lot is the issue of mental health and of addictions. The pandemic has taken its toll on many Yukoners and compounded issues that existed before. My constituency of Whitehorse Centre struggles with these issues.

When I told people at the doors about our proposal of a seven-days-a-week walk-in mental health clinic, they said, "Yes, that's what we need. That will make a difference." I'm so glad that I get to go back to those people and tell them that the Yukon NDP team was able to secure it for them.

The opioid crisis has taken too many Yukoners' lives. The death tolls are staggering. The time for dithering is over. Harm reduction is a proven method of saving lives, and we need safe supply and we need supervised consumption. Of all the policy changes that were negotiated into the confidence and supply agreement, this is one that will save lives immediately, and it cannot come into effect soon enough.

Finally, the environment — people in Whitehorse Centre, especially youth, care deeply about the planet. They want the government to take real, concrete, measurable action on climate change. I'm so proud that we're going to be part of a jurisdiction that is among the leaders on this front.

I also know that there's much to do. I have spent the last few weeks thinking about what kind of MLA I want to be. I don't want to be someone who just shows up at election time. To the people of Whitehorse Centre, I commit that my door will always be open. My team and I want to hear from you, and I'll be hosting regular town hall meetings. I also want to hear from those voices that aren't well-connected, those voices that we don't always hear, as elected officials. I commit to being the kind of MLA who asks the tough questions and the questions that no one else thinks to ask. I commit to being held accountable when it's required.

I commit to holding the people of my riding in mind, the people of the Yukon in mind, as we make decisions in this House, because I know that the government makes better decisions when they put people in the centre. I take the idea of public service very literally and I'm ready to get to work.

I believe that everyone in this House is a reflection of all the stories that we've lived and we've been told. I bring my own experiences and those that have been shared with me by my constituents, and those experiences will inform my work here. I know that there are gaps. My experiences are not universal. That's why I'm committed to learning from all my colleagues in this place, as well as from Yukoners in my constituency and beyond.

I know that every MLA here gets e-mails and phone calls every day from people who need help. We're all here to listen to the stories of all Yukoners and bring them forward, then work together to figure out the best way to move forward. I know that there will be fierce debates inside these walls and that those are necessary. It's my hope that we can find ways to work in collaboration to deliver concrete results that make life better for Yukoners.

Thank you again to all my constituents for sending me here and for putting their faith in me. I promise I will show up for you, every day.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It is a pleasure to rise again in this grand and bright Chamber for the first time after the general election. The Yukon has had responsible government for more than four decades, and while it is sad to have lost the wise counsel and camaraderie of a few of our colleagues, it is heartening to see new faces join the ranks of our politicians in this Chamber — Yukoners willing to assume the responsibility of this hallowed position of leadership and public trust and Yukoners willing to respect this position of trust. To all of the newcomers, welcome. I hope that you find the role as fulfilling and challenging as I do.

The last throne speech was delivered on October 3, 2019. It was interesting to review that document. It painted a picture of a vastly different Yukon and a vastly different Canada. Tourism was soaring. People were gathering without thought or conditions. They were gathering in Faro, Watson Lake, Teslin, Haines Junction, and Carmacks. The arts community was vibrant — singing, dancing, and, well, flourishing. Air North was flying, often full, to BC, Alberta, and Ontario and we were preparing to welcome athletes from around the world to the Arctic Winter Games. We were, in fact, encouraging people to gather and volunteer together.

Well, less than two years later, it is critically important that we remember those days. We must ensure that we don't lose those memories. They are the seeds of the future; they are the seeds of our future. We must remember what it is like to gather, to sing, to dance, to hug, and to grasp hands. We must remember what it is like to laugh and eat together at a large table. We can't lose sight of those simple joys. We must reclaim them, and we will. In the Yukon, those seeds are on the cusp of turning to green shoots.

We are leading the continent in our fight against the global pandemic and have, through collective creativity, diligence, thoughtfulness, and sacrifice, lived relatively normal lives while much of the world cycled through the great lockdowns. Yukon put people first. We were disciplined, and once that discipline took root, we adapted to the new world and lived our lives. Our vaccine program — created through hard work, sacrifice, innovation, and seemingly endless refinement — leads much of the world. It is the envy of the country. Yukon did that. We did that.

In Haines Junction, the vaccination rate leads the territory, and that too is remarkable. Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, its chief and council, and Haines Junction's other community leaders did that. They put their community before themselves. They led by example, and they're not the only ones in the territory, but they excelled at the job and they deserve congratulations for their tremendous effort.

I mentioned responsible government. We recently lost two Yukon leaders who helped shepherd responsible government into the territory. I knew both of them — one as an acquaintance, and the other as a friend, mentor, and decades-long colleague. I met former Commissioner Art Pearson as a reporter at the *Yukon News*. I interviewed him a few times on local business issues. I remember him as someone who was gracious and thoughtful.

Doug Bell was my publisher and a columnist at the *Yukon News*. He cherished words, thoughts, and ideas. Doug's rambling column ran every week, and in the 21 years I was there, I can't recall a single week that he missed. Doug's column was a collection of quotes, reminiscences, stories, and events. It was routinely cheerful, kind, humorous, and sentimental, which mirrored the man. My chats with Doug and his wife, Pearl, at our annual Christmas parties were always a highlight, and I enjoyed talking politics, technology, and life with him at his place in Riverdale, usually over dinner.

I still have an old laptop of his that I bought probably 20 years ago. It is a hopeless antique today, but at the time, it was an incredible piece of technology. I know that it has a few of my stories on it, and maybe, if I'm lucky, some digital fragments of his. I'll check it someday soon.

Now, I spoke about his writing, his stories, and how I knew him, but he was also incredibly important to the Yukon and its government. As the Yukon's Commissioner, Doug oversaw the territory's transition to responsible government. He literally brought this Chamber into being. Doug died a few weeks ago. I'll miss his bottomless good humour and cheer.

We just came through the cleansing fire of an election. I spoke to literally hundreds of people I know, and I know that I'm not alone in that. What I didn't know was what to expect as I trudged down streets in 50-kilometre-an-hour winds, blizzards, and snow squalls, navigating ice and, at times, thigh-deep snow to talk to the good folks of Whitehorse West. Do you know what I discovered? I discovered that a year in isolation makes people loquacious. Seen another way, it takes a pandemic to make a politician a welcome sight at the door. In any event, I had a great many candid, rollicking conversations. I learned a lot about housing — sure — but also schools, power,

power rates, parks, the pandemic, and a little film about regenerative agriculture on Netflix called *Kiss the Ground*. I also heard about children in care, mental health, midwifery, the need to foster more Yukon labourers, wildfire mitigation, climate change, nursing, workplace health, First Nation relations and reconciliation, violence, drug abuse, and the need to have a safe injection site.

I've said it often, but Whitehorse West is a compact and concentrated little riding with a lot of heart. Its issues are mostly the territory's issues, plain and simple. I consider myself privileged to have earned their support for a second term, and I commend the other candidates who put their names forward.

My dad and mom watched my first swearing in as Highways and Public Works minister and Minister of the Public Service Commission in 2016. They were up in the lobby. I served more than four years in both portfolios — the full term. I haven't missed a single day in this Legislature since being elected. I haven't missed a single vote — a record I shared with my colleague, Paolo Gallina.

Dad, however, didn't make it through my first mandate. He died of pancreatic cancer in September 2018. I think about him often these days. In fact, he crept into my thoughts late last night as I was writing this. Dad was, as fate would have it, a federal civil servant who served in transport. He was part of the team that made seatbelts mandatory, and those brake lights centred in the back windows of our cars — he played a hand in those too.

Over my first term, Highways and Public Works and the Public Service Commission accomplished a few interesting things as well. In Highways and Public Works, we tackled procurement, improving local opportunity and forging relationships across the territory in the process. We improved our roads and made them safer. We built bridges and secured pools of capital that will allow us to improve roads and bridges throughout the territory for the next decade. We researched and started crafting a modern *Motor Vehicles Act* that will improve road safety and prevent injuries and death.

We laid asphalt on our airports, commissioned a fifth airport, equipped them with efficient new gear, hired maintenance staff, and built them warm places to work. We created new lots at our airports and laid a new course for the future of aviation. We set clear rules for all to follow in legislation. We built modern buildings, we fixed up old ones, and Highways and Public Works staff worked hard to assess and better manage them all.

We improved heating systems and are pioneering new ones. We are investing in new low-emission vehicles and even government-owned bicycles, and we are cutting greenhouse gas emissions in the process, saving the planet for our children. We improved online services for Yukoners and the Yukon civil service. We improved the rules to protect people's privacy while expanding the amount of information that we provide to our citizens. We fought a pandemic successfully, and our Motor Vehicles branch stayed open throughout the whole thing — the only one in the country to do so.

As I have said to staff, we led, we tried stuff, we succeeded most of the time, and, sure, we bobbed a few things, but that's

okay because we learned something in the process. We even tried to freeze the Yukon River in Dawson a few times and succeeded about half of the time.

The Public Service Commission made the civil service more equitable and respectful. We worked with our union partners to advance issues within the civil service. We negotiated collective agreements that were fair and tackled long-standing problems.

We funded the American Sign Language program to draw those with hearing impairments into the common debate of society. We started recruiting the next generation of civil servants and trained our staff in new skills. For the first time in a quarter of a century, we restructured the department to break down silos and reflect modern human resource delivery. We improved our data collection and standardized it across government. We have instituted a people plan, clarified the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*, and implemented *Breaking Trail Together*, making good on our commitments to our First Nation partners throughout the territory.

All this work that we have done has made the Yukon one of the top 100 places to work in the country — one of the only governments in the country to have such a designation.

Once again, I would like to thank the staff of both departments for the incredible work that they have done and continue to do every day. It was an absolute pleasure to work with them.

Now I am moving into Community Services and the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board — a new assignment in one case and a return to old friends and a familiar location in the other. My first event with Community Services happened just last week in Mary Lake. There was a community barbecue to celebrate residents' considerable efforts in making sure that their community was resilient to wildfire. I really enjoyed the conversations that I had with folks out there, and I learned that I am incapable of outrunning a bear. In fact, I learned that drawing bear spray in the face of a charging animal is extremely difficult. I also learned that I am a poor replacement for an actual bear. In any case, the folks out at Mary Lake staged a great event. I look forward to others like it as I tour the territory over the coming months, introducing myself to community leaders and residents and hearing their concerns, hopes, and dreams for the future.

As the Minister of Highways and Public Works, I was out to every community multiple times and met with many municipal and First Nation leaders while there. Many of their concerns and issues involved transportation infrastructure or building infrastructure, so I believe I have a fair bit of a head start in this portfolio of Community Services. Infrastructure maintenance and development is a major part of the work that Highways and Public Works does, and it is also a major part of what Community Services does. I expect that my experience in procurement over the past few years will serve me well in Community Services as well. Of course, Community Services is also legislatively heavy. Within it resides almost one-third of all the legislation within this government, so I expect to be busy over our mandate.

I'm also very familiar with our new First Nation procurement policy which is mostly now in place, aside from a few of the more complex provisions which are due to be implemented in October. I have every confidence in my colleague to shepherd that process forward.

Protective Services, especially the Emergency Measures Office, are front and centre for most Yukoners these days as we deal with COVID-19. They have done a tremendous job in protecting Yukoners in normal times and in crises like this pandemic. I look forward to working with them.

