



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, March 23, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONSTITUENCY</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO</b>
<b>Hon. Sandy Silver</b>	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
<b>Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee</b>	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier  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	Government House Leader 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 and Gender Equity 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, March 23, 2022 — 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. Clarke:** In honour of the tribute to National Impaired Driving Prevention Week, we have in the gallery to welcome today Jacquie Van Marck, president of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Yukon branch; Cory McEachern; Inspector Rob Nason of the RCMP; and Carlos Sanchez-Aguirre. We welcome those individuals to the gallery.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** I am absolutely delighted to introduce the students of the Porter Creek Secondary School Rainbow Room. We have with us today Grey Spicer, Peyton Still, Cloud Kunnizzi-Njootli, Ana Thompson, Maddi Miller, Nari Barker, Azaria Hogan, Akira Thorsteison, Jamie Trimble, Kiersten O'Brien-Jackson, Emily Graham, Arianna Charles, Luka Eaton, Evey Moore, and, of course, their leader, Jason Cook. Please give them a warm welcome.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any tributes?

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of National Impaired Driving Prevention Week

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I rise today in the House to recognize National Impaired Driving Prevention Week — a week that we use to educate Yukoners and all Canadians about the consequences of impaired driving due to alcohol, drugs, fatigue, or distraction.

As we know, these choices destroy lives, tear apart families, and impact the health of our communities each and every day. Although great strides have been made over the years to reduce impaired driving, it continues to be a deadly problem in our territory. It appears that no matter how much we talk about it, we continue to hear stories of lives cut too short.

It likely comes as no surprise that impaired driving is an issue in the Yukon. The numbers tell a story that is worse than you might think. Since the beginning of this year, 26 Yukoners have had impaired driving charges laid against them, and it is only March. In 2018, Yukon had a rate of impaired driving convictions over five times the national average. That is five times more than anywhere else in the country, but it is not just alcohol that is causing these numbers. Cannabis, prescription

medication, and other mind-altering substances, as well as distracted or fatigued driving, are also contributing to the driving tragedies that we see every day.

The excuses we hear are made far too often: "I'm really not that tired"; "I won't get caught"; "There's no one on the roads"; "Driving high is not so bad"; or "I just need to quickly check that text."

But, today, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the many Yukoners who do not make these excuses, and I want to recognize the many who make a safe choice — the choice to be a designated driver, the sober driver, the choice to plan ahead, to offer their friends a ride home, call them a cab and stop them from getting behind the wheel, the choice to put their phones on silent and to keep their eyes on the road. These people are our real heroes, but I want to stress that we all have a role to play.

The tragic consequences that result from impaired and distracted driving are 100-percent preventable. It is simple: If you drink or take drugs, do not drive. If you are tired and fatigued, wait until you are rested to drive. If your friend is impaired, don't let them behind the wheel. If you hear your phone beep, wait until you can pull over to check.

Preventing impaired driving and distracted driving is everyone's business and everyone's responsibility.

*Applause*

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize March 20 through 26 as National Impaired Driving Prevention Week here in Canada.

This important week marks a national effort by government, law enforcement, and community organizations across the country to raise awareness around the impacts that impaired driving can have on individuals, families, and communities. This campaign centres around education and prevention. Injury or death resulting from impaired driving is entirely preventable. We're all aware that the decision to get behind the wheel after drinking alcohol or using drugs is one of the worst decisions that a person can make, yet it continues to happen.

Keep an eye on your friends and family members and make good, conscious decisions ahead of time to ensure that you have a safe ride home. Don't drive tired and don't drive distracted. Fatigue and distraction could lead to accidents as quickly as alcohol or drugs. Educate your kids and, most importantly, be there for them if they think they might need a ride home.

I would like to give our thanks to our local law enforcement for the work that they do year-round to ensure that our roads remain safe, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving does an exceptional job educating the public about the importance of choosing not to drive impaired.

While these organizations continue to do good work in education and enforcement, personal responsibility remains to be the number one preventive measure against impaired driving.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to add our voices to the serious issue of impaired driving in Canada.

The first time I was hit by an impaired driver was in the middle of the day during my final year of high school. My best friend, Joel, owned a 1979 Jeep Cherokee, and this vehicle was huge. No part of it was plastic. We were driving from Porter Creek toward downtown on Mountainview Drive when Joel said, “Oh no, she’s going to hit us.” I remember the impact; it rattled every part of me. I remember Joel asking if I was okay and us getting out of the passenger side of the vehicle because his side was entirely destroyed. There were ambulances called, and the other driver was surprisingly unhurt, but due to her level of impairment, maybe that shouldn’t have been such a surprise.

I remember my dad arriving on the scene, panicked because he had initially passed the accident scene going in the opposite direction with my little sister in the car. Joel and I were lucky. We walked away mostly unhurt, physically at least, and I cringed at oncoming traffic for months after that.

So, this wasn’t the only or the last time that I was hit by an impaired driver, and I’m sadly not alone. I am, however, lucky to have walked away, but everyone isn’t so fortunate. Impaired driving, whether by alcohol or drugs, continues to kill or injure more Canadians than any other crime. Illegal drugs, cannabis, and over-the-counter and prescription medications can all impact your judgment, coordination, and reaction time behind the wheel. It’s important to know that even one drink of alcohol can reduce your reaction time, blur or double your vision, impair your reflexes, and alter your attention span. Anytime a person gets behind the wheel of any kind of vehicle, they have a responsibility to themselves and others to do so in a safe and responsible manner.

Just a reminder, according to federal data in 2019, Yukon was second only to Prince Edward Island for the highest rates of impaired driving in the country — certainly not something to boast about but definitely something we can all change.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling a document from yahoo!life that shows that, unlike Conservative leader Candice Bergen, the Yukon Party leader favours cooperative deals with the New Democratic Party.

**Mr. Cathers:** I have for tabling a series of documents regarding the Dawson City recreational centre. The first of these documents that I will table is a copy of the Dawson City recreation centre functional program and feasibility study developed by Republic Architecture Inc. indicating that an option entitled “Dome Road Option 1” is estimated to cost \$54 million. I would also note that the document is printed under the Government of Yukon logo.

The second document I have for tabling is a letter dated July 23, 2021 from the project team for the advancement of a new Dawson City recreation centre indicating that the project

team, which includes the Yukon government, is favouring a recommended option with a cost of \$54 million.

The third document is the minutes from the City of Dawson City Council from August 31, 2021, indicating that the city council voted unanimously in favour of Dome Road option 1, as identified in the Republic Architecture feasibility study, with a cost estimate of \$54 million.

The fourth document I have is a letter dated February 28 and signed by the Minister of Community Services regarding the Dawson City recreation centre, sent to the mayor of Dawson and the Chief of the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation, and indicating that the Dawson recreation centre is estimated to cost as much as \$81.2 million.

The fifth document I have for tabling is a copy of Hansard from March 21, 2022, in which the Minister of Community Services told the Assembly that he had budgeted only \$21 million for a new Dawson City recreation centre.

Last but not least, I have for tabling a copy of the Government of Yukon’s most recent five-year capital concept, which indicates that the budget for the new Dawson recreation centre is only in the range of \$18.2 million to \$25.5 million.

**Ms. Tredger:** I have for tabling three letters. The first is from the Yukon Association of Education Professionals to the members of the Yukon Legislature, which indicates their support for the *Act to Amend the Education Act*.

Secondly, I have two letters from the Porter Creek Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance to the current and former ministers of Education. The first is dated November 5, 2019, and the second is dated February 15, 2022.

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

## PETITIONS

### Petition No. 11

**Mr. Cathers:** I have for presentation today a petition signed by roughly 60 Yukon citizens, along with a letter from me, indicating that this petition is endorsed as containing proper matter for consideration by the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

The petition itself reads:

To the Yukon Legislative Assembly:

This petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT for the past two years the government of Yukon has followed policies in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic that have caused hardship to many Yukoners; and

THAT the public during this time has not been allowed to ask meaningful questions of the government resulting in the perception of being ignored;

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Yukon government to have an open, civil, mediated forum between the public and government representatives such as the Premier and the Chief Medical Officer of Health so that questions can be asked regarding the rationale behind the pandemic policies of the past two years, and to hold this forum before June 30, 2022 in a large venue such as a school gymnasium.

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

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports creating Internet redundancy in the Yukon by allocating \$27 million toward the Dempster fibre project this year.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to provide the criteria for prioritizing the replacement or renovation of Yukon schools to school councils, the CSFY, and the First Nation School Board, including the information gathered by the Department of Education about building age, seismic mitigation considerations, operational needs, and enrolment growth.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to provide a public update on the status of the Shallow Bay rezoning initiative, which began in 2014 and has not been completed.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to provide a public update on the status of the development of a local area plan for Fox Lake, which began 10 years ago and has not been completed.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Environment to recognize that closing the Braeburn solid-waste transfer station would result in an increase in fossil fuel emissions, as residents and local businesses would be forced to drive about an hour-and-a-half round trip to the Deep Creek transfer station.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to ensure that the Braeburn, Silver City, Keno, and Johnsons Crossing solid-waste transfer stations are kept open to support local residents and businesses.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow recommendation 4 of the final report of the Task Force on Acutely Intoxicated Persons at Risk by creating a sobering space for acutely intoxicated individuals in downtown Whitehorse.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow recommendation 4 of the Beaton and Allen report by creating a sobering space for acutely intoxicated individuals in downtown Whitehorse.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Safe at Home Society supportive housing project

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I rise today to speak about the conversion of the High Country Inn into supportive housing, which will be owned and operated by the Safe at Home Society.

Collaboration with our partners has been key for the success of the project to date. These include the Government of Canada, the City of Whitehorse, the Yukon Housing Corporation, the Safe at Home Society, Northern Vision Development, and others.

In particular, I want to thank the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Through the northern carve-out national co-investment fund and the rapid housing initiative, \$15 million in federal investment funds has been provided to renovate the former High Country Inn. This will now add a total of 55 supportive housing units into our community.

The Yukon Housing Corporation will further support this project through \$1 million in funding under the housing initiatives fund. As well, under the municipal matching rental construction fund, the corporation will match future development incentives provided by the City of Whitehorse.

As we know, homelessness has far-reaching consequences. It implies not just a lack of housing, but also a lack of safety, comfort, and a sense of belonging. These are all things we, as humans today, need to thrive.

For those who experience homelessness, normal life activities are replaced by the struggle for day-to-day survival. Beyond its fundamental human costs, homelessness negatively impacts our economy and society more broadly. The costs are borne directly by our emergency services, health care institutions, and criminal justice system.

Solving homelessness is complex. It will take time and effort from all communities, but projects like this one by the Safe at Home Society are a step in the right direction.

The Safe at Home project will offer housing alongside client-centred services. It will provide urgent, stable, secure, and supportive housing for women, youth, and indigenous Yukoners who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. As part of delivering on *Putting People First*, the Yukon Housing Corporation participates in the re-housing of clients through the coordinated access table by name list. This is a tool used to identify individuals experiencing homelessness and to facilitate a coordinated re-housing case management approach.

This coordinated access system brings consistency to the way people experiencing homelessness are accessing housing and services. But, as we know, there is more work to be done as we support our vulnerable sector and the Yukoners who need supportive housing solutions. In line with the foundational goals of the Yukon Housing Corporation's community housing

program, now more than ever, we continue to work with our housing partners to provide housing with supported services. Through collaboration with our partners, I know that we will continue to work toward meeting the pressing needs across the housing continuum.

Finally, a special thanks goes to Kate Mechan, who has worked hard in a number of roles over the years to support our vulnerable sector and in particular now as the executive director of the Safe at Home Society. I commend her vision and tenacity on moving this supportive housing project forward and making it a reality.

**Ms. Clarke:** Salamat. I would like to thank the minister for re-reading his press release that announced this project on January 31. I do need to thank everyone who is working both on the front lines and behind the scenes to address the housing crisis here in the Yukon. Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree that everyone deserves to have a safe place to call home. As the old saying goes, “Home is where the heart is.” It is so important that they have a safe space to call home. With housing prices at record high levels and rental units coming off the market in the Yukon, thanks to the NDP-Liberal rent control policy, it makes finding a home that much more difficult.

That is why we were pleased to see the Safe at Home project come forward earlier this year. The project, which sees the refurbishing of the former High Country Inn, will see 55 supportive housing units available in Whitehorse. With the current housing crunch, these units will hopefully help.

Can the minister provide an update on how the facility will operate when completed? Has an operational plan been worked out since January’s announcement? Can the minister update us on the renovation work? Have supply chain issues delayed the renovations? Also, with so many groups involved, can the minister tell us who will be picking up the tab for any cost overruns?

The Yukon Housing Corporation has also committed to participating in the development of a community safety plan and consultations with the surrounding neighbourhood with respect to this project. Has that work begun yet? Who has the corporation met with and when? Can the minister now update us on the total amount of funding going toward this project from both CMHC and the Yukon Housing Corporation?

Finally, when will the facility open its doors to residents? Salamat po.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start with a big thanks to the Safe at Home Society, their staff, their board, and in particular Kate Mechan for the incredible work they have done in working to take this from an idea and bring it to this point in the process. This could not have happened without their commitment to the project.

As well, thanks need to be given to the many funding arms of the federal government, the City of Whitehorse, and the Yukon government. We have always believed and supported that housing is a human right — now more than ever. We are all too aware of the housing crisis that Yukoners are facing. From the homeless to those who are precariously housed, from

those facing legal evictions without cause to those trying to find an affordable rental, too many Yukoners face housing difficulties.

This project will provide not only housing to Yukoners, but supports to ensure the success of tenants. We look forward to the opening of these 55 units and congratulate all the individuals and funders involved in this commendable project.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will start off just providing a little information for the questions from the Official Opposition. From what I’m aware of, the operational plan is still underway concerning the partners that may be brought in, specifically for the first floor of that space and other opportunities for revenue generation with a commercial kitchen and potential rental space. I know that is still being worked on, and that’s updated as of this week.

Again, update on the work — I know that what I have been informed is that they are very comfortable with the work that is going forward. There is nothing flagged at this point concerning anything with supply chain disruption. I think that we’ve seen some of those numbers balance out, at least for wood and other products, but it is something we should be taking as a concern and certainly when we look at the Ukraine/Russia crisis and things like aluminum wire and other things that may not be specific to this particular project, but we probably will see cost escalators.

Again, as the note said that we provided today, right now we are at \$16 million. That looks like the number at this particular point. There have been no concerns from the company or from the organization on this going forward.

They are looking to the fall of this year to have people in those spots. I would offer up that Safe at Home is a fantastic organization. I really don’t want to speak on their behalf about the particulars of their operation. I am sure that the member opposite could reach out to Kate Mechan, and she would give a complete breakdown of what they are working through and what they are thinking. Again, we will make sure that we try to organize an opportunity for all MLAs to go and visit that space in the near future.

I appreciate the comments and the support from the Third Party on this particular project. We do feel that it is very important. Again, when we take a look at the situation in the Yukon, we do know that, since 2016, our territory’s population has grown by over 12 percent. We do know that the national average of growth was about 5.2 percent. We do know that, over the past five years, construction of private homes in the territory has increased by about 12.9 percent, so we are happy to see that, but we are still in the situation of playing catch-up from years before.

We need to continue to work with municipal and federal partners, First Nation governments, and local organizations. I think that this is something that we have been illustrating through our endeavours and our work. We have been putting those good partnerships to work. Projects like the High Country Inn will offer safe and dependable housing alongside client-centred services. For many of us who have had the opportunity to work with vulnerable youth, seeing that opportunity for

individuals — when they are what we call “aging out” — having some stability and support services is something that is incredibly important.

By providing homes for Yukoners who are experiencing homelessness, at the same time, this is increasing access to the support they need. This will help to ensure that they are successful in their journey to getting into a better situation and off the street.

I would just like to touch on the work of the previous minister and the work that continues. Again, we are pretty excited. This is a big year coming up. We support the development of the upcoming 84 units in Normandy Manor, an independent senior building with support services. The Safe at Home project is 55 more units, which we think is great. Challenge Disability Resource Group’s Cornerstone — I had the opportunity last night to drive and look at some of these projects that are coming to fruition. Again, 53 new homes for Yukoners this spring and the 47 homes here at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell, as well as Boreal Commons, with 87 more units.

There are a lot of good solutions on the way. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share today.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Dawson City recreation centre

**Mr. Dixon:** Yesterday, when we cited documents and letters regarding the Dawson City rec centre, the Minister of Community Services launched into a bizarre and aggressive partisan attack, trying to deny and dismiss the facts, but the facts are indeed the facts. In July 2021, the project team, made up of municipal and territorial representatives, recommended to the City of Dawson that they accept Dome Road option 1. Dome Road option 1 was estimated at \$54 million.

In August 2021, the City of Dawson voted unanimously in favour of this option. Then, this week, the minister told us that there is only \$21 million budgeted for this project, and we also see that same amount in the five-year capital concept. So, what we and many Yukoners would like to know is: Where will that additional \$33 million come from?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It’s my pleasure to rise again this afternoon to talk about all the recreational opportunities that we’re providing for Yukoners throughout the territory. We believe in recreation; we believe in investing in recreation, investing in our communities, and that’s what we’re doing.

The member is, again, unreliable with the facts. I didn’t say — it wasn’t a partisan attack. I was basically pointing out that the members opposite are sowing chaos in many places that is really unnecessary. It’s wholly unnecessary, and I think it does Yukoners a disservice because all it does is create doubt and friction at a time when people are looking for certainty. People are in very turbulent times. I think it behooves us as leaders in the territory to provide Yukoners with the right information.

The right information is this, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to building a rec centre in Dawson as soon as possible, perhaps as early as 2026. I have spoken to the mayor and council. We have provided letters — I’m glad to see some

research being done. Letters have been provided to the City of Dawson — absolutely — and the letters say that the cost — and I’m happy to talk about this more on further questions.