Before my election in 2016, I was employed at the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. I know that corporation and its people, and that knowledge, I believe, will serve me well over the coming years. The organization provides insurance to employers that protects them against potentially ruinous lawsuits. That's what their annual assessments pay for.

More importantly, the organization provides financial and medical support to employees injured on the job or it supports their families in the event of a work-related death. The goal is to prevent all workplace injuries and deaths in the Yukon and to get to zero. Is that attainable? Well, if you don't think so, look around you and ask who you're willing to sacrifice or to injure. I daresay that none of us would be willing to name anybody. So, yes, we're looking to prevent every single injury that we possibly can.

Workplace safety is critically important and not something to allow yourself to become complacent about. The annual Day of Mourning provides a stark reminder about what happens when complacency and carelessness take root in a workplace.

While we most often associate workers' compensation with physical injuries, it is psychological injuries that have been the most recent driver of claims. We must give silent, invisible mental injuries the same attention and care that we give physical injuries, so I intend to focus my attention on mental health in the workplace and what we as a government can do to improve it. Improving mental health is important.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to address the House this afternoon. I was elected, but getting here required the help of literally dozens of people who selflessly donated their time to this cause and who believed in me.

I spoke about the snow, ice, cold, and wind a few minutes ago, but I didn't walk the streets and driveways alone. I was always accompanied by incredible, thoughtful, well-spoken, and supportive friends and family. For their friendship, counsel, and guidance, I am eternally grateful.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, to begin, I would just like to say welcome. When I listened to the throne speech — I always find them to be inspiring, regardless of which party is in government. I think that they are meant to talk about a vision for the future, from where we have just come, and where we are heading. I always find it inspirational.

So, to begin, I wanted to welcome the new members to the Legislature: the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, the Member for Whitehorse Centre — who just gave a wonderful reply to the Speech from the Throne — the Member for Porter Creek

Centre, and to you, Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. I think it is such a big deal to be in this place. I would also like to welcome back the Leader of the Official Opposition to continue his service to Yukoners.

I would like to thank the 56 people who put their names forward to run in the last election. I think the way that the Commissioner spoke about it was to make the territory a better place to live for all Yukoners. I think that everybody who made the effort to make this a better place is worth acknowledging — and of course all of their families. You yourself, Mr. Speaker, spoke about your wife and your dogs, and you said it in a very touching way yesterday. I think that we need to acknowledge all those folks who — for each of us in our communities — worked to help the democratic process to allow Yukoners to select people to represent them to make this a better place.

I believe that the main message that I took out of the election was that it wasn't one party in particular that was given a majority. So, what I automatically think is that means we should work together here in this Legislature to try to come up with better solutions for Yukoners. In fact, I've always thought that. I think that's an important factor.

I will talk about my own riding for a little bit if I can, Mr. Speaker. For those who are new here, I refer to it as “beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes”. That is in no way to take away from the beauty of everybody else's riding; I think that they're all wonderful places and I'm sure that we all are willing champions and advocates for our communities.

Just for a second, I would like to take another moment to acknowledge the two other people who put their name forward in my riding: Mr. Eric Schroff and Mr. Erik Pinkerton. I want to thank them because, together, we decided to run a positive and respectful campaign, and I think that's really important. It takes away nothing from their passion about what they were bringing to the table nor, in fact, their criticism of things that I had done or that we as a party had done. I believe it's entirely possible to be both critical and respectful at the same time.

One of the things that I heard in my riding was about — well, I will just list off the few main things that I heard about. Snow was what I heard about the most. I'm sure that a lot of us heard about that; especially the rural MLAs would have heard about snow. In the first interview that I heard from the Member for Porter Creek Centre, she talked about snow. People asked me what I heard about most and it was snow. It turns out that is one of the first issues that I'm first working on: snow. But there were also other issues like aging in place, our landfills, energy — there were many issues. Like others who have spoken here today, it is a privilege to get to go to people's doors, to speak with them, to hear their thoughts and concerns. It is quite something to get that opportunity to hear from Yukoners, and we did. I'm sure that everyone here and all of those people who ran heard many things at the doors.

What I also heard about was COVID-19, so let me start there.

We're so close here. Earlier today, the Leader of the Third Party asked a question about vaccinations and I track those numbers with a fever. As I'm sure members here will tell you, I try to look for trends at all times to try to look for how I can

see things objectively. What I can tell you is that we're just a day or two away from hitting 75-percent first-dose vaccines here in the territory, which is the first that I know of in the country and it might be the first that I know of on the continent. It's quite something.

As the Leader for the Third Party mentioned here today, we're at 66 — or 66 and a bit — percent for second doses, but of course those people who do come to get the first dose typically are coming for the second dose at some point. We can sort of recognize that within several weeks — four weeks or so — that the number of second doses catches up to the number of first doses. So, we are on our way to hitting 75 percent, which is quite something.

I would like to say thank you to Yukoners. First, I would also like to say thank you to Canadians because when COVID hit — when the pandemic hit — one of the things that outgoing Minister Frost did was to go and negotiate for all three of the territories to try to get extra doses of the vaccine here for the north to keep us safe. The argument was basically that we are ultimately small communities and that even our large centres like Whitehorse or Yellowknife — these large places — well, large for us — they are not large when you think of the provinces. What we said was that we wanted to get vaccines prioritized to our communities, especially indigenous and remote communities. What Minister Frost did at the time was to say to our colleagues across the country, “Could you please prioritize the north? It's really quite important.”

I want to stand up here in the Legislature and say thank you to Canadians and other jurisdictions that did that for us because they said yes and we got enough vaccines for everybody who wanted to get vaccinated here.

As I said earlier today, we're vaccinating those non-Yukoners who are working here to help protect our communities as well, and what we've just heard just today from the incoming Minister of Health and Social Services is that we have vaccines on their way — the Pfizer vaccine now — for our youth aged 12 to 18 — all those who wish to get vaccinated.

I encourage all of us to encourage young people to get informed about the vaccine, to get that information through yukon.ca, to talk to their family physician and their families, and to learn about the vaccine, because I think the more we are vaccinated here, the better we are off as a territory.

I was part of the group of folks who first heard — it was the Minister of Health and Social Services and myself who first got the briefing from the acting chief medical officer of health to say that the risk had increased regarding the Arctic Winter Games. We had to take the very, very hard decision to cancel the games. We met with the City of Whitehorse — because they were our co-hosts — and we met with the folks from the games, and we took that tough decision.

Back then, you have to understand that the pandemic wasn't an emergency. A state of emergency had not been declared in Canada. These were the first international games that were cancelled anywhere. That was a really hard decision, and we had lots of people who would come and talk to us about why that was the wrong decision, and we explained that, no, we have to take this bold, hard decision in order to keep people

safe, even though we didn't understand at that time that COVID was coming to the Yukon or how it was going to come to Canada.

We took that decision, and here we are more than a year later — but not much more than a year later — and when I look at the situation here in the Yukon, we are so much better off than almost every other province and territory right now. I want to say thank you to Yukoners next, because with us — when you're in a pandemic — once that happens, the choices that we take as individuals affect all of us as a community. I think that Yukoners stepped up to the plate. We all paddled in the same direction by and large. We're still respectful of a range of perspectives — still giving people the option of whether or not to get vaccinated but providing them with the information. I think that we worked together, and we are leading the country in the fight against COVID-19. I think we are in a very lucky place. It doesn't mean that we're not at risk. We can see that vaccines have kept us safer, but that doesn't mean that we're perfectly safe. We can see that the choices that we have taken as a community — some of which we were lucky because of our geography — but, overall, we're just in a really good place around the pandemic, and I just think that the thing to acknowledge is that we should thank all Yukoners for working with us to keep each other safe — just so important.

You know, I think it is really important that we have stayed steady — the leadership that has been shown in this Legislature with us as a government has needed to be steady and we have needed to be in close communication with our communities or other governments and the broad public. I think that sort of strong, stable leadership is what Yukoners deserve and I'm really happy with where we are at.

It doesn't mean that the pandemic hasn't affected people. I'm sure all of us — when we went to the doors, we heard about those concerns — those concerns about mental wellness, concerns about our schools, concerns about masks. There were lots of concerns. Yet, together, I think we understand that we are in a better place.

Let me turn just for a few moments to my own riding, beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. I told you that I heard about snow. We were even asked in the debates, "What are you hearing most at the doors?" I said, "Snow" and everyone laughed because we were all choked at how much snow there was. But it turns out that there is a challenge with snow in my own riding, and that is that there is twice the amount of snow in the Southern Lakes, which has to come down through the Yukon River here in Whitehorse. What that does is it increases the risk of flooding in the summer. Typically, the Southern Lakes hit their high water somewhere around August — so somewhere around June and July, if we have too much water, then we get flooding.

So, we're working now to try to — Yukon Energy has worked to open the gates a couple months earlier to try to get more water through the system, it has worked to drop the lake level at Schwatka down by just under a metre, and it's working to keep the boat lock open — all of this to try to get more water through the system now in case we have a wet year.

You may recall — and I'm sure many people here do — that, in 2007, we had an extremely wet summer in the Southern Lakes area, and we ended up with flooding. It was like a metre over the previous high water that we had in recent records, and that metre was quite the flood. That's one of the main issues that I'm working on right away.

Other issues that I heard at the door — and sort of bookending — I heard lots of people with young families who were really happy about universal childcare, although my communities tend to be a little greyer — a little more north of 60 — and in my communities, what was most important was the aging-in-place plan that is coming. What I heard from folks was we need to get past this COVID thing to get on to getting aging in place working.

The Premier and I had a really productive meeting with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation during the election. We heard lots of strong concerns and issues to work on, and I'll be working to address those directly.

Finally, we talked a lot about energy. This is by no means an exhaustive list, Mr. Speaker, but it turns out that a lot of the ways in which we wish to address the renewable energy strategy are down through the Southern Lakes in some of those communities. That was great to hear from people, how important they thought it was that we work on renewable energy.

I would also like to acknowledge that all three parties stood up and said that they believed in the Yukon energy strategy — the 10-year renewable energy strategy — and *Our Clean Future*. Not to say that there aren't criticisms and that there isn't more work to be done, but what I generally heard was that it was moving in the right direction. So, that is good news.

Let me turn just for a minute to talk about portfolios. I would just like to say that, for the past four and a half years, it has been my absolute privilege to get to work with the Department of Community Services, the Yukon Liquor Corporation — also responsible for lotteries and cannabis — même la Direction des services en français, the French Language Services Directorate.

One of the things I will say is that I have been so impressed with the public service and the folks I got to work with — whether that was from the front-line cleaning staff up to the deputy minister — it was an incredible privilege to get to work with these teams. I just want to stand up here in the Legislature and say how impressed I was with the work that those teams did.

I know that being in the public service sometimes is challenging, because there are times when the public is uncertain about what the public service is doing or can even be critical. I think that criticism should fall to us as ministers and that the praise should go to the public servants themselves.

I want to say here, as I respond to the Speech from the Throne, that it has been my privilege to get to work with those departments, and I am so looking forward to the work that I have been tasked with. In particular, I have three new files. For example, I have already spoken about energy. That is one of my files to deal with. I am also working with the Public Service Commission, which I am honoured to be able to do. I am

looking forward to working with the Yukon Teachers' Association and the Yukon Employees' Union. That is very important work for how this government becomes employer of choice, but also how we serve the Yukon, how we make this a better place.

Finally, I would just like to take a minute to talk about Energy, Mines and Resources. It is, of course, a large and important portfolio. There are many aspects of it that are important. Agriculture — again, all three parties have talked about the importance of agriculture. I had a good conversation this morning with First Nation leadership about agriculture — where there is conflict around agriculture and where it is important to move forward together.

Forestry — again, when we think about forestry, I think beyond it just being an industry. I think of it also because of my role with forest fires and how climate change is changing the risk that we see — there is an importance that we marry climate change and mitigation, which means how we get out of harm's way and make an opportunity out of that. That, for me, is how we work to reduce our fuel loads and our fire risks around our communities and, at the same time, work to take the energy that we harvest there and use it to displace fossil fuels.

Of course, we've heard a couple times today in the Legislature the importance of land use planning. I look forward to working on this file with communities — currently with Dawson — with the Premier, not only as the MLA but also as the Premier, when it comes to the importance of land use planning for the territory. I think that land, as we know, is a critical issue.

Finally, let me talk about mining. The Yukon government is committed to the long-term responsible management of the Yukon's mineral resources and a healthy mining industry that adheres to high environmental and social standards. I had the opportunity to meet with the Yukon Chamber of Mines, and I will continue meeting with industry groups. I think that it's very important to have those conversations.

What I said to the Chamber of Mines is that I believe mining is critical. It's not simply that it's critical to our economy — I think it is — but what I also know is that, as we move to a sustainable green energy economy, I know that we will need the materials from mines to be part of that transition. But it's also critical that mining be done in a way that respects our governance, our communities, and our environment. What I will say is that, in my first meeting with the Chamber of Mines — which was echoed loudly from the industry, which I'm very happy with — they understand the environmental, social, and governance issues and I think they are ready and willing partners.

What they would say to me is that the industry has changed in recent decades and we have much work in front of us — whether that's through the mineral development strategy or successor legislation and land use planning — I think that these are all terribly important issues that I've now been asked to work on in a collaborative fashion here the territory or in this Legislature. I'm looking forward to that collaborative work.

I think that Yukoners sent a clear message that we will all need to work together for the benefit of the territory and that's

what I am committing — that is what I think we are committing to do. I think that we are going to need steady leadership to put us on the path to recovery. I think that the Speech from the Throne, which was highlighting the direction that we have proposed under the budget that will be tabled shortly — but, as I have heard from the Premier, it is very similar to the previous budget — that is where we will put people first, that is where we will make the Yukon a better place, and that is where we will put all of us on a path to recovery.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to just close with referencing a couple of comments that you made in the Legislature just ahead of the Speech from the Throne, which I think were reflected in the Commissioner's Speech from the Throne. You asked that we conduct ourselves with passion, honour, and respect. I have always believed this — that there is a way to bring together a diverse range of views and that it could be done in a respectful fashion. In fact, I think that a diverse range of views strengthens the decisions that we take here as a territory, and I believe that is a way to make a better Yukon.

I also believe that it has to be done in a respectful fashion. We have to find ways to disagree so that when those passionate views come forward, they are done in such a way that we don't disrespect each other. Then I think that the way you framed it right afterward, Mr. Speaker — you were talking about your Northern Tutchone traditions, and you talked about sharing, caring, teaching, and respect in everything that you do. I thank you for that; I will take that to heart. I think that, as the Speaker of the Legislature, I think that it is a good model for all of us to adopt.

It is my privilege to be back in this Legislature, to be here with colleagues to work to make the Yukon a better place, and to have the awesome responsibility to represent the beautiful riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, and I am looking forward to working with everyone here in the Legislature.

**Ms. Blake:** I am honoured to be sharing this space and speaking with you on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

I would like to express my heartfelt thank you to my community of Old Crow, my friends, my family, and my extended network who gave support and encouragement. I hold my hands up to you as you helped to keep me grounded and mindful as this path was unfolding in front of me. I hold much respect for my community, as all conversations exchanged are meaningful. I only hope to continue to learn and build on these relationships moving forward.

I would like to acknowledge our past MLA, Darius Elias. When I decided to put my name forward for the election in early February, Darius indicated in one of our conversations that there is great power within our nation when our young people step up to take on political roles, which is a true testament to the resilience and strength that lies within our nation, our community, and our families. I have thought about Darius and his leadership throughout this path that brought me here, as he deeply believed in the abilities of us as youth and young adults. I can only imagine his big bear hug and contagious smile as I stand here today to address this Assembly.

I extend my heartfelt thank you to my husband and children for being my rock. Your support and love have kept me grounded and motivated while inspiring me to always stay true to who I am.

A heartfelt thank you to my past coworkers and mentors who have been an important and influential part of my journey. Every individual I have had the privilege to work with has given me meaningful teachings and lessons that have helped me to better understand who I am, what I value, and what my strengths and weaknesses are.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge our past elders and leaders within the Gwich'in Nation for your teachings to deal with things in a good way, to work in a good way, and to hold ourselves in a good way — that we are strong, resilient, and capable. It's an honour and privilege to stand here today to represent Vuntut Gwitchin.

I recognize the confidence and supply agreement that was put in place to support our territory. These commitments bring us closer to improving health and wellness for all Yukoners while strengthening the foundation of our path forward in our territory.

When I made the decision to join the Yukon NDP, I wanted to ensure that we were doing everything out of respect for our people. I commit myself to the responsibilities of this role because I believe in the opportunities to do better and to do more for all Yukoners, even when it means doing things differently.

I am so proud that we will be the first jurisdiction in Canada to implement the public dental program, to help our vulnerable Yukoners in a meaningful way with a safe supply program, and to make sure that the minimum wage pays people fairly.

I feel privileged to stand here today as an indigenous woman to be a part of this path unfolding for Yukon. I commit to being a voice that represents all Yukoners and my home community in a respectful and meaningful manner. I hold my hands up to my past leaders for breaking the trail for us as indigenous people to hold space in government to advance self-determination and autonomy within our indigenous communities so that we can be active participants in all levels of government, ensuring a future that is solid and secure for our communities, our families, our children, our culture, our language, and who we are as Yukon First Nations in this territory and this country.

As children in Old Crow, we learn directly from our elders about our leaders travelling to Ottawa with the document *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*. Standing here in this Legislative Assembly with all of you, I am moved by the power and influence of this document, as I'm reminded that, when our leaders signed *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, those children whom our leaders fought for included my generation, our children today, and the many children who are yet to come.

Being Vuntut means that we are taught as children the importance of respect, to learn about our history so that we can understand who we are, where we have come from, how we fit into the world while we envision where we are going. Our

leaders wanted to ensure a secure future for all people of this territory and this country. The tireless work that was done by our past elders and leaders continues to unfold and influence our territory and Canada while empowering the authority of our Yukon First Nations to continue to build upon the implementation of our self-government agreements in a meaningful way.

I stand here as a leader today for our children tomorrow. We have an inherent responsibility to work collectively for our children and families to ensure that we are enhancing outcomes and opportunities for all citizens in our community and all of the Yukon. As indigenous people, we come from forward-thinking people. All decisions that have been made in the past had us, the generations of today, in mind. That is the foundation that I uphold as we continue to work collectively with the same respect for the generations yet to come.

As children in Old Crow, it was instilled in us that we are the next generation of leaders. That teaching is now passed on to the many children of our community today. When new babies are born into our community, a new leader is born. Our elders and leaders of yesterday committed their lives to ensure that our future is built on respect, unity, opportunity, and prosperity while securing our autonomy as indigenous people as we adapted our lives and ways of being to the changing world around us.

*Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* holds us as leaders of today accountable to all people of our territory and Canada with the decisions laid out ahead of us. It is our duty to serve in the best interests of all people, as that is the legacy that we have inherited from our leaders of the past. This is the teaching that has been instilled in me as a child growing up in Vuntut Gwitchin territory.

Today, I am grateful to my teachers of yesterday as their influence in my life has shaped my resilience, which allows me to stand here today as a new leader in this capacity. In the spring of 2006, I was a young mom determined to pursue social work. I wanted to pursue a higher level of education so that I could contribute to capacity building within our territory and within my home community. I also believe that all those times that our past leaders and elders told us as children to get our education naturally motivated me to take this big step of applying to post-secondary as a young adult. As a young child in Old Crow, my mother tasked me with visiting community members to help with housework. When there were no chores to do, I sat and listened to stories of long ago, or observed as women did their beadwork, or helped with cutting and prepping of caribou meat. This traditional way of teaching me to be a helper in the community fuelled my desire to pursue a career in the helping field.

During my childhood, we were fortunate to have our elders at the time actively present in our school, talking with us about our history with residential schools and how life was for them growing up on the land as nomadic people. We listened to stories of trapping, hunting, working with dog teams, and packing water. These stories of connections to our natural environment taught us that we are deeply connected to our traditional territory, as the stories of where we come from are

embedded all across our lands. We listen to legends and creation stories about our lands and animals to better understand who are as Gwich'in people.

Our leaders at the time regularly informed us of the injustices that our people faced while expressing concerns for our community and our future. Our school ensured our presence in community meetings where we listened to our leadership and our community engage in conversation about our relationship with the Crown, the need for self-government, the importance of protection of the Porcupine caribou herd, the concerns for our lands and waters, and protecting sacred sites within our traditional territory.

We listened to our people talk about the importance of addressing education, employment and training needs in the community, housing, incarceration of our young people, mental health and addiction support in the community, support for children and families, and life skills training. As young as we were at the time, this element of our education helped to prepare us for adulthood and our responsibilities that we would one day carry in our community as the future leaders.

Education has helped me to better understand the systems and structures of society and injustices that we face as indigenous people. I naturally incorporated both westernized and indigenous ways of helping by applying traditional teachings in my course work, which helped to expand my thinking and level of understanding.

I have grown to be more grateful for the traditional teachings I had a child as they honed my ability to listen and to observe while being respectful when holding space for people and not being afraid to stand up and speak up for our community. My passion lies in working and advancing First Nation issues and initiatives such as mental health, child and family services and supports, housing, gaps of programs and services delivery, advocating for greater resources for our children, families, and elders, and ensuring that our most vulnerable citizens have access to the support that they need.

I am also passionate about challenging policies and legislation that have had a direct impact on the lives of Yukon First Nations and all people who call Yukon home.

Standing here today, I recognize the privilege I have to be in this role which allows me to contribute to the decision-making processes that will unfold in this space. I hold in my heart the people whom I represent and our traditional teachings and values as Vuntut Gwitchin.

I hold my hands up to our past and present leaders of Vuntut Gwitchin who have held this space before me. My past leaders taught us, as a people, that every action we take influences the future. We are taught that we are strong and resilient. Our elders indicated to us that hard times are coming and that it is important to go back to the land.

When we talk about who we are as First Nation people, we go back to our animals; we go back to our waters; we go back to our culture; we go back to our language.

Today I better understand why our leaders ensured that we developed that deep connection to our lands, animals, water, culture, and language. I better understand why they encouraged us as children to pursue our education. I better understand why

our leaders of yesterday encouraged us to learn more about who we are and why it was so important to learn about the outside world outside of our communities. It was to ensure that we are grounded in who we are, that we have meaningful connections to our community and our lands, that we are capable of taking up space and to be strong and to be respectful, as I am but one person, yet I represent my community, my nation, and my family.