**Mr. Dixon:** In all that chaos and discord, I’m afraid we didn’t hear an answer.

These are the facts, Mr. Speaker. Last summer, the project team, which included representatives from the Yukon government, recommended the \$54-million option for this rec centre. Last August, Dawson City Council voted in favour of this option. Last month, the minister wrote a letter saying that the project could cost as much as \$80 million, and that letter was tabled just a few minutes ago, but this week, the minister has said that he only budgeted \$21 million in the five-year capital plan for this project.

Now, the minister may not like these facts, but they are the facts. So, can the minister tell us, simply, how this project is going to be funded?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** What the facts are, in very short terms, Mr. Speaker — are this. We have committed to building a recreation centre in Dawson City, a long-awaited recreation facility — because frankly, when I toured the recreation facility in Dawson, it’s really awful. You wouldn’t believe the gaps in the boards, and the work that the maintenance staff is doing to try to keep that facility operational for the citizens in Dawson goes above and beyond.

Why are they doing that, Mr. Speaker? Because 10 years ago, at least, the opposition promised to build a recreation centre for Dawson, but did they build it? No. they didn’t get it done. They dug a hole in the ground, made a promise, and didn’t fulfill it. Well, Mr. Speaker, we are committed to building a recreation centre in Dawson. We are committed to doing it by 2026 if possible. That’s sort of the deadline we’re pushing for.

Yes, indeed, the preferred option by the City of Dawson is the Dome Road option. The estimated cost is \$54 million. That’s the type of estimate that it is. It can wildly vary. It could be \$30 million-minus; it could be \$30 million-plus, but we’re going to get it done, Mr. Speaker. We’ll find the money to get that facility built.

**Mr. Dixon:** I think the minister’s explanation there is pretty loose with the facts as well.

The fact remains that there’s a gap between the most recent cost estimates that the minister just indicated for the rec centre in Dawson and what the minister has budgeted so far. Now, when you have a gap like that, there are only so many ways that the \$33 million can be dealt with: Either you get more money from some combination of municipal, territorial, and federal governments or you scale the project back to make it more affordable.

So, it’s clear that they are going to have to do one of these two things, Mr. Speaker, so what we’re asking is: Which of those two things is the minister going to do?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Again, you can cherry-pick details and that’s really what the agents of chaos across the way are trying to do.

Honestly, if they had actually provided the full context of the letter, we did say that the project could cost, at this very

early stage, up to this amount. We also said in that same letter that we would work with the City of Dawson to deliver a project that met the needs of the community in a cost-effective manner. So, we are working with the City of Dawson very closely to make sure that we have a good facility for that community that has waited far too long. Actually, Mr. Speaker, had it been built when the opposition actually agreed to build it, we wouldn't be in this mess and it would have saved Yukoners probably tens of millions of dollars. But they don't think that way, they don't plan that way, they never did a five-year capital plan, and they didn't follow through on their commitments.

The feasibility study completed by Dawson and funded by Community Services reviewed three options and two potential locations. We are now working with the municipality on the option that they have chosen. This engagement included public meetings and online surveys, and more public discussions will occur once we get further along in the planning. We are still planning. There is lots to be written on this piece, and the agents of chaos across the way would be better just to celebrate the fact that we are building recreation centres across the territory.

#### Question re: Electrical rebate

**Mr. Hassard:** So, yesterday, the Minister of Economic Development explained the reasoning behind the introduction of the \$150 rebate on electricity, which has been notable because it was explicitly copied from the program introduced by Alberta's Premier. Yesterday, the minister said — and I will quote: "Certainly, some feel that's in place because the current leader of the Conservatives in Alberta is under fire and going into a very significant leadership review in the short term." Well, that sounds familiar, Mr. Speaker. The Premier here in Yukon has been lagging in the polls, his popularity has tanked, and he is invisible in his own riding. Residents in the riding of Klondike are asking for the fuel tax to be waived as well.

So, will the government agree to waive the fuel tax for this year?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am happy to rise to talk again about this important initiative. We announced it late last week. We have worked with the chamber of commerce. They approached us to talk about it. We worked with our utilities. We looked for a project here that was going to reach all Yukoners and support them across the board, including those who might not drive as much. It was all about trying to support Yukoners. We know that costs are going up. We know why that is — because of the war in Ukraine and that Russia has invaded Ukraine. We understand that prices are going up, and this is our work to support Yukoners.

I had hoped that the members opposite, the Yukon Party, would support this initiative. It is unfortunate that they don't, but I think that this is important — that we are supporting Yukoners. We developed this specifically to reach as many Yukoners and Yukon businesses to support them at this time.

**Mr. Hassard:** Just so that the minister understands, we have never been opposed to the \$150 rebate for the electricity, but it is pretty clear from the Minister of Economic Development's explanation that he thinks the Premier would only bring in this type of policy if they were struggling in the

polls. It's also clear that they outright copied this policy from the very same Premier whom they criticized. We saw earlier this year that the Liberals have dropped to third place, and the Premier's popularity has tanked. So, it stands to reason that they did it with the same motivation. But when they're plagiarizing Alberta's plan to give the \$150 rebate, they forgot that Alberta is also waiving the fuel tax.

Will the Liberals also waive the fuel tax and give Yukoners much-needed relief from the rising cost of living?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** That was quite a tale that got woven.

What we're doing on this side of the floor is making sure that the policies that we put in place have the best impact for as many Yukoners as possible. As I stated yesterday, just a couple weeks ago in the member opposite's riding, Mayor Jack Bowers spoke about the challenges with the pressures that have been put on by the conflict abroad and the pricing pressures that it has put on inflation. One of the things that was stated was the fact that, yes, we have seen fuel costs go up, but there are a lot of people on fixed incomes in that community that the member opposite represents. Those individuals, whether or not we touch anything on a fuel tax, are still going to have to pay their electric bill. In this particular case, we want to make the best impact to the most Yukoners. This really has people on a fixed income in mind. We think it's good policy. That's why we're doing it.

Certainly, other than that, if the members opposite want to — yes, we know they are big fans of the Premier from Alberta. They brought him in to speak as a mentor to them at their AGM. That's not where we're going. We're just trying to make sure we can help as many Yukoners as possible.

#### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Order, please.

Specific Rule 1.c. — I just want to remind all members that cellphones are not allowed during Oral Question Period. I'm just giving all members a notification. Thank you.

**Mr. Hassard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It certainly didn't seem like a coincidence that it was the Minister of Economic Development who made these comments about a Premier having his leadership challenged in responding to so-called "boutique policies". I'm sure that the minister has been thinking about that scenario a lot lately.

Unfortunately, while the government clearly copied the \$150-rebate program from Alberta, they only copied a small part of Alberta's program.

In addition to the electrical rebate, Alberta is also waiving their fuel tax for the year; whereas the proposal the Liberals have brought forward is only \$3-million worth of relief for Yukoners, the relief program that the Yukon Party has proposed — the waiving of the fuel tax — is \$9 million worth of relief. That's \$9 million back in the pockets of Yukoners.

Waiving the fuel tax will help reduce food prices, construction costs, and so much more. It's the right thing to do. Will the government agree to actually do both?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that anyone keeping notes will find that, at this point, we are in about two and a half weeks. What we heard from the Leader of the Official Opposition was



that we would see a brand-new approach by the Yukon Party. I think that we have now seen that this has quickly changed. Hopefully, the members opposite will take the cues from their leader across the way. We are not quite seeing that, but we will continue to work on behalf of Yukoners. We will continue to make sure that the policies that we put in place are policies that hit as many Yukoners as possible, support those individuals — specifically on fixed incomes. We will continue to watch what is happening with the business sector and make sure that we have programs in place that will help them the most.

Certainly, we will continue to watch sectors like tourism. Even though we see some great signs of recovery, we will make sure that we monitor and adapt like we always have. We will continue to be with Yukoners, as we have over the last two years, in a way that has led the country with the programs that we have had. I appreciate the support that we have had all the way from the Premier and my colleagues on this work.

**Question re: Department of Education sexual orientation and gender identity policy**

**Ms. Tredger:** Back in 2019, the students from the Porter Creek Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance wrote a letter to the then-Minister of Education. The letter outlined a number of concerns that the students had with the department’s sexual orientation and gender identity policy. The minister never responded to the students’ concerns.

That policy is now 10 years old, and it continues to leave students vulnerable and lacking appropriate supports. Harassment and discrimination against LGBTQ2S+ students in Yukon schools are still commonplace and often go unaddressed. The government’s LGBTQ2S+ action plan committed them to updating this policy by June of this year.

Could the minister provide these students with an update on where these changes are at and if she will meet her deadline?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question, and I acknowledge the students here today in the Legislature. Thank you for coming.

The work around LGBTQ2S+ inclusion has been work that I have undertaken since coming into this position and being gifted the portfolio for the Women’s Directorate, now the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, and work that I have taken very, very seriously. We’ve done a tremendous amount of work.

I know we’re going to get into some detail around that this afternoon. But going to the specific question around the sexual orientation and gender identity policy for schools, which is dated back to 2012, to support students who identify as LGBTQ2S+ students — or related to or allies of — we are working to ensure that all Yukon schools follow this policy and that all students are treated with the respect they deserve.

We’re updating this policy as part of Yukon government’s work to modernize and improve services and policies for Yukoners in the LGBTQ2S+ community. I will continue to build on my answer as we go forward.

**Ms. Tredger:** In the minister’s action plan, she states that she follows a “nothing about us without us” approach. That’s an admirable intent, but I’m not sure that has been the

case. The students at the PCGSA sent a second letter to the new minister on February 15 of this year. Thirty-six days later, the students have not heard back. This is after the minister told them to call her anytime if they needed anything.

In a beautiful display of solidarity, queer and trans students at Porter Creek Secondary are worried about their fellow students at other schools who have faced backlash from administration for promoting queer and trans activities within their school. I know that the minister has been made aware of these situations.

Can the minister tell students what steps have been taken to protect and support LGBTQ2S+ youth in all Yukon schools?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I’m happy to rise again and speak about this important topic. It’s very important to me. As I have stated, I have remained very committed to the work. When you talk about the action plan for LGBTQ2S+, it’s not my action plan; it is Yukon’s action plan. It is an action plan to change the culture, really, within our government services and the work that we do but for the Yukon as well. It’s the first time it has ever been done.

We did the first consultation on LGBTQ2S+ in the Yukon, and I was honoured to release that plan with our partners in July. One of the things — the principle that we have adopted is “Nothing about us without us.” That certainly has been my approach and our government’s approach. All Yukon schools follow the sexual orientation and gender identity policy. Are there some issues? Yes, there are.

I remain committed — I will continue to build on this. I just spoke with the children outside the Legislature, telling them that I am looking forward to coming to their class soon.

**Ms. Tredger:** In the LGBTQ2S+ action plan, in the foreword, the minister said — and I quote: “We acknowledge that so often, changes do not happen simply due to the goodwill of the government but through direct community action and hard-won challenges to unjust legislation and procedures”.

So, I hope that the minister knows these students need more than goodwill. They are having to challenge her department’s unjust procedures. The action plan commits her to evaluating the SOGI policy and partnership with students, educators, and the LGBTQ2S+ community. Time is running out to meet the June deadline, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister commit here and now to working in partnership with students, educators, and the LGBTQ2S+ community to update the SOGI policy ahead of the next school year?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the supplementary question. I think that I have been very clear today around my commitment as the Minister responsible for both Education and the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, our commitment to the action plan — to achieve inclusion in our territory. This is really important work that we take very seriously, and we are very committed to ensuring inclusion in Yukon and particularly in our schools.

I am very committed to seeing through the action plan. There is a specific section — and I know that we are going to get into a lot of debate around that today and we are going to

have some really specific discussion around a bill that actually is at the heart of this.

So, I am happy to — I am looking forward to meeting with the students at Porter Creek Secondary School and with the other gender and sexuality alliance group at Vanier at another time. I am looking forward to including all of the actions in our work going forward.

**Question re: Flood mitigation impact on Schwatka Lake float plane operations**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** This year, Yukon Energy has announced it will be lowering Schwatka Lake again to help prepare for potential flooding. While we are glad to see Yukon Energy taking action to mitigate flood potential, lowering Schwatka by 95 centimetres in April will have a real impact on float plane operators who use the lake.

These float plane operators are important to the ongoing operation of both the tourism and mining industries and need support to help recover from the economic challenges of the pandemic. One solution the float plane operators have proposed is dredging areas in the lake to improve the access for float planes.

Will the Government of Yukon work with the affected businesses to find a solution to address their concerns and allow them to continue to operate?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Actually, this past week, Yukon Energy had written a letter to the float plane operator folks and explained that they were going to continue to do this work to lower Schwatka. They haven't done it yet this year. They discovered that last year when they did it actually changed the peak of the flood by dropping it by 45 centimetres, which is huge. That's within their water licence.

Last year, I met with the float plane operators, and Yukon Energy did as well. This year, I have started conversation. I met with the president of Alkan just last week at the Premier's meeting at the Yukon Chamber of Commerce. We're in dialogue with them. I have reached out to the mayor of Whitehorse to begin that conversation, and I have conversations with colleagues going on about ways in which we can try to be supportive.

I think that it's important to note that the City of Whitehorse manages the float plane base. It's not the Yukon government, but we will work in support to try to assist with this work. I'm happy to let you know, Mr. Speaker, that the work is already underway.

**Question re: Mining industry greenhouse gas reduction targets**

**Mr. Istchenko:** The Liberal government has stated that they will establish an intensity-based greenhouse gas reduction target for the Yukon's mining industry by 2022.

Can the Minister of Environment tell us what consultation has taken place with the mining industry on these targets?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What I can say is that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Department of Environment are working very closely on all of our work around *Our Clean Future* to shift our energy economy

and make the territory more sustainable on our goal toward reducing our emissions by 45 percent by 2030.

The mining intensity targets issue is more my lead — or the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources' lead. There has been quite a bit of work around working with industry on this issue. For example, several weeks ago, I sat on a panel discussion that was hosted by the Yukon Chamber of Mines with the mining industry to talk about mining intensity targets and how we are going to work to transition the mining industry off of fossil fuels, along with all of our economy.

I am happy to answer further on that, but what I can say is that we are engaged very directly with the industry.

**Mr. Istchenko:** When was the last time the Minister of Environment met with anyone from the mining industry to specifically discuss these targets for their industry? Can the Minister of Environment share any of the documentation that was provided at those meetings?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will just try to emphasize again that the lead for this is Energy, Mines and Resources. I think I just said that. We are working to establish the mining intensity targets. I have said that I have met with industry. In fact, it is a conversation that comes up at many meetings.

What I will do is try to get the member opposite the transcript from that forum that I just described and where we were working. It was a public forum. It was really well done. I am happy to try to get that information across to the members opposite. That work is underway. We are very committed to it.

What I want to say is that I have seen from industry that they, too, recognize that we need to shift off of fossil fuels. I want to thank them for their dedication toward that same goal that we all share as Canadians, as Yukoners, as northerners to shift off of fossil fuels.

**Question re: Mining legislation**

**Mr. Kent:** Last summer, the Yukon government announced in a joint news release that a private mining company and the Ross River Dena Council have partnered "... to acquire and assess the development potential of the Vangorda Lands within the traditional Ross River Kaska Dena territory."

At the Energy, Mines and Resources budget briefing last week, we were told that legislative changes are required before this acquisition can take place. Can the minister tell us what legislation needs to be changed, when consultation will begin on those changes, and when we can expect it to be introduced in the House?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** This is a very specific question. I thank the member opposite for this very specific question. I'm happy to look into what will be technically required around regulatory or legislative changes. I would be happy to bring back a legislative return or a ministerial statement to talk.

But what I do want to say is that we are committed to responsible development of the Yukon's mineral resources in a way that protects the environment and respects the rights and traditions of First Nations and benefits all of us — all Yukoners. We have built a strong and respectful government-to-government relationship with Yukon First Nations to foster

reconciliation. I can say that just this morning, I happened to attend one of the meetings on successor legislation — government to government with all of the First Nations as we work toward updating our one-century-old legislation. That is strong work and it is ongoing.

I am sorry that I don't have a specific response for the very specific question, but I'm happy to get that information for the member opposite.

**Mr. Kent:** As I mentioned, I did bring this up at the EMR briefing last week. So, it's unfortunate that I appear to have caught the minister off guard with this question.

However, in 2018, the former Deputy Premier consulted on changes to the *Quartz Mining Act*. According to the government website, the changes would — quote: "... allow First Nations to stake quartz mineral claims on specific land that is withdrawn from staking. The changes will also provide opportunities to remediate some of Yukon's abandoned Type II mine sites." This sounds similar to what's required in this instance. So, after considerable opposition to these changes from First Nations and various stakeholders, the former minister did not table any amendments.

So, are the proposed changes from 2018 the same ones that the minister intends to bring forward for the Vangorda deal, and if not, what will be different?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Where I will go with this, Mr. Speaker, is — I want to thank the folks who are working on the successor legislation right now. I had a conversation with one of the folks from Energy, Mines and Resources, and I asked him today: "How much of your work is now involved in dealing with changes to legislation?" He said, "All of it. Don't stand too close or it will be all of your work too."

We talked about the dedication of the public service from the Yukon government and from the First Nation governments. We talked about the importance of working with industry and other stakeholders like environmental organizations, and we talked about the great work that this group is doing on successor legislation. Again, it's a very specific question that is being asked. I am happy to get back to the member opposite. I hope that he can allow me the chance to just ask for that specific information to make sure I get it absolutely right for him.

What is important for Yukoners to know is that we are moving forward with successor legislation, working directly with First Nations, and that is a huge change for this territory.

**Mr. Kent:** For the minister, I wasn't aware — nor were my colleagues aware — that there would be legislative changes required for this transition of these claims to take place. It was offered up by officials at the EMR briefing last week. Again, I'm somewhat surprised that the minister isn't aware of the issue.

It was also confirmed at least week's briefing that a court process is necessary for these claims to be acquired. Can the minister provide us with details of what that court process will entail? Can it be initiated before the legislative changes are done? How much money has the government budgeted for these legal proceedings?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** What I can do is help the members opposite to see where we are right now in the process with this

amazing partnership that we're seeing with the Ross River Dena Council and mining executives. I hope that the members opposite are supportive of this particular initiative because it's really great to see partnerships with First Nations and mining companies, which are extremely important to us on this side of the Legislative Assembly.