My career has helped me to better understand that our First Nation governments must have a seat at every table so that the realities and voices of our people are present. There is much work that has been done, yet we need to be open to doing things differently so that we contribute to the enhancement of lives for all Yukoners. We need to work transparently with our First Nation governments, as they are important partners. We need to continue to build on the relationships that are being established so we can instill hope for our people and model what strong leadership looks like.

To my community of Old Crow, I am here to represent you. I am ready and committed to do the work. I am here to bring forward your voices to help our community move forward. We have much work to be done. That work cannot be done by one person. We need to be united and work together. We have always been taught by our elders that it takes the community to raise a child. It takes a community to make things happen, and it takes a community to make sound decisions.

I want to ensure that you walk this journey with me. I am committed to holding your voices at the forefront of the work that unfolds. I want to remain transparent with you all and I'm open to you holding me accountable in this role.

It is my duty to represent our community. To our youth: I want you to know that I'm also here to represent you. I want to hear from you. Don't ever be afraid to reach out to share your voice and your views, as you are our leaders of tomorrow. Mahsi' cho.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you to the new Members of the Legislative Assembly: the Member for Whitehorse Centre and the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, and to you, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun — thank you for your comments. They are very insightful and heartfelt. I was listening closely to both the Member for Whitehorse Centre and the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin about their personal journeys and how they have ultimately arrived at this Assembly. I welcome all three of you and, of course, the Leader of the Official Opposition returning to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond to the Speech from the Throne. Firstly, I would like to express my ongoing and abundant gratitude for having been able to live my life and raise my family for the last three decades in the vibrant and dynamic neighbourhood of Riverdale, which is situated on the traditional territories of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation.

Where would I be without my family? Thank you so much to Janet, Max, Angus — Max and Angus are my sons — and my extended family for supporting me. I would not be standing



here right now if it wasn't for you. You have my unwavering and unreserved love and affection.

To my Riverdale North constituents: I cannot thank you enough for this great honour. Being re-elected as your MLA is humbling and inspiring. Your insight, patience, goodwill, and candour at the door in the most recent election campaign was very much appreciated.

At the same time, I would be remiss if I didn't thank my dedicated election team, who kept their good humour, dedication, warm jackets, hopefully relatively warm boots, and smiles on their faces during the course of what was a challenging and, as we've heard from various members already, perhaps unexpectedly snowy and inclement March and April in the Yukon.

I remain steadfast in my commitment to my constituents and will be responsive to any concerns that they have as I represent the issues of all of my constituents. Riverdale North is my home, you are my friends and neighbours, and, first and foremost, I work for you.

Briefly, I will continue to engage with all of the Riverdale school councils, as we now have six schools in Riverdale, and I'm excited to report that the dynamic and active community that we have in both Riverdale North and Riverdale South has seen the addition of a new soccer field and athletic complex at F.H. Collins and a commitment to improve the biathlon facility on Grey Mountain Road. Our government has committed to the planning and, ultimately, the construction of a new Polarettes facility, which may well not be in Riverdale, but, in any event, I did attend that wonderful organization many times and was astounded by the breadth of their programming and the number of members they had. When the executive of the Polarettes said that they had 1,100 or 1,200 members, my jaw dropped — in a good way. They have programs from dawn until past dusk, and it's certainly an amazing active-living story for the entire territory — certainly for all of Whitehorse. I wish the Polarettes all the best going forward in that planning phase.

In addition, the new skateboard park will be opened in Riverdale within the next few months, and that looks like an amazing new facility. I know that the prior facility had probably outlived its useful life, but nevertheless, I heard from my constituents and I heard from stakeholders that it was an incredibly important piece of leisure infrastructure. With the new facility opening soon, that will continue to be a focal point of outdoor activity and socializing for a certain group of Yukoners. That is incredibly exciting for our community as well.

In addition, the French first language high school was completed within the last year — the Mercier school — and I have attended there on a number of occasions and can advise that the school community there is excited by that facility, and I look forward to working with that community as well.

All sort of being the theme that Riverdale — in my door-knocking over the course of the last four and a half years — is a young — and a community that is becoming younger, in my experience, with younger families. They are embracing a lot of these new facilities. I'm also heartened by the embrace of active living and active transportation, as these parents, with their

young children, are coming in and out of beautiful — because Riverdale is beautiful, as well.

As I look around me, I am proud to be part of this team of distinguished colleagues in this government. I have seen this group work tirelessly over the past four years in order to pass and implement full and progressive legislation and to provide necessary and valuable support measures for all Yukoners in these unprecedented and difficult times.

As we look at other jurisdictions in Canada, North America, and across the globe, it is clear that Yukon continues to manage this global pandemic in an exemplary manner. The care and adherence to the public health measures that Yukoners have displayed is why we are in our current and enviable position.

Thanks to the efforts of all, Yukon is turning the corner on the pandemic, and brighter days are ahead. It is indeed our shot, and let's continue to take it.

In the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, I was the Speaker of this House. It was a great honour to serve as the Speaker of the Legislature. In addition to my official duties as Speaker, I particularly enjoyed the educational outreach component of my role. Over the past four and a half years, I had the privilege of engaging with hundreds of Yukon youth, from many elementary and high schools as well as with students in various community schools, on the inner workings of their Yukon democracy through class visits to this Chamber and the Legislative Assembly's Mace tour. I can advise all members that elementary school students ask interesting and diverse questions. There were a few.

I won't name the school, but I was in a community school and the current Clerk and I were there. They asked us a few questions. The easier ones were: "What is your favourite colour?" and "What is your favourite animal?" But the doozy was — we were in the robes for the Assembly, and they asked: "Why are you both dressed like nuns?" I said that it is a multi-layered question. There were others as well.

What I would say about young Yukoners is that they are — and I think it's important. I think that it is important for all MLAs — for us to breathe life into the Assembly and to educate our young Yukoners as to what we do — that it's not a parallel track of members from the 19 ridings doing some sort of mystical work that has no impact on our young people. I think that I did a reasonable job in conveying that, and I think that it is an important job for all of us because, obviously, the work that is conducted in this Assembly impacts all Yukoners.

I think that if we want to engage young people going forward, it's incumbent upon us to continue to provide that educative function — a plug for democracy for young people.

As well, it was a highlight to relaunch the well-attended Yukon Youth Parliament program which had been in abeyance for about seven or eight years. That occurred in 2019. We had planned to run it again in the spring of 2020. It was fully subscribed, but, of course, COVID-19 occurred and the plans could not proceed. I would thank all the returning MLAs who provided their support, enthusiasm, and assistance in that project.

As Speaker, I did not partake in the voting on any motions, save for one vote on an amendment to a motion on a private member's motion in the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislature. I estimate that I presided over approximately 4,000 questions from the members of this Assembly, along with hundreds of hours of often lively, dynamic, and sometimes heated debate — principled and heated debate. I did not voice my views on the items at hand as, in fact, in the almost 700-year Westminster tradition of the role of the Speaker, members specifically do not wish to learn or have any interest whatsoever in the opinions of its senior presiding officer.

It is relatively rare in Yukon political history for a former Speaker to transition to ministerial portfolios; however, it is a challenge and an honour which I embrace.

I wish the incoming Speaker all the best and I would encourage our Speaker and Deputy Speaker to embrace the experience and all of its possibilities.

In our new government, I have been entrusted to serve the Yukon and its residents as the Minister of Highways and Public Works and the Minister of Environment. Prior to my election as the MLA for Riverdale North, I had almost 25 years of experience in representing thousands of Yukoners in various areas of law in both private practice — briefly — and at the Yukon Legal Services Society, also known as Legal Aid. In my legal practice, I also served as the executive director of that organization for 16 years. In my capacity as a staff lawyer and administrator, I had the honour of travelling to all Yukon communities.

Advancing social justice, promoting a green agenda, and strongly supporting the rule of law and procedural fairness in a thriving and healthy community are all important values that have guided me throughout my professional life.

I am grateful to be able to draw from these experiences and values and continue to work hard and conscientiously every day for the benefit of all Yukoners.

As other members have indicated previously this afternoon, Yukoners have clearly spoken. Yukoners want their legislators to work collectively together in order to move our territory forward in a positive direction. We have been directed to make best efforts to cooperate for the greater good of this incredible territory. That is what energizes me in the morning and sometimes keeps me up late at night. I take this commitment seriously. I know that my fellow ministers and my caucus share this sentiment with me.

The Yukon Liberal government of this 35<sup>th</sup> Legislature is supported by a confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon New Democrats. This agreement contains several objectives, which fall almost exclusively under my two new portfolios. With a baseline number set at the 2010 greenhouse gas emissions of the Yukon, our Liberal government has increased our target to achieve a 45-percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions for our territory from that baseline by 2030. This government will establish the Yukon climate leadership council which will guide us toward this ambitious yet attainable goal.

A significant majority of Yukoners, including many young and youthful citizens I spoke to in my constituency during the

most recent campaign, expect this objective to be met. We hear you loud and clear. We will move forward with a renewed sense of purpose to implement the recommendations of *Our Clean Future* where, among many initiatives that are proposed, we will enact the clean energy act and its accompanying regulations during this mandate. Specifically, as well — as you have heard in the throne speech — we will ban single-use plastics by the end of this year.

As I become familiar with the departments I have been asked to lead, I am extremely impressed with the work accomplished by my distinguished predecessors, the now-Minister of Community Services and Minister responsible for the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board in his former capacity as Minister of Highways and Public Works — that's a mouthful — and Pauline Frost, with the Department of Environment. True leadership leaves behind a strong legacy.

From my early days and preliminary meetings at both Highways and Public Works and Environment, the dedicated and passionate work of the many talented and hard-working individuals in both of these departments is evident to me. The work achieved in the last four-plus years is a solid testament to these observations.

Only last week, in one of my first acts of office, I signed the finalizing documents to commence the construction of the Dempster fibre line project. This project will ensure that Yukoners do not experience lengthy Internet outages — which may have happened this afternoon — or indeed — fingers crossed — any outages, thereby increasing our territory's competitive advantage, enabling skilled remote workers to choose Yukon as their home. We will have shovels in the ground shortly for the commencement of this construction season.

The Dempster fibre line is a formidable and challenging project that will include many creek crossings and other water bodies, as it follows the rugged Dempster Highway north to Inuvik. I was advised that one of the most significant engineering challenges culminates in a more than one kilometre long proposed underground drilling path for the fibre under the mighty Mackenzie River. Stay tuned for updates on this project. This is only one of the numerous significant initiatives of the Highways and Public Works department led by Deputy Minister McConnell and his dynamic and motivated management team, as well as the hundreds of employees who I look forward to meeting in the weeks and months to come. I can assure the House that they have kept me busy in my first week.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the investments in infrastructure that will be made in the next few years will significantly improve the lives of Yukoners. Whether it is a significant and challenging project like replacing the Nisutlin Bay bridge in the community of Teslin, the construction of schools in Whistle Bend and Burwash Landing, multiple additional infrastructure upgrades, the long overdue rewrite of the *Motor Vehicles Act*, many green economy investments, information technology investments, or the planned construction of the Old Crow health and wellness centre, these are indeed exciting times for our territory and for all Yukoners.

While I have spoken about the climate change goals as reflected through the confidence and supply agreements, there are many additional innovative projects that will be pursued by our government and which are the responsibility of the Department of Environment. The privilege of living in this awesome, wild land comes with the responsibility for the territory's responsible stewardship. As I take on the role of Minister of Environment, we will continue developing and managing our natural resources responsibly and sustainably through our agreements and initiatives through our various partners.