We do know that the screening of the project has commenced. That's in my realm here. The Executive Council is currently considering commitments and comments that have been submitted through the public comment period. Now, we've submitted our comments during the public comment period on February 15 of this year. Our comments were based upon conversations about heritage and those resources in there that are key to the First Nations — fish, surface and water quality. To date, the proponent has responded to five information requests.

As we move our way through the screening of this project, I would hope that, at some point, the members opposite would embrace the fact that things have changed in the mining industry in the Yukon since their approach. Gone is the abeyance of litigation and in its place are these types of partnerships, so I hope that they relish that opportunity to also embrace these amazing partnerships.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

#### Motion No. 288 — *adjourned debate*

**Clerk:** Motion No. 288, standing in the name of Ms. Van Bibber; adjourned debate, Ms. Van Bibber.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Today I rise to speak to a motion that I brought forward asking the Government of Yukon to create a Yukon celebration, as the federal government has dropped the royal ball on this special year. 2022 marks the Platinum Jubilee for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's 70 years on the throne.

Now, 70 years may seem like a lifetime for some. Well, it does represent a span of much change in our world to digest and understand. That is certainly a long time to hold one job. It is a uniquely historic accomplishment — an accomplishment that no one in these Chambers will see repeated in our lifetimes.

But it is not only the 70 years on the throne that merits respect; it is the way Her Majesty has presented herself as the sovereign of the Commonwealth that has garnered respect and admiration from so many. It is the manner with which she has conducted her affairs, the grace with which she conducts herself, and the dignity she displays that has earned her so many fans.

A bit of history about those 70 years — in 1923, Albert, who became King George VI, married Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon. They had two daughters, Elizabeth and Margaret. Albert was most likely never going to be king and his children would just live a royal life, but this was not to be.

Albert's brother, King Edward VIII, had decided only a year after he was crowned King of the British Empire that the love of his life — a twice-divorced American socialite, Wallis Simpson — was more important than the throne — scandalous. Of course, due to royal protocols, for a King of the Church of England, this would never be accepted and could not happen.

By abdicating his duties, his brother and next-in-line Albert became officially King George VI and was known as “the Reluctant King”. His first-born daughter, Elizabeth, immediately became the heir presumptive.

When World War II broke out, King George and his family refused to leave England for safety, as suggested by the Prime Minister. The family stayed with the British people and his popularity rose. The family was praised for staying behind and facing the same dangers that all British citizens faced. He had every means to move out of the country to safety, and no one would have questioned it, due to his station.

The Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, at least wanted the two princesses to be taken to Canada to be safe, and the Queen Mother said: “The children won't go without me. I won't leave without the King. And the King will never leave”.

The Academy Award movie *The King's Speech* was all about this time. The King had a stammer and any public speaking was painful. He was coached and learned methods to overcome his speech impediment and was finally able to do his radio addresses to his subjects with a little more ease.

Now, the King and Queen made a trip to Canada and the United States in 1939 and were well received. Mr. Speaker, I am a collector, and one of my collections relates to this visit. I have plates, spoons, mugs, and much more to commemorate this particular visit — the first time a monarch visited Canada. It is not the value in the collection but searching for the treasures.

King George was a heavy smoker, and he died at an early age of 56. Next in line to the throne, Princess Elizabeth, was visiting Kenya with her husband, Philip Mountbatten, at the time. On February 6, 1952, news rang out — “The King is dead — long live the Queen.” We knew then that King George VI had passed and his eldest daughter, Princess Elizabeth, had become Queen Elizabeth II and the reigning monarch for the Commonwealth. Her husband eventually became the Duke of Edinburgh.

As was the custom, the next monarch could choose a name. When asked, Elizabeth said, “Why, Elizabeth, of course. What else?”

However, it was not until June 2, 1953 that the coronation ceremony took place. It was a historic event that was televised despite the objections by many to this modern invasion of the dreaded TV cameras. Elizabeth already knew the value of reaching her subjects and allowing them to see the crowning ceremony. Thousands would watch and listen by radio. It was breathtaking in grandeur and tradition.

As part of the Commonwealth, Canada has ties to the royal family since we became a nation. Love them or not, the royals have been a part of all of our lives and we are part of the historic fabric that weaves our countries together.

Through her seven-decade reign, Her Majesty has made 22 visits to Canada. The first when she was still Princess Elizabeth representing her father in 1951. That was a 33-day trip. Speaking of her first view of Canada, she stated — and I quote: “I am sure that nowhere under the sun could one find a land more full of hope, of happiness and of fine, loyal, generous-hearted people.”

During a 1957 visit on October 14, Queen Elizabeth read the Speech from the Throne. It was the first time in Canadian history that a sovereign opened our Parliament. It wasn't until 1977 that she did so again.

Her one visit to Yukon was in 1959 during a 45-day trip visiting 10 provinces and two territories. The royal entourage made it to Whitehorse and our sleepy little town was on the royal map. However, not feeling well, she did not do a robust tour, but Prince Philip made appearances on her behalf.

I remember as a child the vision of a tall man walking with hands behind his back, and all the town's “who's who” were walking with him. I'm not sure if our dusty, post-gold rush, old-building Dawson City impressed him very much.

Her Majesty's last visit to Canada was in June 2010. She never made it back to the Yukon, but other royals have — most recently, the second in line to the throne, Prince William, and his wife, Kate. The Official Opposition leader, the MLA for Copperbelt North, was Minister of Economic Development at the time and he hosted part of the tour with the couple.

But that event showed how the royal celebrations can bring communities together. Businesses decorated their storefronts like is done in Britain during the jubilee parades. This will occur in Britain this June, and bunting in colours will be displayed everywhere.

Here in Whitehorse in 2016, residents packed the streets to meet, shake hands, and even just catch a glimpse of the famous royal couple, Prince William and Kate. For those Yukoners like the Official Opposition leader who had a part to play in hosting, the experience was once for a lifetime.

Our niece's son, Evan Lafreniere-Clark, made a presentation to the royal couple with the book *I Was Born Under a Spruce Tree* by JJ Van Bibber. He stole the show with his speech, and Prince William, who was not scheduled to say anything or speak, was so impressed with Evan that he did say a few words. Mr. Speaker, it was a proud family moment and I'm sure one that Evan will never forget.

Prince Charles visited Whitehorse and Mayo, Yukon in 2001. Along with the Commissioner of Yukon, Jack Cable, and me, as Administrator of Yukon, I had the pleasure of greeting Prince Charles at the airport on his Yukon arrival. It was a pleasure to welcome him to our territory as a born Yukoner.

As most know, Canada operates under the Westminster-style parliamentary system that has charted our democracy since our founding in 1867. We practise this system right here in our Legislative Assembly of the Yukon. Queen Elizabeth II is the sixth sovereign since Canada's Confederation on July 1, 1867.

When the Fathers of Confederation retained the monarch system of government, we became the Dominion of Canada. July 1 was known as Dominion Day — a day of celebration.

This name held true until the Constitution was brought home in 1982, and in 1983, Dominion Day became known as Canada Day.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up during a time when we rose every morning in class to sing *God Save the Queen*, and her photo was front and centre in every classroom. It taught us some very important lessons that have lasted a lifetime — routine, respect, and honour for our country and our head of state. There is a real fascination by society of all celebrities, and the royals are right up there. They are actually at a different level. There has been a global fascination and obsession with all things royal, even if one is not fond of the system as it is today. People comment on dress, food preference, and, of course, scandal. The need to know every minute detail knows no bounds, it seems.

Unfortunately, the paparazzi have made a living from getting their hands on any juicy information, true or not, surrounding any member of the royal family — no matter how distantly they are related to Her Majesty. This fascination has created some cynicism around the royal family. If 2012 to 2016 was the peak for royal family popularity, as Prince William and Kate Middleton married and refreshed the global celebrity for the family, the past few years have been strained with scandals or hardship — perhaps warranted and perhaps inflated due to paparazzi scrutiny.

Last year, Prince Harry and Meghan Markle departed the royal family in a public display and an appearance on *Oprah* that cast aspersions on the royal family. Only months later, the Queen lost the love of her life, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

They were married for 73 years. One commentator noted that — and I quote: “It was the importance of the solidity of that relationship, of their marriage, that was so crucial to the success of her reign...”

Just this January, the Queen stripped her second son, Prince Andrew, of his titles after the conclusion of court proceedings in the United States where he was accused of sexual assault. I can only imagine the toll that affair may have taken on her. But through these tumultuous recent years, the Queen has remained steady and stately. She has conducted herself with the same grace, dignity, and respect that merits our admiration and thanks. It is important that her conduct during her reign is remembered and honoured.

In 1969, the Duke of Edinburgh wanted the Queen to allow a film crew access to their daily lives to show the people that they were quite a normal family. The Queen, who was unsure, finally agreed, and she was right: It backfired. The film was shown perhaps five times and now has been archived forever. Most people could not relate to their lifestyle.

Many have watched the series *The Crown*, the historical drama based on historical facts, with a script of what could have transpired in the royals' lives. It has drawn a huge audience and created much chatter. The series — for those who watch *The Crown* and who wait impatiently for the next chapter about their lives in some period of history — but some of the royal members are not happy with the portrayal or script, because although the conversations are fictional, many believe what they see and hear as gospel. Viewers, especially these days, can

be fickle and inconsistent on what they want to believe, but Her Majesty weathers it all.

Throughout her life, she has risen above the fray and continues to represent herself, her family, and her Commonwealth with dignity and grace. As the head of the House of Windsor, she always has the interest of her family at the front of mind to protect them, if possible.

From her sister, Margaret, and her scandals to the very public divorces of her children — Anne, Charles, and Andrew — she faced the world without us seeing a flinch. Strife seemed to peak with the horrifying death of the “people’s princess”, Diana, Princess of Wales. Diana was Prince Charles’ ex-wife and mother to the “heir and the spare,” William and Harry. The public waited for a message from Her Majesty, and when none came, they rebelled. They said the Queen had no feelings and was not giving their princess the proper respect. No one seemed aware that the Queen’s main concern was her grandsons, but she finally realized she was out of step and quickly travelled to London to make a public statement and appearance. Again, she did so with grace and dignity, and she was forgiven.

The movie with Helen Mirren — who did an amazing portrayal depicting this story in the 2006 major motion picture titled *The Queen* — it seems this story struck a chord with moviegoers around the world, as the film brought in \$123 million at the box office — probably the value of just one of Her Majesty’s crown jewels. The actress who played the Queen was already a Dame when she starred in the hit movie. Helen Mirren was bestowed the honour after her lengthy career.

So, through the movies, television, radio, and now social media, over her 70 years on the throne, you can say Queen Elizabeth has certainly fulfilled her leading role, and she has reached the significant plateau — 70 years as the Queen. And now, at age 95, Her Majesty still has all her faculties that have served her, the British people, the Commonwealth, and the world for all this time.

She does want to continue her work, as witnessed as recently as a few weeks ago. The Queen unfortunately had come down with a bout of COVID — not fun for anyone, even for a Queen; however, just a few days after recovery, she was photographed meeting with Canada’s Prime Minister. The duties continue if you are Her Majesty. It’s a quality certainly to be admired.

Beyond the obvious pageantry, the Crown functions as a safeguard for rights and freedoms, especially under special circumstances. It is part of our heritage and tradition, as well as our democratic practices.

Both the Monarchist League of Canada and the Royal Canadian Legion are so unhappy with Canada’s response to this historic time for the Commonwealth that they have taken the time to publicly voice their displeasure with the non-action from the current federal government.

Just think of the time frame, Mr. Speaker — from the 1950s to the 2020s and how society has changed, both for better and worse, and Queen Elizabeth has been there to witness and change with the times as best as she can adjust.

Our government in the national capital, Ottawa, consists of the Queen, the Senate, and the House of Commons. At the

provincial level, it is the Lieutenant Governor and the elected Assembly. In the territories, each has a Commissioner and an elected Assembly.

The mace bearing a crown that the Sergeant-at-Arms is responsible for in this Chamber is the symbol of the legitimate right of the Legislature when in session to sit under the authority of the Crown.

In October 1987, Queen Elizabeth said — and I quote: “The Crown represents the basic political ideals which all Canadians share. It stands for the idea that individual people matter more than theories; that we are all subject to the rule of law. These ideals are guaranteed by a common loyalty, through the Sovereign, to community and country.”

I think everyone can get behind those words.

The current Governor General, Mary Simon, is our Queen’s representative in Canada. She was recently appointed and is the first indigenous Governor General. She resides at Rideau Hall, with a secondary residence at the Citadelle in Québec City.

Each province has a Lieutenant Governor appointed to represent their region of Canada on behalf of the Queen and reside in appropriate provincial government houses. In the three territories — the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut — a Commissioner is appointed by the Government of Canada to fill the role.

Territorial Commissioners are not direct royal representatives, but do the same duties as a Lieutenant Governor, such as read the Speech from the Throne, assent to bills, and sign most Yukon documents. Having had the pleasure of being Commissioner of Yukon from 2005 to 2010, it was amazing to see the interaction of all representatives from across Canada. I had the pleasure of serving with two Governors General: Her Excellency Michaëlle Jean and, later, His Excellency David Johnston. Both were wonderful people who started out with humble beginnings to serve in one of Canada’s most important positions.

I know that many Yukoners have had humble beginnings and have risen to achieve greatness in their own way. I believe that this motion speaks to the many Yukoners who wish to uphold the tradition of recognizing significant times in the life of the monarch. So, I lobby for the Government of Yukon to step up and help Yukoners celebrate. Each province is doing their own events, so why can’t we? I request that we strike a commemorative medal or made-in-Yukon pin. We could use this medal or pin to honour the many Yukoners who have made a contribution to our society in various ways.

Of utmost importance are the front-line workers who helped us these past two years during a very trying time of living through a pandemic.

As a collector, I personally know that memorabilia are lovely keepsakes and represent a time in one’s life that have significance and a special meaning. Of course, the Yukon government could not stop there, if they so choose. As 2022 is the year to celebrate this milestone, we are already three months in. Time is of importance to do something quickly.

As the federal government has definitely not done a good job of recognizing this special year, I request that the

Government of Yukon step up and be a champion for this motion for our Yukon people. If there is a thing or two that I do know, it is that citizens love ceremony and to be recognized for their work done for their community.

The second portion of my motion is a little more social, as I am sure that each community would welcome a contribution of any sort for them to host a community event — whether a tea, a street celebration, children’s games — the ideas are endless. This could be added to a celebration already happening or on the anniversary of Coronation Day, June 2.

It doesn’t have to be extravagant, but just something for people to honour the year in some celebratory way or in their own way. This is a prime opportunity after the pandemic and a gloomy couple of years to raise awareness of our head of state and to make some memories for all.

During the Queen’s last visit to Ottawa, she stated — and I quote: “During my lifetime, I have been a witness to this country for more than half its history since Confederation. I have watched with enormous admiration how Canada has grown and matured while remaining true to its history, its distinctive character and its values.”

Mr. Speaker, let us continue with making history and developing character for our youth and ensuring values are good and solid for the future. I believe that remembering the past, and understanding history and the links we have with other parts of the world, are to be celebrated. Let’s find the good in our Commonwealth country to celebrate this amazing woman who has seen so many changes in her time.

Every reference to history is both good and bad. Lately, our society tends to focus on the bad, so let’s look at the positives. Let’s try to be the society that initiates culture. I agree that there are events related to the Crown that are to be chastised. There are things about individual royals that we don’t much care for, but they are just people born into a position with not much choice for their destiny, especially the lead royals, like Prince Charles and now Prince William.

A community event honouring Her Majesty would give young Yukoners an opportunity to partially fulfill their dream by honouring Queen Elizabeth II. A recap of the years the Queen has celebrated with Canada: 1977, the Silver Jubilee, 25 years; 2002, the Gold Jubilee, 50 years; 2012, the Diamond Jubilee, 60 years; 2017, the Sapphire Jubilee, 65 years; and now the Yukon has the chance to add the year 2022 and the Platinum Jubilee of 70 years to this historic list. Let us put our focus on the longest reigning female monarch in history and on the service and duty given her whole life as a faithful servant: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

God Save the Queen.

**Ms. Clarke:** Salamat, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise today in order to speak to Motion No. 288. This motion urges the Government of Yukon to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty by creating a commemorative medal to be awarded to first responders and EMS and those who have made significant contributions to Yukon. It also urges government to provide funding to interested communities for

the purpose of holding a celebration or community tea in honour of Her Majesty's 70-year reign.

I would like to thank my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, for bringing back this motion today. I'm looking forward to the debate and hearing from members about their thoughts on jubilee medals. A jubilee anniversary marks an opportunity for celebration and a chance to recognize achievement and dedication from Canadians.

Seventy years on the throne is certainly a special accomplishment throughout history. It is a unique time to share our collective appreciation for Canada, and jubilee medals have become a valued tradition for celebrating the jubilee. We only need to look back and see the celebrations that took place throughout the Commonwealth when royals are involved to understand the excitement and positivity it can bring.

In the Yukon in 2016, the royal visit by Prince William and Kate Middleton was one of the most anticipated events for years. The community rallied around the visit and the celebrations of the couple's popularity. Along Front Street and Main Street, Yukoners packed the barricades to catch a glimpse of Will and Kate. Businesses along the streets were decorated with the traditional bunting that we will see in Britain on June 5 for their street parties. Our current Yukon Party leader was part of the group to greet the royal couple in Carcross, as they toured the area.

The visit had international attention and brought excitement to the Yukon. Embracing that community spirit and excitement seems like something we all could use right now, because it has been difficult for Yukoners and for Canadians. Over the past two years of the pandemic, Yukoners have courageously fought the pandemic, but Yukoners are tired. Like all Canadians, Yukoners are near their limits and are ready for the end of the pandemic. If there was ever a time when we needed a celebration, it is now, as we begin to emerge from the pandemic and the restrictions that have been a struggle for so many. That's why I found it so disappointing that the Government of Canada is breaking with tradition and will not issue a Platinum Jubilee Medal in 2022 as part of the celebrations.

I would like to take some time to share why I think this is such a mistake for Canada. This seems like a lost opportunity to mark the occasion and, most of all, to thank Canadians who have provided positive contributions to our country, for example, all those health care workers who have worked tirelessly to keep us healthy and safe. What better way to celebrate than to thank those who have worked so hard to keep us safe? Like everyone, they have struggled during the pandemic but continued to work countless hours on the front lines. All parties in the Yukon have continued to express our thanks to health care workers. We did so again yesterday, as the Minister of Health and Social Services brought forward another tribute to COVID, this time marking the second anniversary of the pandemic in the Yukon.

On March 9, the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission told this House that we have had five tributes on COVID and a further 136 questions during Question Period that have addressed the pandemic. We have had many

other motions, news releases, statements, or debates that shared Yukoners' appreciation for health care workers and front-line workers.

In fact, the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes shared many of those during his speech on March 9 this year. I think he had found that in the Legislature over the past two years, there have been five tributes on COVID. He noted that there have been at least 136 questions that have been asked, not even counting the supplemental questions. The member said that there had been at least two petitions that the government responded to, and he noted that he had also put forward a couple of motions. I might add that there have also been some joint statements and news releases from the government since I have been here, but I didn't track the exact number.

From what I have seen here, all parties have shared their thanks for the work done by health care workers during these debates. That's a lot of speeches; that's a lot of words. There have been many words of appreciation spoken over the past two years.

That's why I feel this Platinum Jubilee presents a different opportunity. It presents an opportunity for the federal government to put action to our words, to demonstrate our thanks with a special gift to those health care workers who have kept us safe during the pandemic.

We have spent so many words on appreciation. I do think that it is time we demonstrated that appreciation with a unique gift of jubilee medals — a truly unique gift that the federal government may never be in a position to award again.

In 2012, the Diamond Jubilee Medals were awarded to 60,000 to honour their contributions to Canada and achievements in their communities. The list included military, politicians, and famous and everyday Canadians who have made significant contributions to Canada or to a particular province, territory, region, or community within Canada.

Medals were awarded to a wide range of Canadians such as firefighters, police officers, community volunteers, and indigenous leaders. Canadian celebrities like Justin Bieber and Gordon Lightfoot received Diamond Jubilee Medals.

Mr. Speaker, some members of this Assembly might not be aware, but it was my great privilege and honour to be included in that group. I received a 2012 Diamond Jubilee Medal. Being a recipient of a 2012 Diamond Jubilee Medal is truly one of the best memories I have. There are other Canadians equally deserving over the past decade, and there are so many Yukoners and Canadians who have worked in health care over the pandemic and who equally deserve this recognition. That is why I feel that it is so important that we take this opportunity to thank those front-line workers who have done so much for Canadians these past two years.

I understand how the jubilee medal demonstrates Canada's and Canadians' appreciation for someone's work. However, I am hopeful that we might still see jubilee medals awarded.

I would like to take a moment to share why I think this motion is important to make that happen. By voting in support of this motion, Yukon MLAs could help reverse the decision of the Government of Canada, because a growing list of

organizations are lobbying the government, the Prime Minister, to award Platinum Jubilee Medals.

In February, the legion strongly opposed the decision to skip awarding jubilee medals and issued a news release asking the government to reconsider. The Monarchist League of Canada has expressed their disappointment as well. The Alberta government has decided to mark the occasion themselves with special events. Other provinces may follow.

So, perhaps there is an opportunity for the Yukon government to act if this motion does not yield results in Ottawa. However, it has been reported that Liberal backbenchers have organized and pushed to have the decision reversed; 96 Liberal MPs have written a group letter to the Minister of Canadian Heritage asking that they introduce a Platinum Jubilee Medal. Perhaps we will see the Prime Minister reconsider his stance and take advantage of this great opportunity.

It would be wonderful if we could add the unanimous voice of the Yukon Legislative Assembly to this movement. Deserving Canadians should not miss out because of a poor decision.

Before closing, I would like to add a few more points about the importance of recognizing the Platinum Jubilee, particularly for new Canadians. A jubilee also presents an opportunity to learn more about our country and our history and new Canadians do not always share the same understanding of our country and how it was created. New Canadians do not always share the same understanding about the British monarchy and the Queen's role in Canada. Of course, part of the process for citizenship is passing the citizenship test. Some of the details are included in the test and the citizenship information kit provides the details, but that doesn't mean everyone really learns it or understands. There are even jokes that many people who are born Canadian citizens couldn't pass the test. Well, maybe that shows why we need to take those opportunities to educate and help everyone.

New Canadians take the Oath of Citizenship and swear allegiance to the Queen, but not everyone understands what that means or it could even mean different things to them. For example, Filipinos don't have experience as part of the Commonwealth. We are not part of a constitutional monarchy like in Canada. The Philippines is a republic with an elected president. There is no royal family now, but the House of Habsburg in Portugal was considered the royal family while the Philippines were claimed as a colony and became part of Spain from 1521 until the revolution in 1898. So, for Filipinos, the commonwealth is a 10-year transition period in our history.

From 1935 to 1945, the Commonwealth of the Philippines governed in preparation for independence from the United States. It was disrupted during Japanese occupation from 1942 until 1945 but gained full independence from the United States on July 4, 1946. So, jubilee celebrations help share our history and can help everyone learn more about Canada.

Mr. Speaker, when I speak of history, I know that we must acknowledge both the good and the bad. Filipinos understand, from our history as a colony of Spain and during Japanese occupation, that there were bad parts of the history indeed, but

last week, we saw an example of that work as Governor General Mary Simon met with the Queen. The Governor General reported that she had shared how Canada needs to address the historical wrongs of the past — and I quote: "... change Canada's history books so that young people could learn what the real history is, without necessarily pointing fingers."

Residential schools are part of Canada's history. Canada is working to make sure that new Canadians understand that part of history. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action 93 in fact called upon the government to revise the new Canadian information kit and citizenship test to reflect a more inclusive history of the diverse aboriginal peoples of Canada, including information about the treaties and the history of residential schools. Action 94 called for the oath of citizenship to include a provision to faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including treaties with indigenous peoples.

The history of residential schools is now part of the Canadian citizenship test, but often new Canadians don't fully understand it or know what it means, but it is part of Canada's Commonwealth history and we need to acknowledge it. Even a celebration like the Platinum Jubilee provides Yukoners and Canadians a chance to learn more about residential schools and how the Commonwealth shares that history. We should embrace all parts of the jubilee tradition to include as many Canadians as possible.

I know that I have spoken for a while, Mr. Speaker, and I am nearing the end of my time. I will be wrapping up soon, but I would just like to add a few more points on the importance of Platinum Jubilee Medals. In 2012, over 200 Yukoners were awarded Diamond Jubilee Medals. I can say first-hand what an honour it was to be included. I am sure that most of those Yukoners were as honoured and privileged as I am to have been recognized for our work. The medals are a way for Canada to show that we appreciate the accomplishments and work of Canadians to make our country better. Sharing in a celebration like the jubilee helps us celebrate being Canadian. It helps us celebrate and share our history, both the good and the bad. But most of all, it helps us recognize the work and accomplishments that speak to our shared values as Canadians by thanking those who make us proud.

During the pandemic, I can't think of a more deserving group or a group that has made us prouder than the health care workers who have kept us safe. That's why I was so pleased to see my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, bring forward this motion. I think we can safely say that none of us will be seeing another Platinum Jubilee in our lifetimes; 70 years is a long time; 70 years as the Queen is rare. The accomplishment itself may never be repeated. I haven't even spoken about the Queen herself and how she has served as a symbol for so many around the world.

I think my colleague did a very good job of sharing the Queen and her influence, so I was happy to focus on some other important points in support of the jubilee medals. I do encourage other members in the Assembly to vote in favour of this motion.

In closing, I would like to also suggest that, if we do unanimously support this motion, we will consider having it



forwarded to the Canadian Heritage minister. Doing that could only help the efforts by other Canadians lobbying the Prime Minister to change his mind and present Platinum Jubilee Medals, particularly to such deserving Canadians. That would be a welcome change of heart.

I will leave my comments there for today. Salamat, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** My comments will be brief.

I rise to respond to Motion No. 288, brought forward to the House by the Member for Porter Creek North. Motion No. 288 urges the Government of Yukon, in recognition of the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, to celebrate with Yukoners Her Majesty's 70-year reign by: creating a one-time Queen's commemorative medal to present to deserving Yukoners and front-line workers in recognition of significant contributions that they have made to their community or to Yukon; and to provide funding to interested communities for the purpose of holding a community tea or celebration on June 2 in honour of Her Majesty's 70-year reign.

Mr. Speaker, our government will not be supporting this motion as the Commissioner of Yukon has already begun to plan celebrations for the 70 years on the throne of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Many of the details can now be found online at [commissionerofyukon.ca](http://commissionerofyukon.ca).

On June 2, the Taylor House will be lit with purple lights in recognition of the Platinum Jubilee, and on June 3, a beautiful jubilee garden will be unveiled. The garden, which will be created by a local gardening centre, will be filled with beautiful flowers and a plaque will be put up in recognition of the jubilee.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, on June 11, the Commissioner's jubilee celebration will take place at the Dawson City Museum from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Both the Commissioner and a story laureate will be in attendance, and there will be commemorative pins given away to Yukoners. Cake and refreshments also will be served. I assume that there is a good chance that there will be a tea included and choice of refreshments available.

Yukoners attending are encouraged to wear period costumes, but they are not necessary to attend. I certainly hope and encourage all members of this Assembly who may have an opportunity to take the trip to beautiful Dawson City and the Klondike this summer to join the celebration.

Furthermore, that's not all, Mr. Speaker. There will be a jubilee garden party held on August 13 at the Commissioner's residence in Dawson. In the coming months, more information will be available with respect to this party.

As well, there is an exhibit at the Taylor House of all the royal visits to the Yukon since 1954. This includes a collection of books on the monarchy that guests can view. This exhibition will be available until the end of the calendar year.

As well, each Friday, the Commissioner does a jubilee Friday post on their Facebook page where they provide links to special events such as the new jubilee stamp and other events that are happening in relation to the Platinum Jubilee.

I would also like to highlight that Platinum Jubilee pins are already available at the Commissioner's office, which is open from Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that our government supports the Commissioner of Yukon's work to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee and that, by supporting this motion, we would be removing our confidence in the Commissioner's ability to properly observe this important celebration. In fact, our government has complete confidence in the Commissioner and we look forward to the extensively planned Queen's jubilee celebrations to happen over the course of this summer.

In the coming weeks, Mr. Speaker, I have been informed that the Commissioner will release more details on their plans to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee, and I am sure that all Members of the Legislative Assembly look forward to seeing those additional details and the schedule of events, which will be provided in due course.

As well, Yukoners may have seen the jubilee flag outside the Legislative Assembly in February as a kickoff to the jubilee celebrations. Of note, Mr. Speaker, we understand from the Commissioner's office that it was Her Majesty's wish that medals not be designed for the jubilee, given the hardship and suffering that the pandemic has caused. Some late-breaking research from my support people indicate that in the Commonwealth, as of right now, two countries have created jubilee medals, and they are Jamaica and the United Kingdom, which, of course, is a little bit problematic right now because Will and Kate are receiving a bit of a frosty reception in Jamaica based on the complex relationship that the United Kingdom has with many Caribbean countries and the legacy of slavery.

This does not negate the fact that our government does not recognize this momentous anniversary. Of course, Her Majesty is the longest reigning sovereign of Canada and, by virtue of that as well, the first to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee. Of course, I do agree with the observations made by the Member for Porter Creek North and the Member for Porter Creek Centre about how our Queen, Queen Elizabeth II, has always discharged her duties with grace, determination, and unflappable resolve during the seven decades of her reign. I have no intention of going into the impressive detail that the Member for Porter Creek North went into and some of the detail from the Member for Porter Creek Centre, but we all know that her unflappable resolve occurred initially before she was Queen, in the rubble that was the Blitz of London and the Battle of Britain. There are iconic photos of her supporting Londoners during that incredibly traumatic time, and, of course, we also know that she volunteered and was a member of the British Armed Forces during World War II. That was even before she became Queen, so this side of the House and I are not disputing the incredible service that Queen Elizabeth II has provided to the United Kingdom and to the Commonwealth.

The Yukon Liberal Party is a little bit surprised that the Yukon Party has chosen this as the second most important item to put forward to the Legislative Assembly on a Wednesday. As I have indicated —

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

**Point of order**

**Acting Speaker (Ms. Tredger):** Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

**Mr. Cathers:** I think that the last comment by the Member for Riverdale North may be in contravention of Standing Order 19(j), which prevents someone speaking disrespectfully of Her Majesty or any member of the royal family. I would ask that you rule on that matter.

**Acting Speaker:** Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, on the point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I didn't hear any disparaging remarks toward the Queen. In fact, I think that the Member for Riverdale North has, throughout his presentation, been very respectful toward the Queen at all times. I think that he was pointing out that the members opposite chose this as their second most important topic to bring here to the Legislature.

**Acting Speaker's ruling**

**Acting Speaker:** This is a dispute between members. The Member for Riverdale North has the floor.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you. As I indicated in my prior comments, I have nothing but respect for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Although this is an important day for many Canadians across the country, I doubt that the celebrations are a top priority for Yukoners right now.

I know that Yukoners have many issues they would like our government to focus on, which of course include the climate emergency we face, mental health supports, critical infrastructure investments, and our ongoing response to the pandemic, to name a few. Instead, we are debating spending additional tax dollars on additional celebrations that are already being planned by the appropriate host.

I want to end by thanking the Commissioner of Yukon for her hard work to plan these celebrations and to ensure that Yukoners can meaningfully and significantly celebrate the Platinum Jubilee together. I look forward to the celebrations this summer, and I have full confidence in the Queen's representative and the Yukon's ability to successfully host them.

**Mr. Cathers:** I'm pleased to rise in support of this motion. I would like to thank my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, for bringing forward this motion urging the government, in recognition of the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, to celebrate with Yukoners by: creating a one-time Queen's commemorative medal to present to deserving Yukoners and front-line workers in recognition of significant contributions that they have made to their community or to Yukon; and providing funding to interested communities for the purpose of holding a community tea or celebration on June 2, 2022, in honour of Her Majesty's 70-year reign.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Member for Porter Creek North for her service as Commissioner of the Yukon and note that one piece of information people may not

be aware of is — an interesting side note to the debate is that hanging on the wall in our office is one of the orders-in-council appointing me to Cabinet signed by my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, back during her time as Commissioner of the Yukon.

I would like to talk about — beginning to rise and to speak to this motion — I would also like to acknowledge Queen Elizabeth II, particularly for her dignity and grace and her dedication and service to the Commonwealth. Even for those who may not personally be in favour of the monarchy, I would think and would hope that people would recognize her service to the Commonwealth, her dedication, and the very fact that she has dedicated her life to upholding the institution in the manner that she believes is appropriate.

I would note that, in stark contrast to most monarchies in history, this is a monarchy whose most defining feature, I would argue, is respect for democracy and democratic institutions, including the traditions within the British system, which has spread throughout the world through the Commonwealth and which dates back to the signing of the Magna Carta over 800 years ago. It has formed an important part of freedom and democracy around the world, including in countries such as the United States which, even while forming as republics — in that case, leaving the British system — they founded much of their system of laws and protections of the public on the traditions contained within British common law and on the legal system within the United Kingdom.

There are a few things that I want to make reference to in speaking about this. I would like to note, to begin with, that the Queen — the length of her reign begins with the first Prime Minister she worked with, who was Sir Winston Churchill. Her ongoing connection with prime ministers in Britain includes, typically as I understand it, weekly catch-ups with the Prime Minister, of which no record is kept, stretching over her 70-year reign. The chats range from the political to the personal, and over the years, stories have emerged that tell tales of how the Queen's meetings with Mr. Churchill often stretched from 30 minutes to two hours.

I would note as well that, as we are dealing with the world situation in Ukraine and the increasing concern about what some view as the rise of the Second Cold War, it is important to reflect back on the courage and the work of those who guided us through earlier troubling times in history, including the Second World War. I would note that the Queen has indicated, with regard to Mr. Churchill, that no other Prime Minister "... will ever for me be able to hold the place of my first prime minister, to whom both my husband and I owe so much and for whose wise guidance during the early years of my reign I shall always be so profoundly grateful."

Years later, when Churchill died in 1965, Queen Elizabeth II broke protocol by arriving at his funeral before his family. Protocol states that the Queen is supposed to be the last person to arrive at any function, but in this instance, she wanted to be respectful of Churchill and his family.

I would also note that, over the past seven decades, as noted by the Government of Canada, Queen Elizabeth II has been a constant presence in the lives of Canadians and has

witnessed growth and significant change in Canadian society. The Queen has cultivated enduring ties with Canadians over years of connecting with our rich cultures and traditions.

Throughout her reign, the Queen has made 22 official tours of Canada — more than any other Commonwealth country. Her travels have brought her east, west, and north to large cities, small towns, and tiny hamlets. She has met countless Canadians and been present for most important milestones and celebrations. Her Majesty has said, in multiple speeches, that she always regarded Canada as home and shares in the pride that we take in our achievements. As noted by my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, in fact, she has been the Queen of Canada for more than half the time since Confederation.

In honouring Her Majesty and speaking to the value of this motion and the importance of both honouring the service of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and speaking to the value of recognizing extraordinary contributions from Yukoners and front-line workers through the creation of a medal as proposed by my colleague, it is worth noting that, in stark contrast to most nations and empires, under Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, countries have had the democratic will of their citizens shown great respect by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

It is notable that Canada established its own Constitution and moved away from any formal control by the Parliament of Britain simply by asking nicely. Barbados has moved down the road of becoming a republic while maintaining membership in the Commonwealth — again, under Her Majesty's reign, simply by asking nicely.