We will continue to improve the Yukon government campgrounds as we work to identify new potential sites to meet the increased demand for camping opportunities in our beautiful wilderness. As well, we will develop and implement animal protection legislation as well as a Yukon wetlands policy. Work will also continue on remediating contaminated sites across the Yukon, continuing to engage on responsible ongoing management of Yukon wildlife and the many other initiatives led by the Department of Environment.

The Department of Environment will continue to work closely with our partners to collect and analyze data that supports decision-making based on strong, current science and long-established traditional knowledge. In this regard, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Deputy Minister of Environment, Mr. John Bailey, who has done an admirable job, and to welcome newly appointed Deputy Minister Manon Moreau, who I greatly look forward to working with in her new role.

The past 14 months have represented a unique and substantial challenge for our territory. Yukoners have rallied to support each other and to keep each other safe. Emerging from these unprecedented times will require both our government and all of us to look out for both the physical and mental health of all citizens of our dynamic and diverse community.

I remain very optimistic, however, for our territory's future, and I am excited to roll up my sleeves in my second mandate.

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a pleasure to see you in that Chair. There are a lot of firsts, I think, right now in this Assembly — in this, the 35<sup>th</sup>. Of course, I came here to the Assembly the first time in 2011, during the 33<sup>rd</sup>, with some — actually, to be honest, there are not that many faces from back then. Of course, there are the members of the Yukon Party who were here in 2011 and the Premier was also here in 2011. I think that there are so many things to be able to talk about today and so many things to be grateful for and to say thank you for.

First, I just want to thank my family. I've been asked a lot of times over the years how I could make sure my ego wouldn't get too big to get into a door and I said, well, they would have to meet my family to understand that truly, because the amount of ribbing that I get on Sunday from them is enough to make sure that my ego is never going to be a problem. I want to thank my friends who make sure that I stay true to myself and am able to be the person who I am.

In the last campaign, I think there were three of us in the Chamber who can understand the real privilege of being in a leadership position during a territorial campaign. I say that because, in those positions, you have an opportunity not just to be in your riding, but you have an opportunity to be across the territory, to be in every community, and to be learning from people around you.

I really want to make sure that I thank Yukoners because there has been a real privilege of being in this Chamber since 2011 and a real privilege in this last territorial election campaign to be there in a leadership position, to be meeting and learning from folks. It's those stories that we always bring forward here and it's those experiences that help shape how I view the world. It was a real pleasure today to hear from both yourself, Deputy Speaker, in your maiden speech, and of course my colleague for Whitehorse Centre. I believe that the stories that we share are important, that the stories that all members here share are important, and that we all come forward with those views.

I think that there is a real difference in this throne speech from previous ones where we're looking more forward. There were a couple of things that were mentioned that I'm really proud about and that come from the relationship between the Yukon Liberals and the Yukon NDP caucus through the confidence and supply agreement. But there are some things that weren't there that I'm also really pleased about.

In 2011, I had been elected just after working in corrections. In my first speech in December of that year, I said that, in the correctional facility, when women got close to being released you could see the anxiety increase, because when women were released from corrections, there was no safe place for them to go. They didn't qualify for existing programs and they often went back into the same situations that they were in. I asked then, to a Yukon Party government, when we were going to build a place for women. So, although it has been 10 years, it was mentioned in the throne speech — and for that I'm grateful. To know that women leaving the justice system will have a safe place to transition back into community where they will have that ability to get their feet under them and proceed forward — I think that's really important.

Also, in that first speech I gave in 2011, I talked about the importance of McIntyre Creek and I talked about the special place that it is and how I was hopeful that it would be protected. That was included in the throne speech, and I'm thankful for that.

I think that there is a real opportunity here as we go forward in the next number of years, and that's a real opportunity for us to work together.

I hope the Member for Watson Lake tables a motion again talking about a street light outside of Two Mile because I know how dark that section is and how important that is for safety. I hope that the Yukon Party brings forward a motion about making the SHINGRIX vaccine available for free to Yukoners 55-plus as they did in their election campaign, because this is an opportunity for us to work together to get those things to happen. This is the first time that we don't have a majority government, which means that we are able to work together to

the benefit of all Yukon for things that we think are important. I think that's a real privilege and a real opportunity. So, I hope that we will see members from all sides bring forward ideas that they think are important so that we can have conversations about them to move them forward.

During the election campaign, there were a lot of things that we heard and things that I am looking forward to hearing solutions for. There is not a single community in the territory that hasn't said that housing isn't important. Housing is important. We know that housing is a desperately needed in Old Crow for the Vuntut Gwitchin. I know that housing was mentioned when I visited Pelly Crossing, when I visited Mayo, when I visited Carmacks, when I visited Beaver Creek, Haines Junction, and any of the other communities — Watson Lake, Teslin — any community — Ross River, Faro — maybe not Faro; Faro might be the one place that doesn't actually need housing in the same way, but housing is required across the territory. So, it's going to be up to us in the Chamber to figure out how we make that happen. In some communities, it's about making lots available, but in some situations, it is actually about building. It's about making sure that we address the concerns of those communities and make that housing available.

It was really incredible to see the housing that is being built in the Takhini River subdivision with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations from the rapid initiative housing fund through the federal government. In a span of five months, they were putting up six buildings, including multi-family and multi-unit. So, there is a real opportunity.

When we talk about the creation of the Yukon climate leadership council, which will be really important in getting us to the increased greenhouse gas reduction target of 45 percent — we should look at the representation that we want on that council.

Just recently, I was at a meeting with the Yukon Chamber of Mines, and they said that they would like to participate, that they have ideas about the work that they can do and how they would like to be involved in that. They also talked about how they wanted to be involved in the implementation of the Yukon mineral development strategy and how they could be a real benefit to that.

I have had lots of conversations about agriculture and concerns around elk and the ability of farmers to produce. When we talk about food production in the north, we talk about it in terms of northern food security, and we talk about it in terms of climate change and our ability to make sure that we're doing the work that we think we need to do here in order to move forward, but there's that real concern with that elk herd that was introduced. I think that there's a real opportunity in the makeup of this Chamber to come up with solutions to tackle those concerns.

In the throne speech, there were things like the field house complex in Whitehorse, but there are questions like: Who will cover the operation and maintenance cost of that new recreation facility? Then, of course, when we talk about recreation facilities, I say things like: "What about other communities outside of Whitehorse?" Particularly I think about Old Crow, which I never realized until just recently — I always thought

that it was a covered area that was used by the co-op to store building supplies. It's a large tent area, and the reason why I highlight it is because the wind in Old Crow can be phenomenal and it tears through that fabric and that fabric flaps in the wind. I was just thinking about it when I was there. I didn't realize that this was the old rink area, but it's not used as a rink anymore because the wind just howls through that space. One of the things that we heard from folks in Old Crow was the pride of hockey and the real desire of that to be something that the community focuses on and how that, through hockey, there was that opportunity for wellness and for healing. Then my colleague mentioned that it's great to have an outdoor rink, but if you don't have a warm place to get dressed, it's going to be really challenging when it's colder. Although you can play when it's cold, it's really hard to get your stuff on in that space.

Then I looked at the community of Ross River, and when their rink collapsed, there was a warming hut built. So, although it's an outdoor ice rink, there's still a warm spot to get ready, so maybe there are options there and ways that we can look at it.

We think about what's going on at Carmacks and the rink that's underway but hasn't been completed, and then, of course, I think about your communities, Mr. Speaker, and I heard about the importance of the swimming pools, and I heard about the importance about maybe making sure that there was available recreation in the wintertime.

Then we can look toward the community of Watson Lake to see what that recreation facility could look like, and it is fantastic. We heard from the community of Watson Lake about the pride of hosting experiential learning or education weekends and how, when people were able to visit Watson Lake from rural communities, they were blown away by things like the Northern Lights Centre and that recreation complex. I think that there are real opportunities right now for us to figure out how we can address some of those shortcomings in communities.

There was a question in Question Period today about minimum wage. I guess I am going to put it back. This is what I have been saying all along. I challenge those who say that you can live off \$13.85 an hour. I want to know how a person can pay rent, how they can get groceries, and how they can pay bills without having to access the social supports of a social safety net. I am really proud that, as part of that confidence and supply agreement, we are increasing the minimum wage to \$15.20 an hour, because, come September 1, when NWT goes up, we would be standing alone. We would be on our own, looking both south toward BC, Alberta, and then, of course, next door to the Northwest Territories.

I think it is an important thing to note that it's not just small businesses in the Yukon that don't pay higher than minimum wage. Small businesses in Yukon do. They value their employees. They understand those hardships, so they take care. It's just about bringing everybody else up along.

I am really proud that, in the throne speech, there was the commitment to the seven-days-a-week mental health clinic and what that will mean for people. Today I had the privilege of doing an interview with the *Hill Times*, and it was about access

to mental health services in the north. The truth of the matter is that we know there are shortcomings. We do. We know that it has gotten better, but it is not there yet. We can talk about ending stigma all we want, but when the services aren't available, what does that mean? So, right now, I can look toward detox, for example, and only eight beds are available out of the 14 because of COVID. What does that mean when someone is ready to take that journey, to take that first step, and they try to access that service and it is not available? That is really hard. They might not be ready again for a long time, but they are ready right then. So how do we do better?

I was pleased to see that there is the commitment. All parties committed to making sure that we build on-the-land healing and we all recognized how important that was — that connection, that separation from an institution — to making it more holistic. I am pleased to know that the federal government is going to support that. I think that is really important.

Since 2016, knowing that we've lost 40 members of our communities to opioid overdoses and to drug addiction, it is a tragedy. To hear in the throne speech that we're committed to safe supply and supervised consumption is something that I'm really proud of. We have heard that — the Yukon NDP has been talking about that for a long time, and that was part of the confidence and supply agreement. I'm pleased to know that we can work together for that.

This morning, I was at CHON-FM, and Doug Tremblay — hello to him. I know that the Leader of the Yukon Party and the Premier both go on a regular basis. He said that, for him, when he looked at the election, there were so many commonalities, and he hoped that we could work together on those commonalities, knowing that some of the differences would be harder to get to, but he was hopeful that we could get there.

I really believe that we can, because this is the first time in 30 years that we don't have a majority government. This is the first time in my time in the Assembly that I won't be debating motions other than government motions about saying that a prescribed amount of money in the budget will be used for the thing that is listed in the budget. I am really excited about that. I am really excited. I don't even know how many back-bench Wednesdays I did where we had to debate something like that.

So I'm looking forward to changing that conversation. I'm looking forward to knowing issues that are important to my colleagues, as we bring them forward. The Member for Watson Lake wasn't here before, but I hope that she brings forward a motion about the lights outside of Two Mile. I think that this is an opportunity for the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin to also bring forward those issues that have been dear to him and bring them up for conversation.

I think that there's a real opportunity for us to work in a different way, and for that reason, I am really looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to having conversations about agriculture and what that means. I'm looking forward to having conversations about energy, about mining, and about resource development. I'm looking forward to having conversations about the draft mineral strategy — I guess it's not a draft anymore, so the mineral strategy. I'm looking forward to having conversations about what the government believes

when they talked about subsidies for birth control or for fertility treatments or period products, because those are things that were really highlighted as being important.