I want to recognize, as my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, did — I believe that her words were that every reference to history is both good and bad. Of course, at some point, things have happened under the current monarch, or previously, that have not been perfect, and it is notable that, around the world, throughout the world, there is very little about the history of any country that is perfect, but we should celebrate what is good, and that includes, I would contend, acknowledging the service of Her Majesty to the Commonwealth and celebrating as well the contributions of those who are deserving of a medal.

I would also note that the Royal Canadian Legion supports this and has expressed concern and their disagreement with the federal government's decision not to recognize this with a Platinum Jubilee Medal. It was interesting that the Member for Riverdale North claimed to have some indication that the request had come from the Crown itself, and that would suggest that he may want to check his facts and if he has information we do not, to provide it. But the Royal Canadian Legion, I would note, representing veterans, has formally expressed their disagreement with the federal government's decision and has urged the creation of local recognitions, such as the one proposed by my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North.

I just want to talk about the fact that the Queen, in her late teens, also participated in the war effort. After asking her father repeatedly to let her pitch in, Queen Elizabeth II — then an 18-year-old princess — joined the woman's Auxiliary Territorial Service during World War II. Known as second subaltern

Elizabeth Windsor, she donned a pair of coveralls and trained in London as a mechanic and military truck driver. The Queen remains the only female member of the royal family to have entered the Armed Forces and is the only living head of state who served in World War II. I think that's notable and commendable.

Mr. Speaker, I also just want to make reference to another bit of history about the Queen. It's notable, as members mentioned, that she has ruled for longer than any other monarch in British history and continues to carry out a full program of engagements. The Queen also, on her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, famously declared in a speech broadcast on the radio from Cape Town: "I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service..."

It is fair to say that she has done just that. The Queen also said, according to the royal website — and I quote: "... I feel enormously proud of what the Commonwealth has achieved, and all of it within my lifetime." Again, I do think that it is worth commending and recognizing the service of the Queen and the fact that a big part of her legacy has been support for patronage and charities around the world in Commonwealth countries, as well as for acknowledging the service and contribution of citizens to their countries and to the Commonwealth.

I want to just briefly talk about some of the comments that Sir Winston Churchill made about the monarchy itself. It's noted, in doing research for this, that the Queen, as I mentioned — the first Prime Minister of Britain with whom she worked was Sir Winston Churchill — has, since that time, seen many prime ministers there and in Canada and other Commonwealth countries, and it's clear that the Queen was an admirer of Sir Winston Churchill, and Sir Winston Churchill was a great admirer of the Queen.

Sir Winston Churchill declared that constitutional monarchy was a practical instrument and a means of national self-preservation against every type of republic and every degree of dictatorship. He also noted: "These are the days when in other countries ignorant people are often disposed to imagine that progress consists in converting oneself from a monarchy into a republic. In this country we have known the blessings of limited monarchy. Great traditional and constitutional chains of events have come to make an arrangement, to make a situation, unwritten, which enables our affairs to proceed on what I believe is a superior level of smoothness and democratic progress."

I just want to note that whatever someone's views on a monarchy and whether we should be one or whether we should be a republic, I would think and would hope that all would acknowledge that Queen Elizabeth II has clearly respected what she believes is the duty of a monarch and made the monarchy, as I mentioned, one for which its most defining feature is respect for democracy, the democratic institution, and the will of citizens in Commonwealth countries. As Mr. Churchill referred to it, it has been a limited monarchy.

The British monarchy, Mr. Churchill said, "...has no interests divergent from those of the British people.' That is a principle Her Majesty the Queen has splendidly maintained

through all the trauma and heartbreak, the highs and lows of her long reign. Ever since as a girl of 21..." — that's what it said in what I am reading. Ever since she was 21 — I would rephrase the quote from what I was reading. She said that "... my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service."

It is fair to say that she has certainly done that through tragedy, through adversity, and been a source of continuity and tradition that is about respecting the democratic traditions and the rule of law within the Westminster system.

It has, of course, around the globe and here in this Legislative Assembly, resulted in that much of what we do is rooted in those traditions. While no traditions are perfect, it is important to recognize the good in what we have.

In 1951, Queen Elizabeth II made her first visit to Canada as Princess Elizabeth representing her father, King George VI. With her husband, Prince Philip, by her side, she travelled for 33 days from coast to coast and was enthusiastically greeted by thousands of Canadians. Of this visit, she said, "I am sure that nowhere under the sun could one find a land more full of hope, of happiness and of fine, loyal, generous-hearted people ... They have placed in our hearts a love for their country and its people which will never grow cold and which will always draw us to their shores."

Just a few months later, on February 6, 1952, the Queen acceded to the throne upon the passing of her father, King George VI. Days prior to her coronation, which took place on June 2, 1953, the Canadian Parliament passed the *Royal Style and Titles Act*, making her the Queen of Canada, the first monarch in Canadian history with this title.

In 1957, during her first official visit to Canada as Queen, Her Majesty read the Speech from the Throne, the first occasion in Canadian history that a sovereign has personally presided over the opening of Parliament. She would do so again in 1977.

I would just note for the reference of Hansard that I'm currently reading from information that can also be found on the Government of Canada's website.

In 1959, Her Majesty made a 45-day visit to Canada where she visited all 10 provinces and two territories and inaugurated the St. Lawrence Seaway a historic binational project, along with the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable John Diefenbaker, and the President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

In the early years of her reign, the Queen established a personal connection with Canada, becoming increasingly present and involved just as the country was struggling for a national identity of its own. At the start of the decade, the Queen approved and adopted her personal Canadian flag, which is used to indicate her presence in Canada.

In 1964, the Queen travelled to Prince Edward Island and to the cities of Québec and Ottawa to mark the centennial of the historic Charlottetown and Québec conferences that led to Confederation in 1867. While in Québec, she visited the Citadel and addressed the National Assembly in both official languages. In 1965, she proclaimed the red and white flag with a single maple leaf in its centre as the national flag of Canada, the foremost symbol of our national identity.

In June 1967, Queen Elizabeth II took part in Expo 67 in Montréal and then joined thousands on Parliament Hill in Ottawa for festivities to celebrate Canada's centennial on July 1. On the same day, the Order of Canada, one of Canada's highest civilian honours, was established under the authority of the Queen. Since then, more than 7,000 people from all sectors of society who have made a difference to this country have been invested in this order. I would note that one of them is the mover is this motion, the Member for Porter Creek North, who has been awarded this honour.

Mr. Speaker, I understand from your indication that my time to speak is running to an end, so I would just commend this motion to the House and urge all members to support it.

**Ms. White:** It has been an informative afternoon, definitely educational, and I really appreciate the enthusiasm that was brought forward by the Member for Porter Creek North. I appreciate her history with the Office of the Commissioner and her love of these types of celebrations. I also recognize that we had a visitor for a good portion of the afternoon.

Although I appreciate the enthusiasm with which the Member for Porter Creek North brought forward this motion — and I appreciate what I heard from my other colleague in Porter Creek, as well — the NDP is not going to be supporting this motion. If it was just built on the enthusiasm of others, I would indeed.

We echo that it is a remarkable milestone that Queen Elizabeth II has reached with this 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and we know that many Yukoners are pleased to celebrate her accomplishments and longevity on the throne as head of the Commonwealth. I think that it is important that we mention right now that the person in this position also failed to protect the well-being of indigenous peoples, and especially children, in Canada. I am waiting for a point of order, to be honest.

I think that it is important, too, that we acknowledge that the history and relations with indigenous peoples in Canada have not been good. The legacy of residential schools almost overlaps with that. So, we can talk about the good things and we can talk about the other things, and to be honest, we have just seen a country saying that they want to separate and they want the acknowledgement of slavery. They were looking for that apology. So, although I appreciate, again, the enthusiasm with which this was brought forward, it is a hard one. I can refer to myself as, at times, definitely an uncomfortable member of the Commonwealth. For sure, swearing allegiance to the Queen was something that I had to think about. That was an interesting one, and I appreciate all the things that come along with the Commonwealth, but there are struggles.

In the Yukon, we believe that it is the Commissioner of the Yukon — the Queen's appointed representative — who is responsible for celebrations regarding the Queen.

To date, the Commissioner will be hosting jubilee events across the territory, in here and in Whitehorse, and we know that some events have already taken place, including the raising of the jubilee flag in February, the virtual exhibition, and more.

We also note that the federal government has offered funding for community celebrations to celebrate the Queen's jubilee. As communities in the territory bring forward their desire, we look forward to them hosting things.

But it is at times an uncomfortable history. Despite all the accomplishments and all the positives, there are things — and not just in Canada, but in 51 of the other Commonwealth countries. We can look toward Australia and New Zealand, with the Maori or the aboriginal people; we can look toward our Caribbean relatives as well. Again, if it was just based on the enthusiasm and the love shown by the Member for Porter Creek North, I would say yes, but there is so much more tied around with that, so the NDP will not be supporting this motion today.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, I rise to speak to Motion No. 288, as brought forward by the Member for Porter Creek North.

On February 6, 2022, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II became the first British monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, marking 70 years of service. To celebrate this unprecedented anniversary event, some initiatives will take place throughout the United Kingdom — a chance for people to come together to celebrate this incredible milestone.

In line with the long history of lighting beacons to celebrate royal jubilees, coronations, and weddings, there will be over 1,500 beacons lit throughout the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, and UK-overseen territories. For the first time, beacons will also be lit in each of the capital cities of the Commonwealth countries to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Mr. Speaker, the Queen has a long-established personal connection with Canada. I'm going to highlight a few that some of my fellow colleagues have, but I think it's important for what I have to say today.

She has made 22 official tours through Canada. She has said multiple times that she always regarded Canada as home and shares in the pride that we take in our achievements. I wanted to touch on just a couple of snapshots of her service in Canada. In 1965, the Queen proclaimed the red and white flag with the maple leaf as the national flag of Canada. On Canada Day in 1967, she joined thousands of Canadians on Parliament Hill to celebrate Canada's centennial. On the same day, the Order of Canada was established under the authority of the Queen. Since then, over 7,000 people from across the country have been invested into the order on account of the differences they have made to this country.

We just so happen to have one of these people seated among us here today, which is the Member for Porter Creek North. I am sure that we are all aware that the Queen has taken part in some incredibly significant events in Canadian history. In 1982, she signed the proclamation that patriated our Constitution. This gave Canada complete independence from British law and brought about the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which we hear in this House and discuss through our Westminster system.

The Queen has visited Canada to officially open the Olympic and Commonwealth games. She has dropped the

ceremonial puck at an NHL game, joined by great Canadians Cassie Campbell and Wayne Gretzky; they are Canada's hockey greats. She has toured the north and celebrated the creation of Nunavut in 2002 and has been present for centennials, anniversaries, and other notable events across the country for decades.

For decades, she has been there. In 2002, Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her Golden Jubilee, marking her 50-year reign. During her tour that year, she travelled to the new territory of Nunavut, which she established in 1999. This visit marked a milestone in the Queen's relationship with the north and its people.

Canada celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty in 2012, marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Queen in Canada. On September 9, 2015, another milestone was passed when she became our longest reigning sovereign, officially surpassing the reign of her great-grandmother, Queen Victoria. In 2021, Queen Elizabeth II sent a message to the people of Canada to mark our first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. She said — and I quote: "I join with all Canadians on this first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to reflect on the painful history that Indigenous peoples endured in residential schools in Canada, and on the work that remains to heal and to continue to build an inclusive society."

Indigenous people from across Canada have played a significant part in the Queen's role in Canada. In fact, in 1953, hereditary Chief Joe Mathias of the Squamish Nation attended her coronation in London. This year, as we celebrate Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee, we reflect on our history as Canadians. It is complex. We look back on our many accomplishments and, as we heard earlier from the Leader of the Third Party, some of the challenges that have brought us to this point in time. Over the past seven decades, our sovereign, Queen Elizabeth II, has been with us on our journey. She has participated in our triumphs, shared in our sorrows, and has been witness to our growth as a nation.

On a personal note, my grandfather, Ron Watson, was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal for all that he did during the war and after the war, building our community of Haines Junction and the communities up the north Alaska Highway.

I was awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal from my unit, 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, for contributions to the Canadian military and to my community. As we know, we've heard that a number of colleagues on this side of the House have also been awarded a jubilee medal, and chances are that each one of us in here in today knows someone who has also received one.

I was pretty proud to be a Ranger when I was on the tarmac, when William and Kate came, to do an honour guard. I was also very honoured to be part of the Governor General's change-of-command parade in Ottawa in 2005. In light of where we are today in society and what's happening over in Europe, the Governor General, who is the viceregal federal representative for the Queen in Canada — the Governor General was Adrienne Clarkson at the time, and she was leaving office. She had huge focus on the Canadian Ranger program. She was the

first one to be here in the Yukon to give out special service medals to rangers who were dedicated in the ranger program, focusing on the north, letting the world know that we have a military in the north and that Arctic sovereignty is very important to us.

The Queen actually served in World War II, as we heard earlier, and fought together as our allies against Hitler. That's what makes our country what we are today. She has been a huge influence on awards and decorations in our country. Every year on Remembrance Day, communities across the country remember those who sacrificed and those who have served. An important part of that ceremony is the singing of *God Save the Queen*, showing that Her Majesty is an integral part of our military history and the freedoms that we recognize today.

So, as the motion says, creating something in the Yukon for her 70<sup>th</sup> would be appropriate, in light of all we have been through in the past few years. I believe, Mr. Speaker, it would be an honour to have something to present to deserving Yukoners.

The motion brought forward by the Member for Porter Creek North — I just want to highlight how important that would be, in light of two years in a pandemic: an opportunity to recognize and thank hardworking individuals who have made a difference to their community and to Canada during the pandemic.

The Minister of Highways and Public Works spoke earlier about some of the things that will be happening — some of the celebrations — but I didn't hear him mention Beaver Creek; I didn't hear him mention a bunch of communities. Yes, there is a tea in Dawson, and there are some events, but having a medal that we could have at every community, that a chief, a mayor — someone — could present to those who were there for us during this tough time, during this pandemic, I think is needed.

I'm a little bit disappointed and bewildered in our country today that there's actually not a plan federally to issue a Platinum Jubilee Medal. Other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, are doing something, and I think the Yukon should. Of course, I support this motion — 135 percent — or 180 percent. I wish and I would encourage all members of this House to vote in favour of this motion. Thank you for your time today.

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Motion No. 288 as brought forward by the Member for Porter Creek North.

Now, the motion reads: THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon, in recognition of the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, to celebrate with Yukoners by creating a one-time Queen's commemorative medal to present to deserving Yukoners and front-line workers in recognition of significant contributions that they have made to their community or to Yukon; and providing funding to interested communities for the purpose of holding a community tea or celebration on June 2, 2022, in honour of Her Majesty's 70-year reign.

Now, on February 6 of this year, Her Majesty the Queen became the first British monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee. Seventy years as Queen — 70 years of service to the

people of the United Kingdom, the realms, and the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth of Nations, Mr. Speaker, includes Canada, which celebrated its confederation on July 1, 1867.

Canada became the first independent country within the British Empire. The British Commonwealth of Nations was adopted and formalized during the 1926 Imperial Conference in the Balfour Declaration. Britain and its dominions agreed they were equal in status, in no way subordinate to one another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Today, we use the term "Commonwealth" to describe this humanitarian coalition of countries. It was formalized with the 1931 Statute of Westminster.

It is devoted to the development of free and democratic societies and the promotion of peace and prosperity to improve the lives of all of the people in the Commonwealth. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is the head of state of 15 member states, or the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth realms, each of which recognize the Queen as their monarch. The Commonwealth itself consists of those 15 member states, 34 other republics, and five others that have different monarchs.

In 1931, Newfoundland was one of the founding states of the Commonwealth, in addition to Canada. It reverted back to British rule in 1934 for a time, but merged with Canada in 1949 to become the province we know today. I think that this little bit of Commonwealth history is important. It helps for Canadians to understand the importance of what it means to be a Commonwealth country and to understand how Canada fits into this group of nations.

It is unfortunate that this motion had to be brought forward in the first place. Seventy years is an incredible milestone. Traditionally, these milestone anniversaries of the Queen's reign have been celebrated nationally and throughout the Commonwealth. We have long celebrated these milestones in Canada and we have a long history of issuing jubilee medals to honour-deserving Canadians.

This year, the Government of Canada announced a series of initiatives to mark the Queen's 70 years of service. It was said that Canada has no plans to issue a Platinum Jubilee Medal, however. The Member for Porter Creek North brought forward a motion in May 2021. This motion urged the Government of Canada and the Chancellery of Honours to maintain a Canadian tradition of creating and awarding a jubilee medal to recognize Her Majesty's reign and to honour deserving Canadians — to honour Canadians who have made a significant contribution to their region or community, who have made their community and their country better.

COVID-19 has impacted every jurisdiction, region, and community across the country. This is an opportunity to recognize some of the incredible contributions from front-line workers — those who have been serving their communities throughout the pandemic, since day one.

It is a missed opportunity on a national level. It is a break from Canadian tradition — and no explanation from the federal government for doing so. The motion we are debating today is

about honouring this tradition on a regional level, a chance to honour deserving Yukoners who have stepped up to provide service and assistance to their neighbours and communities during an unprecedented, confusing, and somewhat scary time.

Health care professionals, law enforcement, educators, essential front-line service workers — we have thanked them here in the House as recently as yesterday. We have been through a lot in the past two years. Over the course of these two years, we have seen a resiliency throughout our territory that is unlike anything we have seen before. We have seen our neighbours, families, and friends rally around each other through periods of isolation. We have seen Yukoners come out in droves to support businesses to ensure that they did not have to shutter. Of course, we know that not all businesses were so lucky.

Health care professionals, EMS, law enforcement, educators, and those who delivered essential services all worked to keep things going. Everyone has felt the effects of the pandemic in one way or another. Many have worked tirelessly to get us through it. We have seen a number of unintended negative impacts on society. We have seen a serious decline in mental health for many. We have seen a serious increase in drug overdoses. We have seen routine health care put on the back burner. We have seen so much division in our community in the face of this pandemic — family and friends with invisible lines drawn between them. Through this, Yukoners persevered. There are so many incredible Yukoners who deserve our thanks and recognition. Jubilee medals have always provided us with the opportunity to do just that and to thank and recognize those who have made their communities a better place.

Regardless of how Canadians feel on an individual basis about the monarchy, 70 years is an incredibly long time for an individual to do any job. The Queen's position in Canada is symbolic in nature but truly significant to many. Her Majesty has been Queen for my entire life. The monarchy remains an important part of Canadian history. Queen Elizabeth II, as head of state, has dedicated her life to humanitarian efforts. As such, it is certainly fitting that we continue to honour Canadians who have done the same on this 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her reign.

The second part of this motion speaks to the Government of Yukon providing funding to interested communities for the purpose of holding a celebration or tea on June 2 to allow community members to come together in celebration, and this is not something that we have been able to do in some time. I know that a large number of my constituents would be happy to have an opportunity to gather in celebration of this remarkable woman.

It would certainly be a great thing to not only be able to celebrate Her Majesty, but also to take the opportunity to recognize exemplary members of our community. Recently, the recipients of the 2020-21 Community Safety Awards were announced, and I am pleased to hear how the Watson Lake System Navigation Project was one of these recipients. Led by Angela Miller and Sue Rudd, this project has been operating in the community for four years and provided outreach and navigation support for individuals living with

neurodevelopmental disabilities. This program has helped to improve health, mental wellness, and safety for people in Watson Lake. I would like to thank Angela and Sue for their continued work in our community.

John Moses was another recipient, as a volunteer for EMS in Watson Lake. John has worked extensively throughout the community and takes on a number of roles, wherever he is needed. His continued advocacy of safety and security for the marginalized population is appreciated, and I am happy to see recognition for his actions.

I am happy to see each of these individuals recognized for their contributions to society, and these are only the most recent nods to the incredible work done in my community. There are others in Watson Lake who deserve recognition for the work that they do and the time that they dedicate to their community.

I know that this is true in each and every community across the Yukon. It is these types of contributions that have been considered historically for jubilee medals. We have seen considerable efforts put in by a number of Yukoners throughout the pandemic — individuals who have gone above and beyond to ensure that Yukoners remain informed, supported, and safe throughout the last two years. We have seen EMS workers provide unwavering support to our community, even in the early days when we didn't quite know how this virus would impact our communities. Vaccination and testing teams worked to ensure our safety, travelling throughout the territory and responding to community outbreaks with calm and professionalism.

I believe that these are some of the acts that should be recognized with Platinum Jubilee Medals. I think that this is an opportunity to celebrate those who have dedicated their time and expertise to their community and shown what it means to be a Yukoner.

I do note that the Member for Riverdale North commented on his opinion that opposition private members' day should be spent talking about something else. He didn't say what — anything else, I guess. I was quite offended by that, I must say.

I understand that the government and their coalition partners are not going to be voting in support of this motion. I think that's a real shame. I think it's a lost opportunity.

**Mr. Hassard:** Thank you for the opportunity to rise today to speak to Motion No. 288, as brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North.

While I've always respected the monarchy, I would never refer to myself as a strong monarchist, but 70 years really is an impressive feat. February 6, 2022 is the day that actually marked this incredible milestone — the first British monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee. Now, we know that over 1,500 beacons will be lit throughout the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man, and the UK's overseas territories. However, here in Canada, there don't even appear to be plans to issue a Platinum Jubilee Medal. I think that this is very unfortunate.

Queen Elizabeth II has a long-established personal connection with Canada. As we've heard from other members today, she had done 22 official tours through Canada during her reign. It was on one of those trips that she was met by some

Yukon First Nation chiefs who were travelling to Ottawa, and one of those chiefs was a former Speaker of this Legislative Assembly and a very good friend of mine, Mr. Sam Johnston. Sam has told me this story on more than one occasion — about that particular day and how it will always be fondly remembered as one of the most honourable days in his career when he was able to meet the Queen.

Now, this year, the proposal for the Platinum Jubilee Medal is to recognize and be presented to a very important and crucial group in our community. It's proposed to recognize admirable service for military and RCMP personnel, to first responders, teachers, long-term care workers, and others. So, you may ask: Why is it so important to recognize this incredible milestone at this time? Well, there is a very good answer that comes to mind quickly — for me anyway and hopefully for a lot of people in this Legislature. Our health care professionals and first responders have been so essential to protecting our community and protecting public health, and the world is, quite frankly, in a place we've never seen before. Two years ago, as we all know, the world as we know it was turned upside-down by this thing called "COVID". It has really blown things up and changed much in our world. In two years, our communities have been put under significant stress and pressure, and mental issues are on the rise. The pandemic itself has had a very strange effect on people. I know that others have mentioned this today, but people really were scared and confused. From the beginning of the pandemic, people were worried about their health, to the last couple of years when economic impacts have led to job losses, closure of businesses. People have gone from living paycheque to paycheque to trying to figure out how they are even going to make a mortgage payment. Entire livelihoods have been thrown away as a result.

The social impacts have been just as devastating to our small community. COVID became the most polarizing issue in recent history, pitting people against people and even causing division between family members. At the beginning of the pandemic, lack of knowledge about the virus was creating havoc. In addition to those impacted by the closure of businesses, there were also essential businesses that stayed open during the pandemic so that our society could continue to operate. While it is true that some people had the ability to continue to do their jobs from the safety of their own homes, many others didn't actually have that luxury.

Mr. Speaker, "front-line workers" became a very common phrase, even here in this Legislature. Those front-line workers were everyone from health care workers to grocery store clerks to truck drivers. They are the people who essentially keep us alive and moving every day. They couldn't stay at home to work, even if they wanted to. They kept our hospitals open, they kept our ambulances running, they kept our health care systems working, and they did so much more. These individuals were quite literally on the front lines. It's important to recognize them and show them that this Legislature values their work, their sacrifices, and the countless hours of overtime that they put in to keep this entire territory safe and operating.

Now, over the past number of months, we've praised our front-line workers. We've given tributes here in the Legislature

and said kind words. We've even put up signs thanking the truckers, even though recent history shows us that the Liberals may not have actually appreciated those truck drivers as much as we thought, but that's another story.

Despite all of these praises for our front-line workers and our front-line EMS and all of those people who sacrificed for two years for our community, the government has not always shown their support for these individuals.

Last fall, a strange thing took place, and these mandates were imposed. Many individuals who had sacrificed for our community and had been praised were actually forced out of work. In effect, government went from praising these people to actually shunning and vilifying many of them. Right here in the Yukon, there are people we praised just six months ago who are now unable to work today because of this.

I often use the front-line workers and the EMS crew in Ross River as a great example of a group of individuals who did all we could possibly ask in the worst of possible times. They put in overtime. They worked whenever we needed them to. They were on the front lines of COVID. They were dealing with sick people. They made personal sacrifices to keep our communities safe, but despite all of these efforts, they had their knees cut right out from under them by the government mandates. That's why it is so important to support something like the jubilee medal to honour those front-line workers.

Government shouldn't be vilifying them. We should be honouring them. When our society is divided, it can certainly create tougher times for all of us.

We haven't seen darker times here in the Yukon, I don't believe. Addictions are at an all-time high, the number of opioid deaths is staggering, and people have been forced to shut down businesses and lay off employees. Many of those employees had been faithful to those businesses for a number of years. Thankfully, it appears that the light is beginning to shine again. We see spring slowly coming back to us and the world of COVID begins to regain some normalcy. Now we have a glorious opportunity to show our appreciation for those people who really stood out and helped others through those dark days.

I would like to speak about some of the other groups that would be honoured under the proposal for the Platinum Jubilee, and that, of course, is military personnel and RCMP. Those individuals are also essential front-line heroes in our communities. In fact, with world events the way they are today — we have Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine — now even more than ever we see the importance of our veterans and our currently serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces. We never want armed conflict, but when it does happen and when democracy is under attack, we need them. They literally put their lives on the line for us, so it is important to recognize the efforts of these individuals and their sacrifices. From support through benefits and pensions, we must all continue to fight for these individuals to be recognized and honoured.

The debate today is about how we can honour them. An incredible way to do this would be to support the creation of a Platinum Jubilee Medal for the Yukon so that all Yukon veterans and service members know that they are cherished members of our society. I certainly had hoped that the other two



parties in the Legislature would see the importance of this today; unfortunately, it doesn't sound as if they will be supporting this motion.

The RCMP is another important front-line group that keeps our community safe. Every day, they respond to calls and, in the line of their everyday duties, they are quite literally, again, putting their lives on the line.

A routine traffic stop or routine response to a safety issue on a lake or a river — this is not a safe job and the members of the RCMP wake up every day knowing this, but they still don the suit and off they go. We all know that without them, our communities would certainly be less safe.

So, again, I think this is a perfect example of why this topic of debate is so important here today. The RCMP — they are there every day to keep us safe and to respond when they're needed most. They really should be honoured. They should be respected and it's just another example of why I think the creation of this Platinum Jubilee Medal would be an excellent opportunity to do just that.

Teachers are the backbone of our society. They teach our children and they set up the next generation for success. Quite simply, without teachers, our society would be nowhere. Throughout the pandemic, teachers kept showing up to work, teach our students, and keep our education system going. Despite the risk of COVID, they showed up and they got it done. That was crucial and it was appreciated. That frankly was a sacrifice and I want to say thank you to all of the teachers. Thank you for helping our students, not just with education, but with mental health supports throughout the pandemic. This was a difficult time and, for many, teachers made it easier. We know that the government may not have always been there for the teachers during this time. They maybe didn't always listen or provide the supports that they needed or give clear direction about what was required during the pandemic, but the community as a whole recognizes their sacrifices.

We know that Alberta has taken the opportunity to provide some 7,000 residents with a Platinum Jubilee Medal to honour them for their significant contributions to society. So, why would we in the Yukon not take advantage of this opportunity to recognize Yukoners who have made significant contributions to society right here?

Now, the second part of the motion talks about providing funding to communities that may wish to hold a community tea or celebration on June 2 to honour Her Majesty's 70-year reign. I can tell you that, as a resident from a small town here in the Yukon, people are looking for something to celebrate.

This would provide communities with important opportunities to hold community events, to bring everyone together, and to start the healing process. People need a reason to be happy and join together in harmony, and this is a glorious opportunity to do just that.

So, as I said at the beginning, I am not much of a monarchy guy, but I do think that this is a perfect opportunity to show our support not only for the Queen and her 70 years, but also for citizens of the Yukon who deserve a little extra recognition. I certainly hope to see this motion pass the House, even though, from what I have heard, it probably won't. But, again, I would

like to thank the Member for Porter Creek North for bringing this motion forward. I do believe that it is an important issue, and I hope that it gets the recognition that it deserves.

**Mr. Kent:** I am going to be brief in my remarks here this afternoon. I know that a number of colleagues have spoken to this motion and I, too, would like to join them in thanking the Member for Porter Creek North for bringing this forward. Like many of my colleagues, and like many Yukoners, we were certainly disappointed in the decision by Canadian Heritage not to honour the Platinum Jubilee with the issuance of a medal. I know that, on a number of occasions in this Legislature during my time here, we have honoured veterans, and we have honoured members of the legion, so I think that it is appropriate to read into the record a legion press release from February 23, 2022. It states — and I quote: “The Royal Canadian Legion is disappointed and bewildered to hear our country does to plan to issue a Platinum Jubilee medal in 2022. A recent media report confirmed the decision by the Department of Canadian Heritage. This year commemorates the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's ascension to the throne.” And then a quote from the dominion president, Bruce Julian: He says — and I quote: “I am saddened by this decision ... A unique medal would also have allowed us an opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding service of fellow citizens.”

My understanding, from this news release, is that the Legion for close to two years was advocating for having a Platinum Jubilee Medal presented to Canadians who have made a real difference in their communities. I think the important part from this legion press release is that it would recognize admirable service from military and RCMP personnel to first responders, teachers, long-term care workers, and others.

Mr. Julian goes on to say that he hopes the decision not to produce a medal will be reconsidered.

So, the legion is Canada's largest veteran support and community service organization. They are a non-profit organization. They have a national reach and 1,350 branches across Canada, including those in the Yukon. They also have branches in the United States and Europe, and they have 250,000 members, many of whom volunteer an extraordinary amount of time. We certainly recognize that from the local legion here in Whitehorse, branch 254, with the incredible amount of work they do in the community and the support they provide to veterans, as well as the broader community, through donations to organizations, such as the Yukon Hospital Foundation and others. They're an incredibly important part, and I think their voices should be respected and considered when it comes to what we're doing here.

I also have a note from the Monarchist League of Canada in which they — the title of this is that 96 Liberal Members of Parliament write to the Heritage minister asking that a jubilee medal be issued. In that — I'll just quote from the first part of this. It says, “After reporting to you earlier that the Government seemed adamant in its decision not to issue a Platinum Jubilee Medal in the Canadian tradition, it was heartening to learn that a large body of Liberal backbenchers have written a group letter

to the Minister of Canadian Heritage asking that such a Medal be struck. It might have had much more effect had such an effort been mounted many months ago, when so many monarchists felt very much alone in their advocacy, rather than after a decision was announced.”

This goes on to talk a little bit more about the importance of the Queen and other aspects of why a medal should be issued. But, of note, as I mentioned, there are 96 Liberal MPs who have signed this, according to this document. Many long-term Members of Parliament and many new Members of Parliament, including Brendan Hanley, the newly elected Member of Parliament for the Yukon, has also signed on to this.

While Liberals in this Legislature don't appear to support the issuance of a medal, their colleague, the former chief medical officer of health and the current Member of Parliament for the Yukon, has signed on to this letter to the Heritage minister asking that a jubilee medal be issued. We thank Member of Parliament Hanley for that, and hopefully that gets some traction at the federal level. I am not confident that it will, and that's why I think that it is important that we are here talking about this motion today from the Member for Porter Creek North.

Colleagues have talked about what other jurisdictions have done, most notably, what we have seen in Alberta. There was a bill introduced on February 22 of this year. The minister responsible was the Minister of Culture and Status of Women. Bill No. 1, which was entitled *Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Recognition Act*, celebrates Her Majesty's 70 years of reign and honours her legacy of public service. The act would establish awards and scholarships to recognize Albertans who have helped change Alberta for the better through volunteerism, public service, and community leadership. Again, I think that this links back to what the Legion was looking for, as far as teachers, first responders, and health care workers who have given so much through the pandemic.

Of course, when it comes to the royals, there is a strong Yukon connection going back to the 1950s. Queen Elizabeth, at that time, did a 45-day visit to Canada and visited every jurisdiction, including the Yukon. Obviously, that was an exciting time for many Yukoners who were here during that time. More recently, in 2001, Prince Charles visited the Yukon, with stops in Whitehorse and Mayo. I was a member of this Legislature at that time — the Member for Riverside, the former riding of Riverside — and had the opportunity to meet Prince Charles when he was here. I know that he very much enjoyed his trip to Mayo. I, along with colleagues at the time, enjoyed meeting with him here in Whitehorse upon his return from Mayo. I remember, at the time, we gathered in small groups in the room so that the prince could come through the room and talk to us. I was with the former Member for Klondike, the late Peter Jenkins, and his wife, the late Karen Jenkins.

It was a very special time, I think, for us as opposing politicians — or politicians on different sides, representing different parties — but to come together to meet with Prince Charles at that time was quite exciting. Of course, 15 years later in 2016, I had the opportunity to attend events around that royal

visit, as a Member of the Legislature for the riding of Riverdale North at the time. Of course, William and Kate came and visited Whitehorse and got to meet with the late Doug Bell at the MacBride Museum, as well as visit with many constituents in Whitehorse and went out to Carcross as well.

I think the royal family has a long and dedicated connection to our country and to our territory. The Queen has made 22 official tours of Canada, more than any other Commonwealth country during her 70 years of service.

I know my family and I are strong monarchists. We're very appreciative of the Queen and that she does represent our country and that indeed, when we swear our oaths, we swear allegiance to the Queen — Queen Elizabeth — the second Queen of Canada.

I think that this is a very timely motion, and it's a very important motion. Without the federal government supporting it — and again, hopefully the Liberal MPs, including our Member of Parliament, Brendan Hanley, and the letter is effective with the Liberal government in getting them to change their mind. But if they don't, I think that adopting this motion here today and voting in favour of it would be a great way for us in the Yukon to honour members of our community — very deserving members of our community — with this and allow for those celebrations that the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin referenced to take place in many of our communities. I certainly agree with him that, now that COVID-19 restrictions have been loosened and eliminated in many cases, gatherings and people getting back together and looking for reasons to celebrate is something that I've heard many are looking forward to for this summer and, of course, the many months going forward.

With that, I will conclude my remarks and indicate that I will be supporting this motion here today. I am hopeful that perhaps others across the way will change their mind and agree to support this motion, especially given what is happening with their Liberal colleagues in Ottawa and this letter to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this, and again, thank you to the Member for Porter Creek North for bringing this important motion forward here today.

**Mr. Dixon:** I will be fairly brief in my comments. I would like to speak about this more, but, of course, we are somewhat limited in our time today. This is something that I have supported and felt strongly about for some time now. I want to begin my comments by thanking sincerely the Member for Porter Creek North for bringing this motion forward. I think it is something that is extremely positive and is an extremely genuine endeavour to bring forward a motion of this nature and offer up a suggestion for the government as to how they should respond to the decision by the federal government not to issue the Platinum Jubilee Medal.

I have a lot to say about the role of the Crown in our country and the important role that the Queen has played in the development of our nation, but I will limit my comments, due to time, to a few specific issues.