One thing I didn't realize when we included it in the Yukon NDP platform — when we talked about access for fertility treatment, I didn't realize how close to home that hit. I remember being told by someone that it was the first time they felt like they were being seen because of those hardships. It is important to recognize that families look different and that if there is that commitment and that willingness to be a family, and it is just not possible, then I am happy to know that this government is talking about those supports. I think that's important.

I also think that it is really important that when we talk about — so, for example, my colleague — there is going to be a new health centre in the community of Old Crow, and that is really important. But what is also really important is making sure that we have training opportunities for people in that community to become those health care workers and those support workers.

When I think about visiting any rural community in the territory which is represented here by us — knowing that support for home care was challenging, which is why we talked about that training opportunity based on the Nuka model. We think that is important and so we're happy that was included in the confidence and supply agreement because we think that there is a real opportunity.

We also think that it is important that when we talk about training and communities, we are talking about identifying people in communities who will do the job that those communities need. Again, I look at the community of Old Crow — knowing that what we really need to be doing there is encouraging and identifying people in that community to do the important jobs like being the water truck driver and the sewage truck driver — making sure that we have built in redundancy in that community, so someone can be sick — because that is a community that is 100-percent based on water delivery and sewage pickup. The fact that right now that rests pretty squarely on one or two sets of shoulders is hard.

Knowing that when we talk about training opportunities — knowing that there is not a single community in the territory where there are not people who would fill those jobs, who would do those jobs, but they haven't had that opportunity for that training — so, when we look at building these government projects in communities — trying to figure out a way that we make sure that people in those communities have those opportunities to be trained as carpenters, electricians, and plumbers — knowing that if it is going to take two years for a project to be built, that could be the two years before your apprenticeship and that is critical, if we talk about building that capacity and that redundancy in those communities.

So, I think that there is a real opportunity as we move forward to work together. I think that there are going to be times where we will agree and there are definitely going to be times when we will disagree, but sometimes it is within those disagreements that we learn a different perspective and we can

learn things from each other, and I think that is a real opportunity.

So, I look forward to those conversations in this Chamber and I look forward to the conversations as we go together knowing that we won't always agree but we're always going to be coming at it for what we believe is the best interests of our friends and our neighbours. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** It is my honour and privilege to address this Legislative Assembly. I'm looking forward to working with all of the honourable members of this Chamber to make the lives of Yukoners better. It is truly a privilege to have the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

I have been sent here, Mr. Speaker, by the people of Riverdale South to represent them. I'm grateful and honoured that the people of Riverdale South placed their trust and faith in me to represent them once again. Riverdale South is truly an amazing, maybe beautiful, and rather unique place to call home. It is an established and yet diverse neighbourhood. It has single-family and multi-family dwellings. It has community clubs, young families, seniors housing, schools, businesses — large and small — wilderness, lakes, and world-class hiking, biking, and walking trails.

Recreation — summer and winter — is on our doorsteps, but so is downtown Whitehorse and all that it has to offer. It has been my true honour to serve as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for the past four and a half years and return now with a new mandate, new responsibilities, and a vibrant team of leaders.

I'm so honoured to have worked with the MLAs on this side of the House — and all MLAs, but particularly I know our team better. We are diverse in skill and opinion, but I can attest that there is no group of people who has been more dedicated to Yukoners in these roles.

Government must understand their responsibility to serve the public, understand their authority to act, abide by the rules, and foster innovative, progressive problem-solving among a talented public service.

Government must be fair, efficient, and accountable. We must strive for professionalism and excellence. Never before has this been more evident than during the world pandemic. Our senior management and all members of the public service have been called upon to work in places and at tasks that they may have never considered — never been asked to achieve before. They have risen to every challenge; they have worked above and beyond.

In making preparation for this presentation, I read several — as some of my colleagues have mentioned — other replies to throne speeches, and curiously, almost without exception, every person who spoke — no matter the party — spoke of wanting to do things differently, encouraging a more professional decorum in this House, and committed to behaving in an appropriately respectful way. Many of those speakers are in this room today, and I urge them to remember and honour those commitments.

Sound decisions are based on solid, knowable evidence — evidence that provides the basis for decision-making and is

communicated in support of a decision, fosters greater transparency, accountability, and understanding. Even if you ultimately don't agree with the decision, the opportunity to understand it is critical.

Communicating how decisions are made and what facts are taken into account is the responsibility of government. This is my view and belief in how government should operate. This is the government that Yukoners deserve.

They also deserve to hear strong female voices. Yukoners have sent eight women to this Legislative Assembly to represent them. Women bring a unique perspective and need a greater voice in politics. The team of Liberal candidates in the election held last month was an incredibly diverse group of talented Yukoners and included eight amazing women. While those women were not all re-elected, they remain leaders in our community and will serve Yukoners in many different ways.

I am proud to share the opportunity to be in this Legislative Assembly with the eight women who were elected and will represent their neighbourhoods and their constituents so well.

Mr. Speaker, in my previous profession as a lawyer, and in my current profession, your reputation is everything. It precedes you, people judge you by it, and they react to you based on it. It just happens to be true. Earning the trust of my peers, superiors, clients, and the public has always guided my work. My career has been dedicated to fairness, equality, collaboration, and respect for all people. My work has often focused on finding real solutions, improving government processes, and instigating change.

I will continue to do this as an elected member of this Legislative Assembly, representing Riverdale South and as Minister of Justice, the Auditor General, and the Minister of Health and Social Services. This is a true privilege. I trust that my skills and attitude will serve me well in these roles.

I echo the comments of my colleague, the Minister of Education, about how bittersweet taking on new roles and leaving others behind has been. It is also a tremendous honour to take on new responsibilities and have the opportunity to forge new relationships. I hope that you find that to be true for you as well.

As I move on from the Education portfolio, I want to thank Nicole Morgan and her senior management team who worked tirelessly for Yukon students. Together we realized the Yukon University, settled the 11-year lawsuit with the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon and built a new secondary school, made a plan to modernize learning spaces — starting with Whistle Bend school and portables at Golden Horn, Robert Service School, Selkirk and Hidden Valley — and perhaps most importantly, we began a true evaluation and independent review of inclusive and special education — a task that has never been done before.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to all that and the everyday work and services and issues and challenges of running Yukon schools, we asked the Department of Education and all those who work in Yukon schools to manage through a world pandemic. If that wasn't enough, we moved early learning childcare to Education while launching a universal childcare subsidy program on the way in. We have often asked more than

was humanly possible from every single education staff person, teacher, and administrator. Without question, they met those challenges. To them all I say thank you, albeit inadequate. I know that they are dedicated to their work and will continue to serve Yukoners as we go forward.

In this mandate, I have the honour to serve Yukoners as Auditor General, Minister of Justice, and Minister of Health and Social Services. It is the honour of my legal career to serve as Auditor General and Minister of Justice for this government and for Yukoners.

I'm immensely proud of the evolution and the work of the Department of Justice over the past mandate. We conducted an independent review of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and implemented the recommendations. We initiated an RCMP historical cases unit, increased funding to Legal Aid and to the Human Rights Commission, implemented the Gladue report writing program, supported development of community safety plans, introduced a new mandate for administration of justice agreements that support and respect the vision of First Nations, and the sexualized assault response team — an issue that I have worked on since I was 18 years old. As my colleague from Riverdale North says, that was not yesterday.

I want to take the opportunity to thank Minister Frost and Minister McLean for working so hard with me to achieve the SART services for Yukoners — the sexualized assault response team. It's an issue that I will continue to work on and focus on because it has just been too long that our community, our society, our courts, and our justice system have not responded in the way that's most appropriate to victims of sexual assault. It cannot go on any longer.

The Department of Justice — and many departments across government, but all focused eventually in Justice with respect to drafting and completion — helped me bring 43 pieces of legislation to this Legislative Assembly and 20 budget bills over the last mandate. I want to thank all members of the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislature for their thorough attention and review of those new laws. They have all been brought here for the benefit of Yukoners. It was an amazing amount of work and an excellent start to the modernization of Yukon laws.

Lastly, I would touch base for a moment on my role as the Minister of Health and Social Services. Our government has been laser-focused and dedicated to transforming Yukon's health care approach and how we can improve how people can access health care services in their communities. There is simply not enough time to list the improvements made under the leadership of Minister Frost. I will do my very best to honour her achievements by striving for high-quality health care for all, increased community wellness, and supports to address substance use and serve our most vulnerable people here in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, our caucus has met with literally thousands of people during our first mandate and brings a renewed commitment to transparency in government operations and finances, a legislature that incorporates First Nation values and culture and a caucus that is respectful, accountable, and responsive to Yukoners.

I believe that for every problem there is a solution when you tackle it with an open mind, hard work, and integrity. I look forward to us all working for Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, as I close my remarks, I want to thank my family and friends who have supported me during the past mandate, through that spring election and all the weather and challenges that it brought, including a pandemic, and on into these next challenges. I simply would not be here without them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** It is an honour to rise today and to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I'm absolutely thrilled to continue in my role as the MLA for Klondike as well. It's truly the honour of my life to serve my constituents and to represent my home, Dawson City, as well.

My re-election campaign would not have been possible without a lot of hard work from a lot of very dedicated Yukoners. I'm endlessly grateful for their continued support — this being my third campaign as the MLA for Klondike.

I do want to start with thanking members of the Yukon Liberal Party executive for their tireless work, whether it's during election campaigns or during the regular season — either. Each of those members made additional and impressive contributions, not only to our team and to the campaign but to our platform and therefore the lives of Yukoners through programs that went from platform to mandate.

I want to thank the executive which includes George Filipovic, Linda Casson, Noah Curtis, Janine Workman, Mike Pemberton, Kim Stavert, Clarence Timmons, Vice-President Carly Carruthers, and President Emily Farrell. The executive is also supported by past President Devin Bailey and former party leader, Arthur Mitchell. I'm very grateful to both of them for their contributions and guidance and mentoring as well.

Our campaign would not have been possible without the many efforts of a lot of people in our particular riding associations. I'm very humbled by the support that our teams gave us. Each candidate was supported by a team of dedicated volunteers. We were so fortunate to have so many new faces join us to support the efforts to keep us going. From door-knockers to campaign managers to those in charge of snacks, our candidates each brought incredible people on board from their campaigns, from a diverse number of backgrounds, which is really the hallmark of the Yukon Liberal Party.

My campaign and every campaign was supported out of the core team from Whitehorse through our election readiness. We had our campaign chair, Moira Lassen; we had the campaign administrator, Carly Carruthers; the communications chair, Sunny Patch; we had Jason Cuning, Kathleen Smith, Renée Francoeur, Michael Curtis, and Dario Paola. The contribution of this core team can't be overstated. I want to thank them all. We all know the drill. Every single person in the Legislative Assembly knows all of the hard work done, from producing the materials to assisting the candidates, the work that they did with the candidates, guiding the volunteers, keeping up with the quick pace of the election period — endless work, tireless work. I don't think these folks slept.

My team in Dawson generously donated their priceless skills and their dedication, their endless hours as well, and I'm forever grateful to the crew of volunteers who worked very hard, every day, to make my re-election possible. I am especially privileged to know and to work with my core team in Dawson City, which included — there are too many people to name, but I'll name the core folks who were there every day: Sacha Marceau, Viki Paulins, Jody Beaumont, Cara MacAdam, and also our campaign manager, the tireless work of a very dedicated public servant who believes in democracy like no one else, Kyla McArthur.