I was a Member of the Legislative Assembly back in 2012 when the Queen had her Diamond Jubilee, and I was so

honoured to receive a letter from then-Commissioner, Mr. Phillips, which included a number of celebratory comments, but also noted that it would have been an honour — in his words, at least — to receive nominations for the Diamond Jubilee anniversary, which was being celebrated in 2012. Back then, I believe that it was in the neighbourhood of close to 60,000 Canadians who were honoured in 2012 with a Diamond Jubilee Medal. Since this issue has been in the news in the last year or so, I have heard from a number of those folks who received medals, and I can say that, almost universally, folks find it to be an incredible honour and one that they carry with them for the rest of their lives.

I remember seeing one particular individual — Adam van Koeverden, who is a former Olympian and now Liberal Member of Parliament — talking about how he received the medal from Stephen Harper. While he was no fan of Prime Minister Harper in the slightest, the recognition coming from the Crown was what he took a lot of pleasure in. It is something that he reflected on just last week in the media — about how important it was to him. That was some of the impetus for the most recent letter that has been sent by Liberal MPs from across the country, including our own here in Yukon, which is urging the federal government to reconsider its decision. Indeed, Mr. van Koeverden is a signatory to that letter. I hope that the federal government reconsiders that with pressure from their own caucus to revisit that decision.

In light of the decision to forego the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal, a number of people in civic society have raised their voices. We have heard the Monarchist League; we have heard the legion — all have taken a strong position urging the government to take action. I do note the Monarchist League's comment about the letter from the Liberal MPs. First of all, they certainly welcomed it, but they also noticed one profound inaccuracy in it, which was that the letter referred to the "British monarch". The fundamental error there is that this is with respect to the Canadian monarch — to the Queen of Canada. The second thing that they noted was that it would have been nice if this had come earlier. I certainly echo that.

It also causes me to recall the motion tabled by my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, last year to this very same effect, so this is not a new issue for us. This is an issue that we have been tuned into since last year when the rumblings began and the federal government was considering not awarding a Platinum Jubilee. That was the impetus, as I understand it, behind the motion that the Member for Porter Creek North put forward last year. It is one that we even considered calling for debate then.

This motion, of course, is calling on the Yukon government to step in and fill in the gap in leadership where the federal government had left off. We have seen that in other jurisdictions. Alberta, as has been referenced by my colleagues, tabled similar legislation to create a medal there. That is great, although it has been pointed out to us that, while that is welcomed and appreciated, a medal issued by the provincial government does not carry the same recognition or weight as one delivered by the federal government and, of course, the Governor General.

While we knew that there were some practical limitations to the issuance of a territorial medal, we thought that something was better than nothing and that it was indeed a worthwhile endeavour to consider offering a territorial-level medal.

I wanted to say a little bit more about the role of the Crown in our country and our democracy as a foundational piece of our Constitution. Unfortunately, time just won't permit me to do that. I will leave that for another day and perhaps another debate.

I will conclude by again thanking the Member for Porter Creek North for bringing this motion forward. I would reiterate my disappointment that it won't pass and that we won't be issuing a Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal here in Yukon. My primary disappointment is with the federal government for not issuing one from the federal government. I had hoped the Yukon could step in and fill the gap, and unfortunately, that's not going to be the case.

Like many of my colleagues, I look forward to celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee throughout the next year. I look forward to the events that are planned for this year. At every opportunity, I will be sure to wear the medal that we've been gifted — each one of us — which was a gift from Her Majesty or from the Governor General, who is her representative here.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude. Again, for a final time, I urge my colleagues to reconsider and consider supporting this motion to enact this motion and to take action to honour the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the words that were spoken today from all sides. It was an interesting debate. A little history — as the Leader of the Third Party said — I think is important.

This motion was primarily to speak to the celebration as a nation to celebrate the Queen's 70<sup>th</sup> year of reigning — the longest reigning female monarch, as I had stated.

As the Leader of the Official Opposition just stated, to be an official medal, the award must be sanctioned by the Government of Canada. I was told by a military member that if it's a provincial or territorial medal, it can't be worn with the official medals.

So, hopefully, those members of the House of Commons who are trying to overturn the government's thoughts on this will succeed. However, my motion was to have a local medal, and that would be just what it is — Yukon memorabilia. But as we said, it would be something. The main point of the motion was to recognize the well-deserved front-line workers. That's who this medal would have been given to.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to share.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

**Division**

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

*Bells*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Disagree.

**Ms. Tredger:** Disagree.

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

**Speaker:** The nays have it.

I declare the motion defeated.

*Motion No. 288 negatived*

**BILLS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT BILLS****Bill No. 304: *Act to Amend the Education Act* —  
Second Reading**

**Clerk:** Second reading, Bill No. 304, standing in the name of Ms. Tredger.

**Ms. Tredger:** I move that Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a second time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre that Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a second time.

**Ms. Tredger:** I am very happy and very excited to be talking about this bill on the floor of this House today.

I want to start by talking about the students who were outside this Legislature today and then sat in our gallery today. They came down from Porter Creek to talk about how important this bill is to them, how important it is for them to have safe spaces in their schools, and how they are willing to make signs and show up with flags and stand in front of our Legislature to talk about how important it is.

They gave me this bracelet, which I am so excited to be wearing. I told them that, when I talked today, I would be wearing this bracelet and I would be thinking about them. That is what I intend to do, is think about them, and I actually am going to ask us all to do that today so that when we are having this conversation, we are putting students at the centre of it — that we are thinking about what our LGBTQ2S+ students need to feel safe in their schools, because conversations get complicated with adults. There are so many interests and so

many things happening, but I think that if we can bring it back to what is at the heart of this — students — I think that the way forward is really clear.

That is actually where this bill started, was in conversations with students. I was speaking with students and talking about what they were facing, and the stories they told me were sometimes very hard to hear. They told me stories of being supported, of having family and community who supported them, and other students told me that they didn't have that. They told me that they wanted community. They told me about their desire for peer support. They also told me stories of desperation, stories of being afraid for their mental health and not knowing where to turn for help, and so I said: "What can we do? What can we do?" They said something that would help is knowing that we have support at school, knowing that we have a safe place to go when we are at school.

I think that is so important, because the LGBTQ2S+ community has faced such challenges over the years and continues to face such challenges. It is true; lots of things have gotten better, and I am so grateful for the work of activists, community members, and allies who have really pushed us to a place where we haven't been in a long time, but it is still tough, and it is especially tough for youth.

There are a lot of statistics that I could read to you. I have read many of them in this House before. I could talk about how a Canadian study found that 65 percent of transgender youth ages 14 to 18 have seriously considered suicide in the last year. That is compared to 13 percent of their peers. I could tell you that only one-quarter of that group reported that their mental health was good.

Some of the kids we are talking about don't have supportive families. Some of them are experiencing bullying from peers. We would like to think that our schools are safe spaces, but it is not always true, and that is why we need to make sure that every school does have a safe space. One shining example of how this can work is the Rainbow Room at Porter Creek Secondary School, and I think that is pretty clear from seeing the students here today. I was up there talking to the students, and they told me about how, in the last few years, their school has become more welcoming, it has become friendlier, and it has become kinder and safer for them. I said: "Why is that? What has happened? What has changed?" And they said, "This space. Having this space has made us feel safe here, and it has also made us feel safer outside of this space, when we are in the rest of the school." Having that peer support, that teacher support, buoys them for the rest of the day and has helped teach their peers how to be kinder and more welcoming.

There is lots of evidence to support places like GSAs. I'm going to talk about GSAs lots today. By that, I mean a gender sexuality alliance. They're also sometimes called gay-straight alliances. There is lots of evidence that students who participate in GSAs have a greater sense of belonging in their school. What could be better than having more belonging for students in our schools?

They talk about having higher self-esteem and lower rates of depression. It was found that a particularly important piece is the advocacy that GSAs do — and students who had GSAs

that did advocacy found they were less likely to experience discriminatory school policies and practices. They found that their peers and their educators were more supportive.

I've shared stories. I've shared evidence. I want to tell you one more story about why I think this is so important. When I was in high school, I wasn't out yet, but I still knew where I was welcomed and where I wasn't welcomed. I was so lucky to have teachers who did create a safe haven in their classrooms. I loved their classes. At the time, I couldn't have told you why I loved their classes so much, but I showed up early and I stayed late, and I came at lunch and I was open in the classroom and talking about and learning and open to new ideas. I loved those classes, and I learned so much in those classes.

Unfortunately, that wasn't all of my classes. I remember one class in particular where students knew that they could get their teacher's approval by sharing the latest gay joke they had heard. I remember that teacher telling a student that he needed to change what he wore to come to class, because it was making him uncomfortable. I wish I could say that I called out that teacher. I wish I could say that I went to administration and made sure it changed. But when you're just one student, it's hard. When you don't have peer support, when you don't have explicit support from your teachers and your administration, it was just too hard. Instead, what happened was I drifted out of class. I sat at the back and kept my head down. I made sure that no one ever paid attention to me in that class. Mostly, I quit going to that class. I was not a student who missed a lot of school, and I did not skip a lot of classes, but I didn't go to that class very much.

Would that experience have been different if there was a GSA at my school? Maybe. Maybe I would have gone to that club and told my peers what happened, and we would have found strength in numbers to challenge it. Maybe I would have told them that story, and a supportive teacher would have overheard who could have taken action. Like I said, I was so lucky that I did have classes where I felt safe, but what if those teachers hadn't happened to be around? A GSA would have made sure that there was a safe space, no matter which teachers were in the school.

We risk a lot when students don't have safe spaces. We risk losing them from classes. We risk losing them from schools. We risk losing them altogether.

I hope that I have made a compelling case for why safe spaces are important in schools. Despite lots of talk and lots of work on plans, there are many schools that don't have safe spaces like this. There are many that do, and I want to applaud the teachers who have taken it on themselves to create GSAs and create safe spaces in their classrooms. I am so grateful to you for the work that you do to protect our students, but there are schools that don't have these spaces. That is what this bill wants to change. This bill wants to make sure that every student, no matter what school you go to and no matter which teachers happen to be there that year, that you'll have a safe space in your classroom.

Let's talk about the policy that is in place right now to protect students. We have the sexual orientation and gender identity policy — the SOGI policy. What it says about GSAs is

— and I quote: “The administrator will make best efforts to facilitate the formation of Gay/Straight Alliance clubs (GSAs), where students or staff come forward requesting this support.” I will come back to this in a minute as to why that is not adequate. There is also the LGBTQ2S+ action plan. It says that — and I quote: “... encourage schools to support Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) or similar clubs.” Neither of these pieces of policy go far enough. The problem with the first one is that students have to come forward to request the support. That is an enormous barrier that is just not realistic for many students to cross.

I think that a very typical experience with a GSA for a student might be that, long before they're out, they hear such a thing exists, and they think that maybe they are safer in this school. They feel a little better. Maybe the next year, they make up excuses to wander down that hallway and walk by the door and maybe peek in really quickly when no one is looking. Maybe then the next year, they feel brave enough to walk in that door and join the club. The next year, they are out in front of the Legislature, waving flags and fighting for their rights.

That progression would never happen if that GSA didn't already exist for them. If we had to wait until that student was ready to ask, they would never have had the chance to find the peer support to make that request. I wouldn't have, as a student. I know many students who wouldn't. I have talked to parents who want support for their kids, but they are not sure how to advocate for support for them at school without outing their kids, which their kids are not ready to do. We need to have these in place automatically, already available for all students, whether they are ready to ask for them or not.

The second concern I have is with action plan language where schools are “encouraged” to support GSAs. Encouraging is great until someone digs in their heels. Encouraging is great until you get an administrator who really is opposed, and then it's not enough. We need to go beyond “encourage”. This can't be optional. It's not optional whether we support our queer students. It has to happen. It needs to be mandatory.

The final problem I have is that, without a strong mandate, the support tends to be piecemeal. That's what we're seeing right now. We see individual educators rising to the challenge, taking this on to make safe spaces for their students. But then what happens if that educator moves schools or has a busy workload the next semester? Suddenly, that support disappears. That's not the fault of any educator. We need system support for our students. We need a system-level change to make sure that they have the support they need.

This bill fixes these problems by making GSAs, or similar activities, a requirement for all schools.

Now, you'll notice I said “GSAs or similar activities”, and I want to speak a little bit about that in the bill. As we were putting thought into designing this bill, we acknowledged that there are a huge variety of schools in the Yukon. There are schools of hundreds of students. There are schools with fewer than 20 students. There are schools in Whitehorse; there are schools in rural communities. So, we thought: How can we make sure that this bill works to support students in all schools?

Now, some of those schools I really want to see have a GSA. Some of them already do, and that's fantastic, but there are schools that probably won't work for. Is it reasonable to ask a school with fewer than 20 students to have a student organization? Maybe; maybe not. It's going to depend on the school. So, that's why we landed on the wording of talking about activities that support students.

I'm really excited about this wording, because it's very flexible. It allows schools to take this mandate and make it work for them and adapt it to their particular, unique school community. Maybe for them it will be a picnic. Maybe for them it will be a movie night. Maybe for them it will be a field trip or a trip joining up with another school in their region. There are so many opportunities here, and I'm very excited to see what they come up with.

I'm going to leave the technical side of the bill for now, because I'm sure I'll have lots of opportunity to answer questions further on.

I want to close by talking about some of the reactions I've heard to this bill, because I've talked to a lot of people about this bill. What I've heard overwhelmingly is excitement about the possibilities it presents. I talked to teachers who have been trying for years to make this happen without any central support, who see this gap and know it needs to be filled and know that there is a limit to what they can do on their own. I've talked to parents who want support for their children. They want their children to have a place they can go at school, but don't know how to ask for that and advocate for their child as an individual. That support needs to already be there and they are so excited that's a possibility.

The most powerful reactions that I've had have been from students themselves. I'm going to finish with one story. A friend of mine shared that she told an 11-year-old she knew that this might happen, and the 11-year-old burst into tears and said: "I can't believe I might have this at my school. That would mean so much for me to have this at my school."

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I would like to start by acknowledging the young people who were here in the gallery today as I did during Question Period earlier. I am always happy to see our young people come and be part of the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly. After all, it is their House. I am pleased to stand today to speak to Bill No. 304 to share my initial thoughts on the proposed amendment to the *Education Act* brought forward by the NDP. I am very interested in looking into it further as we proceed through this process.

As the Minister of Education, my focus is on ensuring the safety and well-being of all children in our care. Our government has done a tremendous amount of work to make Yukon laws inclusive and to make the territory a safe and supportive home for the LGBTQ2S+ community.

Students in the LGBTQ2S+ community are a marginalized group in schools. I recognize that and see the need to continue making changes that will continue to improve the lives of our students. All youth and staff deserve a safe and supportive school, and I take this very seriously. I think this is the core of

my job as the minister. I'm absolutely committed to putting policies and programs in place so that students and staff feel safe, welcome, and included.

I wanted to talk a little bit about consultation and engagement to help ensure that the government is meeting the needs and the priorities of Yukoners. We have done extensive consultation and engagement. We initiated a territory-wide public engagement process in the fall of 2018 to identify ways to strengthen our legislation, policies, programs, services, and practices. We hired a Vancouver-based organization, QMUNITY, which is a non-profit focused on improving the lives of LGBTQ2S+ individuals to facilitate the engagement. The reason that — we looked for really specific skillsets and folks who knew what the uniqueness would be in consultation with a community such as the LGBTQ2S+ community and to work with us in a different way — and that is, in fact, what we did. They brought a lot of insight and ways of consultation that stand today in terms of how we conduct consultations around marginalized groups.

QMUNITY initiated a pre-engagement process. They met with LGBTQ2S+ community members and equality-seeking organizations to determine the appropriate method, scope, duration, and design of the public engagement. In January 2019, QMUNITY hosted 12 focus groups in a number of different demographics. They worked in Watson Lake, Dawson, and Haines Junction, and they held senior- and elder-specific focus groups in continuing care. They met specifically with youth and youth workers, including: educators; trans and non-binary; families; loved ones; significant others; queer, indigenous, or two-spirit folks; newcomers to the Yukon; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other women who have sex with women; gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men; and the Government of Yukon sexuality orientation and gender-identity working group.

There was extensive work done around this consultation. We also hosted three larger community dialogues. The themes of each of these dialogues were: mental health and wellness; safety, justice and employment; and LGBTQ2S+ culture and community building.

I thank you for your opening comments today — to the member for the New Democratic Party. We will get into more detail, I think, when we get into Committee of the Whole, but I think that the work you do around consultation is critically important. It's probably easier to have discussions with folks who are in agreement. It's harder to have discussions with folks who may be oppositional to amendments, bills, or different pieces of legislation. I'll go into some of that and what we've done as a government in terms of the legislative agenda that we've had since 2017. I'm curious about that, and I will be asking more questions about that for sure in Committee of the Whole in terms of the different groups that the New Democratic Party has met with and what some of that outcome is.

When we did our consultation, we published a "what we heard" document in 2019. Some of the feedback we heard was: a need for education and training and LGBTQ2S+ culture competency across departments and sectors; a cultural shift toward more acceptance that would require systemic and

institutional leadership from Government of Yukon and associated professionals; person-centred services in rural and remote communities outside of Whitehorse, including mobile and active outreach to communities; gender-neutral washrooms with low-barrier access in facilities like schools, hospitals, and other government buildings. Additionally, specific feedback was received regarding health care, education, employment, and business LGBTQ2S+ culture in community.

We found, through the engagement, that stakeholders were generally supportive to take steps to positively impact diversity and inclusion. Stakeholders also expressed a strong desire for clear, timely, and coordinated action in the priorities of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners and organizations.

We initiated a second phase because we received a massive amount of information and priorities that were expressed to us, so we then initiated a further process where we looked at an engagement with a purpose to prioritize what we heard during and after the engagement.

So, there was some information that came after the engagement. From the LGBTQ2S+ prioritization survey, we found that 75 percent of the respondents said that legislation to ban conversion therapy in Yukon was extremely or very important.