I am also very grateful to all the candidates from all the parties. It is very hard to put your name forth for an election. It is a huge commitment, as everybody in this room can tell as well, and one that comes with great responsibility. To all teams, to all political parties, and to all their candidates, thank you very much for your tireless efforts — and to the families as well. There is a lot of onus and responsibility at home, that is for sure. I remember talking to the Leader of the Official Opposition about how his partner is now a single mom at home because of all the work that he has to do on the campaign trail.

With our candidates, they definitely worked very hard to reach all corners of the Yukon, and I was glad to participate in that work and to connect with Yukoners as well. What a privilege it is to be able to campaign not only in your own riding but in other ridings as well. Many thanks to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me into your community and to meet with some fantastic elders in your community. What an honour it is to talk to people like Danny Joe and others. Thank you for that opportunity.

All the communities that I got to visit — it is just an honour and a privilege. To hear the concerns from every riding is extremely important, and I appreciate the opportunity to connect with Yukoners from all different walks of life right across our beautiful territory. We have heard recognition of great accomplishments, appreciation for the progress that our government has made over the last four and a half years, and we also heard that there is a lot more work to be done.

Mr. Speaker, the new government has a new Cabinet. Several ministers are in different roles. We had an opportunity to do things differently, and we have an opportunity to do things better. There is a new member of Cabinet — no stranger to this House — and there are members of the former Cabinet who are no longer here as well. We welcome the contributions from the Member for Riverdale North, and we miss the voice of Pauline Frost at the Cabinet table as well. I want to thank Pauline for her work on behalf of the residents of Vuntut Gwitchin and of all Yukoners. She can be very proud of what she has accomplished over the past four and a half years. That is for sure.

I also want to thank former members — MLAs Ted Adel and Paolo Gallina — for their work as Members of the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. I know that they served their constituents well. To Mr. Adel, I wish him very well in his retirement. He will be spending an awful lot of time out in Tagish country. Hopefully he will be offering some rides on his

boat to some of his ex--colleagues, and I hope that the fish are biting for him.

To Mr. Gallina, I know that he will remain an active member of our community and I look forward to his continued contributions to the Yukon as well.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations to you on your election as the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun. I know that you have a strong connection to all of the communities in your riding and you will serve them very well — the work that you've done with sports, recreation, and youth, not to mention your work with First Nation governments as well. We have an amazing representative for all three communities in you in Mayo-Tatchun. Thank you for that.

I would also like to thank Janet Moodie from the bottom of my heart for her guidance, wisdom, and patience all through the course of the last mandate. As you know, she is retiring this week as my chief of staff, and there is nobody more deserving of a long, restful retirement after a truly exemplary career in the Yukon. Talking to her just the other day, she had the opportunity to work in so many different departments — every department that starts with “E” by the way — and then to have the opportunity to then come over and work as principal secretary and chief of staff as well. I don't know of too many Canadians who have had an opportunity like that. Really, the work that she has done for Yukon and public services is truly remarkable.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very honoured to serve as Minister responsible for the Executive Council Office and the Minister of Finance as well.

One of the most important aspects of the Executive Council Office is our work with Yukon First Nations through our Aboriginal Relations department — really a whole-of-government collaborative approach spearheaded through the Executive Council Office. Our government believes in the value of genuine dialogue. We've seen it work, and we're very committed to continuing to govern in partnership with Yukon First Nations, generating benefits and positive outcomes for all Yukoners.

In 2016, relationships with Yukon First Nations were strained, to say the least. The Yukon Liberal government made a commitment to do better and to work in collaboration with First Nation governments. We delivered on this commitment and believe that it needs to continue because there are so many opportunities on the horizon when we all work together.

It was great to hear from the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin speaking about *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow*. We have amazing leadership that we can look to in the past. That document has really saved us through the Yukon Forum many times. When we had elders from the Yukon Forum tell us that we have no choice to go back, that we need to work together — that's an extremely important message coming from our past leaders and some of our elders who are still around, but also some who have passed. It really is the glue that binds. We do not have a choice; we have to work together.

Our first legislative work as a new government was, in the 34<sup>th</sup> Assembly, to establish a National Indigenous Peoples Day as a statutory holiday in the Yukon. First Nations, as you know,



Mr. Speaker, are the heart and soul of Yukon communities, and this day is the chance to recognize their diversity, the diversity of accomplishments, and ongoing contributions to the vibrant cultural and historic fabric of the Yukon. We have made respectful relationships a priority by re-energizing the Yukon Forum, and we have met the chiefs consistently since being elected.

We have had significant success through the work of the Yukon Forum. Some of the memories, as we look and reflect on the work that we did in the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly and the work that we have done through the working groups of the Yukon Forum — we have created a more united and strategic approach to engagement with the federal government when it comes to governance here in Yukon. We signed an agreement to clarify how resource royalties will be shared under chapter 23 of the final agreements. We signed a memorandum of understanding on heritage management which marked the Yukon as the only jurisdiction in Canada that has co-owned, co-managed historical sites with self-governing First Nations. Most recently we finalized and began implementing the very progressive Yukon First Nation procurement policy.

Mr. Speaker, strong partnerships have seen the Yukon become the first jurisdiction in Canada to create a comprehensive murdered and missing indigenous girls and two-spirited people strategy, entitled *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice*. The strategy outlines 31 action items that will guide our response — not just the territorial government but our collective response to the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. It was created in partnership with MMIWG2S+ survivors, families, indigenous women's organizations, First Nation governments, municipalities and other stakeholders, including the Government of Canada and the RCMP.

We also signed the *Final Recommended Peel Watershed Land Use Plan* and increased First Nation involvement in Yukon school governance through funding the Yukon Native Language Centre, the First Nations Education Commission and the Chiefs Committee on Education as well.

We have built a strong foundation, Mr. Speaker, and we need to keep on moving forward. Looking forward, our government is making commitments to implement Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy with our partners. We will implement our representative public service plan, *Breaking Trail Together*, an inclusive public service plan that is built around barrier-free recruitment, culturally safe and responsive work environments, and training opportunities as well.

We will continue to incorporate Yukon First Nation traditions and practices into the Yukon Legislative Assembly. We have only just begun there, Mr. Speaker. Supporting the establishment of a Yukon First Nation school board — we will continue to support that — the amazing work that has been done with the previous minister and is now being passed on to the capable hands of the new minister.

We will continue to fulfill our commitment to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. We will also continue to work actively to uphold, to support, and to promote the spirit and intent of the self-governing agreements

and to work together to identify and to resolve roadblocks. These are hard conversations, but we are so lucky and fortunate to have built a rapport with leadership in the First Nation governments across the Yukon. Sustaining and further developing these vital relationships with Yukon First Nations is the only way to an even more productive future for everybody in the territory, and we must build that future together.

While different departments will take the lead on many of these items, the Executive Council Office, of which I have the privilege of being minister, will play a coordinated role in all of them. Our government has made it a priority to foster positive, respectful relations with First Nation governments because these relationships are absolutely essential to all Yukoners. Working together doesn't mean that we are always going to agree. It means that we will continue to show up, and we will continue to put in the sweat equity together and we will work on these issues.

Our government will also continue to work with the Government of Canada, with municipal governments, and with the provinces and territories right across the country. We are looking forward to working with our neighbours in Alaska as well, continuing down that road, and hoping for better days as the pandemic starts to hopefully have a bent curve.

With regard to the Department of Finance, we are very proud of our record of financial management. The Financial Advisory Panel, in my first year as Premier, outlined the situation that we inherited from the previous government, and I am proud to say that we have set a more stable course for our financial future. We have solidified the leadership at the top of the department, and I am confident that we are on the right fiscal track.

COVID-19 has been a challenge from a fiscal point of view, but our good work with the Government of Canada has ensured that we have weathered a financial storm better than most. On the economic side, we are one of only two jurisdictions to see positive economic growth in 2020.

Mr. Speaker, we are leading the country in the fight against COVID-19. Our government has kept Yukoners safe throughout the pandemic and will continue to do that good work. Our vaccination rates are very impressive. Our economic programs to support businesses and individuals have been very successful. They lead Canada, and we are able to give the lift to businesses during relief, and now, as we turn toward recovery and see some lifting of restrictions, we will continue to be there for the private sector.

It was interesting to hear from Dr. Theresa Tam over the weekend, Canada's chief public health officer, referring to Yukon as — and I quote: "... a model that we're all looking towards for success..."

Our government is proud of this success and very grateful to the public servants who worked very hard through the pandemic and to Yukoners for doing their part for keeping the territory safe.

Our government is ready to keep the good work going and tackle what is ahead of us and we are working to improve the lives of all Yukoners. We have committed to working with all MLAs in the Legislative Assembly. We provide strong, stable

leadership that Yukoners deserve by working together. Yukoners have sent a clear message that we need to all work together for the benefit of the territory and that's what we are committed to doing.

We need steady leadership to get us onto the path of recovery. This year's budget sets the path to recovery and makes life more affordable for Yukoners, and I look forward to debating it later on this week. We also look forward to continuing to work with the NDP.

Both of our teams appreciate the need for a stable government to guide the Yukon right now. They have signed an agreement with us that achieves that stability, and we absolutely look forward to collaborating on areas that we can agree on and vigorously debating on those ones that we can't. There's plenty of room for a positive contribution and for more partnership working together, and I hope to see that from both opposition parties.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to support the Speech from the Throne that is before us, and I'll keep my comments to that for now.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the privilege and honour to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

**Mr. Dixon:** I'll be very brief in speaking to this. I know that time is winding down and that there is interest in bringing this to a vote. I'm very much interested in that as well.

First of all, let me say that I'm very pleased to be back here in the Legislature. It has been some time — about five years or so — since I was able to stand in the Legislature and speak, so I'm pleased to be back on the floor of the Legislature and doing this work that I enjoy so much.

I won't speak too much about some of the riding-specific or family-specific things that I know many members address in these types of speeches, because I know that we're very cognizant of the time and the fact that we need to deal quickly with this material to accommodate what we feel is a very short Sitting for this amount of volume before us.

Tomorrow we'll see a budget tabled, and we'll have an opportunity to make responses to that budget, and at that time, my colleagues and I will have the opportunity to respond and discuss — in some cases, our first speeches before the Legislature — but we'll also address the type of riding-specific and personal matters that sometimes come up at those points.

The throne speech is obviously one that has been defined largely by the confidence and supply agreement between the Liberal caucus and the NDP caucus. So, obviously that is much of what I think we'll be debating and discussing over the coming days — whether it's the content of the agreement itself, the policy matters therein, or some of the governance structures and new ways of decisions being made that will be undertaken by this government.

One thing that I did want to note — I know that there has been a lot of discussion about one particular word, and it is the word "coalition". I know that it's something we have mentioned a few times. I know that both the Liberals and the NDP have been unwilling to sort of characterize their agreement as a coalition. On our side, we have been explicitly

referring to the agreement as a coalition. I think that it's something I wouldn't mind explaining.

Of course, as some members — and some members have bristled at the characterization of this as a coalition, but I think it merits some discussion.

I think that the reason they're uncomfortable with the term is that in Canadian politics over the last several years the term has become somewhat associated with illegitimacy. That's largely a function of what happened in 2008 with the proposed coalition back then and the subsequent prorogation crisis, but I think it's worth noting that there's absolutely nothing illegitimate about a coalition and that coalitions are quite common in parliamentary democracies around the world. In systems that use proportional representation, they're very much the norm.

Our use of the term "coalition" is not meant in any way to convey any sense of illegitimacy. Rather it's just my view of the correct assessment, based on the weight of the evidence of the agreement, and my assessment of what the nature of this agreement is. Because I view the current arrangement fitting the criteria of a coalition, that's why I use the term.

One of the ways that I've arrived at this determination is by looking at precedents. Obviously, those range on a spectrum from minority governments — we've typically seen these at the federal level. We have one right now in Ottawa where Prime Minister Harper holds a minority in Ottawa —

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

**Mr. Dixon:** Trudeau; sorry. Prime Minister Harper held one too. Prime Minister Harper and Prime Minister Trudeau have held minorities over the past decade or so, I should say.

Then we've seen more integrated caucuses — something like the Horgan-Weaver agreement in 2017. That's an agreement, of course, that will be very familiar to members of this Legislature because it, in many ways, informed the creation of the 2021 agreement between the Yukon Liberals and the Yukon NDP not only in its structure but, in some cases, it's almost identical and so it's quite clear that it was used as the basis upon which to build the agreement that we have here.

Then, of course, you see more fully blended governments. In Canada, those have been few but, looking back over history, you have the 1985 Peterson-Rae government, you have the 1999 Romanow government in Saskatchewan, and then, of course, at the federal level — we haven't seen one in a very, very long time, although we have seen one in the United Kingdom relatively recently with the Cameron-Clegg agreement of 2010. In that Cameron-Clegg agreement, I think that there is an actual agreement that we can review and determine some of the similarities.

So, when I look at those, I note a few important features. First of all, we have a written formal agreement between two parties that outlines how they will cooperate to allow the formation of a government in a situation where neither has a majority of seats — a hung parliament or a hung legislature — which is the situation that we find ourselves in today. That's not the case in any recent minority situations, but it's certainly more integrated than typical minority governments. We wouldn't see that, for instance, in Ottawa. There's no written

agreement for a minority government. There wasn't with Prime Minister Harper or with Prime Minister Trudeau over the past several decades.

The second — we note that the agreement sets out a fairly deep level of consultation on major policies and files. It outlines shared priorities and commits governments to act on a number of different key policy areas. This is clearly what happened with the Horgan-Weaver agreement back in 2017. I don't quite think that the Horgan-Weaver CASA quite meets the threshold for what I would characterize as a coalition but, as we've seen, this agreement between the Yukon Liberals and the Yukon NDP goes quite a bit further than that. The agreement goes further in a few very important ways.

In section 3 of their agreement — of the current CASA — we see a commitment to joint policy implementation whereby a minister and an NDP MLA will jointly make decisions, give direction to public service, and interact with the public service on a regular basis. We've also seen it tied specifically to two specific policy areas, but those policy areas are extremely broad ones. The *Putting People First* report, for instance, is comprehensive in nature and applies across the entire department — and then, of course, the energy file as well. In any event, it requires that they allow members of both parties to work directly with the civil service.

Another feature of this is, of course, the legislative coordination. There's the structure of the standing committees. That's normally the realm of all Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, but instead, in this case, we have seen the two parties come together and unilaterally make decisions on behalf of the Legislature. Things like the length of the Sitting or the structure of committees — those are normally things that are determined by the Legislative Assembly in its whole, so that's obviously a departure from that and a new level of integration between the parties that we haven't typically seen.

Finally, of course, there's the fact that the resourcing — the NDP will receive additional staff and resources from the Government of Yukon provided directly to the NDP caucus. That's quite unusual and impressive — as far as I am aware — for government resources to be funnelled directly to an opposition party. That's obviously a new level of integration and one far beyond what we've seen in other jurisdictions.

Then there's the creation of a secretariat, a specific government department or subset of a department, tasked with managing this agreement. So, when I look at the weight of that evidence, when I look at the balance of those criteria, I find that this agreement can be placed far beyond the Horgan-Weaver agreement and close to, but probably not as far as, the Cameron-Clegg coalition. So, ultimately, I believe that the most accurate characterization of this agreement is a coalition, and that's why I've used the term.

I just thought that would be useful to explain why I've used the term. I know that some have bristled at the term and have been uncomfortable with it, so I thought I would describe it. It's not an indication of illegitimacy or anything like that; it's simply something that I feel could be an accurate characterization of the agreement.

As has been noted, the throne speech focuses heavily on some of the policy material in the CASA — whether it's things that were campaigned on by one party or another or not — but ultimately, I think what's important is that there are things in the throne speech that we can certainly support. There are things that I have said publicly; there are things that even appeared in the Yukon Party's platform that exist in this agreement. So, it's not that we oppose this in its entirety. There are gems of positive policy in this.

One example that has been cited a few times has been the on-the-land substance abuse and treatment program or facility. That is something that appeared in all three political parties' campaigns and platforms, and that's something we're excited to see. The throne speech included a commitment to streamline YESA. There were a number of things in that throne speech that were fairly positive.

That being said, there were obviously a number of areas where we disagree. I don't want to rehash the debates and differing policy positions that we took throughout the election. Obviously, there is a difference of opinion on the government's proposed early learning and childcare program. Our view on that is that the program they have put forward isn't exactly universal and in fact leaves behind a number of Yukon families and children. The alternative that we offered was well-debated during the election, so I don't think that we need to re-hash it now.

Things like rent control and things like the minimum wage — these are issues where we disagree with the government and with some of the material in there. On the matter of rent control, we obviously proposed a motion earlier today to debate it in an urgent or pressing way through a motion under the Standing Orders which would allow that. There will be more opportunity as this session progresses for further debate on those types of issues.

On the minimum wage, obviously we asked a question today, and I know that has piqued the interest of some members and their responses. I should note that our issue with that particular policy area isn't the minimum wage itself or what the actual rate is — much of it is related to the process and the fact that the business community in this territory has become accustomed to a process by which the Employment Standards Board makes recommendations about the setting of the minimum wage. In this particular case, that process has been thrown out and replaced with the political direction coming from the confidence and supply agreement.

I don't need to — like I said, I don't want to go through issue by issue and lay out the differences of opinion. We will have the Legislature for that, we will have debate for that, and we will have Question Period for that.

I will be the last speaker from the Yukon Party on this. We do look forward to bringing it to a vote and moving on to matters of importance such as the budget. As I have noted, part of the reason for our expeditious approach to this throne speech is that we feel that the Sitting that we are currently in is going to be fairly short — and indeed too short. That means that it is incumbent on us as the Official Opposition to manage our time very carefully, and so to allow for more fulsome debate and

scrutiny of the budget, we want to expedite our response to the throne speech.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move on. I will close by, as well, welcoming the Chair and thanking my colleagues for the opportunity to be here. It is a pleasure to be back in a new role in the Legislature but a role here in the Legislature nonetheless, and I am excited about the opportunity. We will have much more to say about my riding, my family, and all the opportunities before us with regard to collaboration when we have a chance to reply to the budget speech tomorrow, I understand.

So, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to bringing this particular issue to a vote.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, as well as my congratulations for your new role here in the Legislative Assembly. Thank you for addressing us yesterday and the fantastic words that you shared with us. What an absolute pleasure it is to have an opportunity to return here to the Legislative Assembly for the 35<sup>th</sup> session. Of course, again, what an honour to be here on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and to be here representing the good people of Porter Creek South.

Like all of us in the Assembly, we have the opportunity to do this work because of the support of our family members, friends, and acquaintances, and those who rally around us and support us to take this on. Although this job, this task, and this responsibility do come with lots of challenges and with sacrifices, those around us make the biggest sacrifices. So, I would first like to thank my wife and my two sons, Taylor and Calum — my wife, Delilah — for the opportunity to continue to do this work. We had discussions about working in a public role like this many, many years ago — back in 2009 — when I was looking to make the decision to run for Whitehorse City Council, at that time, knowing that this would lead to sacrifices for all. That has been the case over the last number of years, and I again want to thank them for their support through this election this spring.

Also, when I think back to preparing to do this work — again, I'm lucky enough to have parents whom I can still speak with and reach out to. I know that a lot of my colleagues have lost folks over this last mandate, and my heart goes out to them and the words that they shared today — but again, to my mother, Johnena, and my stepdad, Jeff, as well my dad, Dr. NG Pillai, and his wife, Bernice. I use wisdom that has been passed on from my grandmother and grandfather, Mary and Lauchie MacLellan, in every Sitting.

I think about the lessons I was taught by them — hardworking individuals who grew up on the land as farmers — my grandfather as a miner, and then going back to farming in his retirement. They were people who were very, very close to the land and I have learned so much from their respect for the place they called home. Those lessons were so important in the last Sitting, especially when taking on different responsibilities, such as mining or forestry or agriculture and the lessons they taught me.

I also would like to thank Father Stanley MacDonald who is still a spiritual advisor, I'll say. He is the priest that baptized me, married me and still, to this day, works at St. Xavier University, and I reach out to him still for advice. Over the period of this past campaign, he was kind enough on a couple of occasions to speak with me and give me the opportunity for us to pray.

As I move on, I want to thank the individuals who worked around my campaign. There are a number of folks from Porter Creek South, and I just cannot thank them enough for the support — walking, knocking on doors, prepping, doing all the absolute work that one has to do — early mornings, late nights. When I think about those folks, I just cannot say enough. Kim Stavert, my advisor here in my work, but she also ran my campaign — what an incredible individual who gives so much to Yukoners in her work and is such an absolutely talented individual. I was lucky enough to have her guidance — along with a number of other individuals who gave so much. Really, that is why I have the opportunity to come back here. It's because of them.

A long-time politician, who was a conservative MLA and later a mayor, taught me a lesson a long time ago, and it was quite simple. He said, "Don't ever forget, if you're elected, that the seat that you sit in does not belong to you — it belongs to the individuals from that riding. It's their seat; you just get an opportunity to sit there while they let you."

Again, I say to the people of Porter Creek South: Thank you so much for the opportunity to serve you. I do not take that lightly, and I know that I have an obligation to represent all folks in the riding, no matter what their political views are. I cherish the opportunity to work on behalf of all folks there.

When I think back on the last number of years and the work with Porter Creek South, I also have to put out a big thank you to the Porter Creek Community Association. The association has done an absolutely tremendous job. They have just elected a new executive. This week, they have their annual general meeting. As I have said before, it's primarily a group of amazing folks in the community — primarily moms in the neighbourhood — and just talented individuals who work tirelessly on behalf of everybody in the community.

Working with them to upgrade the Pine Street park is something that has really improved people's quality of life, and the children in the community — we see lots of smiles on their faces, as they continue to use that space, as well as the traffic crossing — that was key. It was something that was — for probably over a decade, folks wanted to see those changes in their community — and this morning, just driving down 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, coming into work and seeing little ones having that opportunity to take their bikes to school now that there's a safe way for them to cross. It definitely brings a smile to my face, when I see those lights finished and children in grades 1 and 2 — young individuals who have the opportunity now to, in a healthy manner, travel to school, and their parents feeling very comfortable that they can do that in a safe manner.

It's very important — as my colleagues have done — to thank other individuals before we conclude today — and I'll have an opportunity to share a bit more — but I'll start with just

thanking the folks at Energy, Mines and Resources. What an amazing group of people I had the opportunity to work with across the entire department — two deputy ministers, Mr. Stephen Mills, and then Mr. Paul Moore —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

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

*Debate on motion re Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne accordingly adjourned*

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

**The following sessional paper was tabled May 12, 2021:**

35-1-2

*Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees (May 12, 2021) (Speaker Harper)*