Related to the discussion today around Bill No. 304, 74 percent of respondents said it was extremely or very important to ensure that sexual orientation and gender identity — SOGI — policies are implemented and that gender sexuality alliances, or GSAs, or similar clubs are supported by school leadership and educators; 77 percent said it was extremely or very important to provide education and training for teachers and school administrators in LGBTQ2S+ cultural competency; 81 percent of respondents said that improving anti-bullying initiatives in Yukon schools, especially for LGBTQ2S+ youth, is extremely or very important; and 70 percent said that providing extracurricular programming in more inclusive or queer relationships and diverse gender identities is extremely or very important. All of that can be found in a lot more detail in the “what we heard” document to look at more specific feedback in different themed areas.

In terms of what resulted from all of that, I was very proud that Government of Yukon, alongside our partners, released the *LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan* in the summer of 2021. Across Canada and around the world, systemic transphobia, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice and discrimination results in inequity for LGBTQ2S+ people. This includes experiencing barriers to programs and services that others may take for granted. This five-year plan is based on what we heard through our public engagement and, of course, then the second phase of the prioritization around how we would structure a plan that would reflect what we heard through this whole consultation and how we would prioritize that and what work we would do first.

It includes over 100 actions under eight themes: health care; education and youth; community and culture; inclusive governance; Government of Yukon as a workplace; public facilities; gender data; and tourism and culture.

We have definitely made some changes already. Much of this work is underway. I would like to just highlight a few of the areas that we have achieved or are still working on: expanding health care insurance coverage for the trans and gender-diverse community; extending coverage for gender-affirming therapy for trans Yukoners; extending coverage for trans-affirming medical therapies, procedures, and surgeries — this is leading policy in the country and maybe even throughout North America — providing HIV pre-exposure and post-exposure medications for HIV free of charge to those who request it; offering World Professional Association for Transgender Health training, at no cost, to Yukon government clinicians and non-governmental organizations; passing the *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act* to ban conversion therapy in the Yukon; making LGBTQ2S+ awareness and inclusion training available to all Yukon government employees through our internal Yukon Learn website; integrating inclusive language into new government communication and including it in the official Government of Yukon style guide; funding for All Genders Yukon Society to offer mental wellness services; renovating the Whitehorse visitor information centre and updating signage to provide gender-inclusive washrooms in this building; for the first time, providing operational funding to Queer Yukon Society; and working in partnership with all LGBTQ2S+ societies to support the development and implementation of this action plan and to work toward establishing a Yukon Pride Centre.

We continue with our partners to implement all the actions in the LGBTQ2S+ action plan. I look forward to carrying out this important work alongside our partners and always striving to be a more inclusive government.

As I said earlier today, we are embracing the principle of “Nothing about us without us”. That is something that definitely works in that way. We all have to achieve the milestones that we have achieved together.

Regarding education and youth specifically in the plan, the plan identifies four areas of focus: implementing the SOGI policy; encourage schools to support gender and sexuality alliances or similar clubs; providing education and training for teachers and school administrators in LGBTQ2S+ cultural competency; improving anti-bullying initiatives in Yukon schools, especially for LGBTQ2S+ youth; and encouraging extracurricular programs that are more inclusive of queer relationships and diverse gender identities.

Our focus is on children, first and foremost. We have taken action and will continue to take action. When I think about the safety and well-being of our students, I think about their right to dignity, respect, fairness, and equality. That is why we are committed to ensuring that Government of Yukon laws, policies, and practices meet both the legal rules and social standards for LGBTQ2S+ non-discrimination, including in schools. I am proud of the commitment and action that our government has taken already.

We have addressed non-discrimination in many of our laws. In 2017, we took the first step when we amended the *Human Rights Act* to make it illegal to discriminate against a person on the grounds of gender identity and gender expression

by including gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds for discrimination in the *Human Rights Act*. We ensured that all trans, two-spirit, and non-binary Yukoners know that their basic rights and freedoms are explicitly protected. At that time, we also amended the *Vital Statistics Act* to remove the requirement for sex-reassignment surgery before a person can change the sex on their birth registration, ensuring that trans, two-spirit, and non-binary Yukoners are able to make those changes. We enabled the regulations to allow birth certificates and non-binary X sex gender markers. These steps help to ensure that trans, two-spirit, and non-binary Yukoners have fair and equitable access to all government programs and services.

The *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act* in 2018 increased representation of diverse voices on government boards and committees that influence key areas of decision-making, such as childcare, social assistance, violence prevention, and provision of care. Specifically, we improved the following acts: *Public Service Labour Relations Act*, to prevent employee organizations that discriminate against any employee on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression from certifying as a bargaining unit; the *Care Consent Act*, the *Child Care Act*, the *Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Act*, and the *Social Services Act*, to enable and promote cultural, regional, and gender diversity in appointments and memberships of the respective boards and committees.

We also passed Bill No. 9, the *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act*. The act bans the provision of conversion therapy to minors, supporting the government's commitment to inclusion for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirit-plus Yukoners. The Canadian Psychological Association of Canada and the Canadian Psychiatric Society have broadly discredited conversion therapy and the aim of the act was to protect minors and adults who have a substitute decision-maker or guardian appointed from harm associated with the practice. The act also clarified that conversion therapy is not an insured service.

So, we are very pleased with the changes that we made in those acts. We further passed an *Equality of Spouses Statute Law Amendment Act (2018)*, which included the repeal of the *Married Women's Property Act*.

Updating legislation to be more inclusive of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners is a long-term project that we are making progress on and will continue to support and look at other ways that we can improve laws in our territory for the goal of inclusion.

In this regard, I really appreciate the members opposite for bringing this proposed legislation forward. I would like to speak specifically about a couple of things today. I also appreciate that not all students may feel comfortable coming forward with a request to set up a GSA or a request that the school provide options for inclusive activities.

Having a policy in place will help ease the ability for some students to participate and feel comfortable in their learning environment. The concept and intent of the bill is in alignment with the *Education Act* and policies. The Safe and Caring Schools policy is based on respect, responsibility, and rights

and is supported by the *Education Act* in several sections, including the preamble and those related to duties of students, parents, and school councils, teachers, and administrators.

The purpose of the Safe and Caring Schools policy is to promote the safety of people in schools; to ensure all members of the school community are treated with respect and dignity; to promote responsible citizenship by encouraging appropriate participation in civic life of the school community; to maintain an environment where conflict and difference can be addressed in a manner characterized by respect; to encourage the use of non-violent and restorative approaches to solve conflict; and to prevent bullying in schools.

I'm proud that we have put in place a SOGI policy for schools as well. Our government values diversity in its school community and wants to provide safe, welcoming, inclusive, and affirming learning environments for all students.

I want to note that the work that we've done around inclusive and special education is also another area where there are key commitments to inclusive education. There is a tremendous amount of work that is underway right now that will support the policies that we're looking to review, to enhance, and to really improve on. We recognize that students and school community members identifying as LGBTQ2S+, or questioning, face a unique set of challenges within schools, including being targets for discriminatory behaviours. Our school communities share the responsibility for supporting students and staff in addressing and facing these challenges.

We want to reduce homophobic and gender-based comments, discrimination, and bullying that are demeaning to all students, parents, guardians, and employees, regardless of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. The SOGI policy does not permit or tolerate any homophobic behaviour or bullying, whether by commission or by failing to act to end the behaviour. Staff will respond to all incidents and provide support and assistance to those who are intended or unintended targets of such behaviour.

I would like to acknowledge that there are schools that have already established GSAs or programs. Both Porter Creek Secondary School and Vanier Secondary School have shown leadership in the creation of GSAs. This is valuable work and means a lot to the students in these schools. I appreciate the intention behind the proposed amendment and I believe this is something we need to be discussing.

However, I have some concerns on how the amendment was developed. Very early in my time as minister, I had the privilege of meeting with Queer Yukon. They were very clear and told me that, if we were to embark on a law or policy changes impacting the queer community, we needed to talk with the queer community. They said, "Nothing about us without us." I've said that a few times today. That is a phrase I take to heart. I definitely believe it — and on a number of fronts. I mean, I definitely feel that, when we're working to make life better in any area, that's a really good principle to embrace.

I appreciate that even a small change in a law can have a large impact on the people who interact with that law. I know that in the work we do every day, we take care to ensure that there are not negative consequences of our work, especially as



legislators. Even the most well-intentioned change can have unintended consequences.

That is why we take time to fully research legislative changes before we proceed, and that is why we invest considerable time and effort into consulting with people so that Yukoners can have an opportunity to provide feedback. Our government has made it a priority to ensure that all voices are heard in the development of legislation. So, I do have some concerns that there is not an opportunity for extensive public conversation on this proposed legislative change; however, I have pointed out the work that we have done with the LGBTQ2S+ community on the action plan and the relation to that plan.

I look forward to hearing from the Member for Whitehorse Centre on how this was developed and who was offered the opportunity to influence this change. I want to take a minute to acknowledge — as the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate — all the strong, courageous, and determined people in Yukon and elsewhere who have put their hard work, life stories, and even sometimes their lives on the line to advance gender equality and LGBTQ2S+ rights and freedoms. I want to acknowledge the Member for Whitehorse Centre's own personal story today. I thank you very much for sharing that with us and having the courage to do that. I really appreciate the vulnerability that we can show in being real and human first. I think that this is the type of Legislature that I want to be part of.

I want to thank all of our partners, all of the equality-seeking groups — All Genders Yukon, Queer Yukon, the gay-straight alliance — and all of their work, voices, and the work that they continue to do each and every day with their incredible contributions to our communities. I am proud to have learned so much from each of these groups and so many more. I think that I have to mention Chase Blodgett and the work Chase has done in our territory and the friendship that we have developed. I really appreciate it, and always know that I can go and speak to Chase about matters relating to LGBTQ2S+ or education.

We are able to be here today to consider Bill No. 304 because of the work of these organizations and their pursuit of a stronger, more inclusive Yukon. I want to encourage the LGBTQ2S+ community and their allies to stay engaged. Follow the process of this plan and challenge us to do better when our efforts do not meet the mark or when priorities change.

I want to close today by emphasizing our priority to put the safety and well-being of students before anything else. We are focused on supporting students and their families and staff and the school community and building a more inclusive Yukon. I support the intention of this bill and hope that, through our questions in Committee of the Whole, we can learn more about the development and have a good, healthy debate.

I had the opportunity this morning to go to the First Nation Education Conference, and I was very encouraged by that discussion. Something that the Member for Whitehorse Centre said today, speaking from the heart, keeping that space open and keeping the children there, was part of what I heard this morning at this conference. It was so moving and so inspiring.

I know we are speaking about something very specific here in terms of the LGBTQ2S+ community, but I think that it applies to all.

I look forward to moving into Committee of the Whole and thank the member for bringing the bill forward.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the opportunity to rise at second reading to speak to Bill No. 304, put forward by my colleague, the MLA for Whitehorse Centre. I wanted to begin by agreeing with the Member for Whitehorse Centre that it is really great to see the engagement of young people, as we saw earlier today. Regardless of the issue that comes up, whether it is a policy issue, a legislative issue, or anything else, it is always encouraging to see young people get engaged in politics and get interested in their rights, the rights of others, the legislation that governs the territory, and issues that, for us as legislators, are everyday matters, but for a lot of people, are not top of mind. I think it is very encouraging, and I appreciate the member's advice that we should think about kids and those affected by this as we debate this bill and this material.

I would also like to say thank you for a second reason to the member, and that is simply for bringing this bill forward. It's probably no surprise to anyone in this Legislature that I'm very much a proponent of Members of the Legislative Assembly bringing forward legislative changes that they see as appropriate in their capacity as an MLA. What I mean by that is that, for some time now, the trend of the Yukon Legislative Assembly has been that only the government can bring forward legislation. This is something on which my views have personally changed over the last number of years. I was certainly not extremely interested in private members' bills when I was a member of the government. I was often dismissive of them. That is something that I have had a lot of time to reflect on, having been on both sides of the aisle. I think it's worth noting that it is very much an important thing for MLAs to consider that we have the ability to bring forward legislation, and it is a legitimate ability and one that this Legislature is fully within its capacity to address.

The Minister of Education raised some points that I will be echoing, for sure. I found myself agreeing with a number of comments that she made about the need for consultation. In agreeing with her, I am also aware of the limitations that exist for opposition members to conduct that kind of legislation. I know that we have faced this type of issue before. On the government side of the Legislature, the government has literally thousands of public servants available to them to assist with consultation and drafting development, and that is not the case for us in the opposition.

I am certainly sensitive to the amount of work that it takes for a private member to bring forward a bill like this that amends very serious legislation and that proposes to make a real change in the laws that govern the territory. That was the second introductory point that I wanted to make — my appreciation for and belief in the importance of Members of the Legislative Assembly bringing forward legislation like this in this form.

I would like to turn now to the bill itself. I would be remiss if I didn't note, of course, that a very similar bill was tabled last week — Bill No. 303, I believe, was its title — to a very similar effect as this bill. Subsequent to that tabling, the member then tabled a second bill — this bill, Bill No. 304, which is now before us in the Legislature.

The intent of the bill is fairly clearly laid out, in my view, in the summary. I will read from it: "This bill amends the *Education Act* to: Ensure that all schools in the Yukon have safe spaces for LGBTQ2+ students in the form of student activities or organizations." The intent of the bill is fairly captured in that summary. As expressed there, that is an intent I can certainly support and agree with.

I think that safe spaces for students is imperative for government and for our education system to ensure. I certainly appreciate the intent expressed here in the summary. Ensuring that, in particular, LGBTQ2S+ students have access to safe spaces is, without doubt, something that we support. I think that all students should have access to safe and welcoming learning environments when they come to school, not only for the fact that this supports a healthy learning environment, but also because it is simply the right thing to do.

Without doubt, I can say at this stage that I support what I think is the intent of the bill. However, like the minister, I do have some questions and concerns about the process by which we arrived here. I will have some questions about some of the content as well. I would be remiss if I didn't also note that the Member for Whitehorse Centre was extremely proactive and offered all legislators a briefing on this bill. I was pleased to attend that earlier this week. I sat down and had what I felt was a fairly frank discussion with the sponsor of the bill, as well as with her colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, and their staff member, who I understand was integral in bringing this together.

In my view, I thought I was fairly frank about some of the questions I had around the content of the legislation. I asked questions about the section of the act that it was amending. For instance, I asked why we had chosen the duties of the principal as the section of the *Education Act* to amend. I also asked about the "must" versus "may" usage of language. I note that, in the act, one section includes a "must" and another includes a "may", and I asked the member to explain that at our briefing, and she did.

I should note, though, that despite having a briefing in the committee room, I do think it's important for others to see the permanent record of Hansard, and so I will be asking questions in Committee of the Whole that will be familiar to the sponsor of the bill, but I do think it's important to get those on the record.

Another issue that I had asked about was what was different between the first Bill No. 303 and this Bill No. 304. I noted that many of the concerns I had with Bill No. 303 were allayed by Bill No. 304. Bill No. 304 is much better laid out, and I think it's much more coherent in its expression of what it's trying to achieve. So, I appreciated the explanation there.

In particular, article (x) in this bill is one that — in a previous bill, I did have — it did raise some red flags for me,

and having it explained as it is now in article (x) with respect to the staff member I think is an improvement on the bill from last week.

I also noted a question about the reasoning behind the coming into force provisions of this act. I had noted, at the time, that typically when we see coming into force provisions of this nature, it's done by a government bill that is intended at allowing for the subsequent development of regulations. My question to the NDP at that time was: Does this bill contemplate regulations? Or do they contemplate regulations being needed? They had answered no or they had indicated, at least, that they didn't believe so.

However, I did note that, by including the provision that this act will come into force on a day to be fixed by the Commissioner in Executive Council Office, it did require an action by the Commissioner in Executive Council Office to actually bring this particular bill into force and the legislation into force. I did raise that question, and I understand that it's possible, at least, that the sponsor of the bill is willing to entertain amendments to it or maybe even perhaps be proposing amendments themselves.

The other part that I wanted to address — and it was one that was touched on a fair amount by the Minister of Education — was the need for consultation. I appreciated the comments in that respect, because as we know, over the past several weeks, this Legislature has debated a number of different pieces of private members' business, not the least of which was a private member's bill from my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, who proposed changes to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. We have also seen amendments proposed in Committee of the Whole to bills that have been before the Legislature, namely, the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*, which this Legislature saw an amendment tabled to that bill.

Throughout that, there has been a lot of discussion about the nature and need for consultation, and I wanted to take a moment to note some of the quotes from earlier this Sitting for members. The first one I came across was from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on March 9. That member said — and I quote: "However, we had better be pretty careful about how we introduce it so that we don't inadvertently, through the way in which we have amended a piece of legislation here — if it's through a private member's bill or however it is amended — that it be done appropriately, because we are talking about incredibly serious issues. I just want to make sure that there needs to be that forethought that would go into how this legislation would be shaped."

The minister went on to say — and I quote again: "Normally, when there is a piece of legislation that we would go through, that engagement would happen. It would be done well ahead of time. Often there are two rounds of it. You would start with asking very open-ended questions about what the public thinks we should do. Then when you start to get closer on a piece of legislation, you would go back out and again talk with various groups and certainly with other governments — incredibly important — and then almost always we would issue a 'what we heard' document."

There are other ministers who commented on that to a very similar effect, but suffice it to say, I think that their consultation of this type is necessary, and I agreed very much with the comments of the Minister of Education when the minister indicated that — first of all, something that the minister said was that the work you do in consultation is critically important.

She went on to say that even a small change in the law can have unintended consequences. So, I don't know for sure that this bill will have any unintended consequences, but quite frankly, I don't know. That's why I took note of a quote from the Leader of the Third Party earlier this Sitting along the same lines. The Leader of the Third Party, in debate on the CEMA bill, said — and I'll quote: "Considering that, I think it's an important..." —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

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

*Debate on second reading of Bill No. 304 accordingly adjourned*

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

**The following documents were filed March 23, 2022:**

35-1-53

Amendment supporting LGBTQ2S+ students, letter re (dated March 23, 2022) from Theodore Hupé, President, Yukon Association of Educational Professionals, to Members of the Legislative Assembly (Tredger)

35-1-54

Department of Education's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Policy, letter re (dated February 15, 2022) from students of the Porter Creek Secondary School's Gender and Sexuality Alliance to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education (Tredger)